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Learning how to behave in school: a study of the experiences of young people with socio-emotional differences

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Citation: BOWLBY, S., LEA, J. and HOLT, L., 2014. Learning how to behave in school: a study of the experiences of young people with socio-emotional differences. IN: Mills, S. and Kraftl, P. (eds). *Informal Education, Childhood and Youth: Geographies, Histories, Practices*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 124 - 139.

Additional Information:

- This is a chapter from the book, *Informal Education, Childhood and Youth: Geographies, Histories, Practices*. Mills, S. and Kraftl, P. (eds). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 124 - 139, reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.

This extract is taken from the author's original manuscript and has not been edited. The definitive, published, version of record is available here: [<http://www.palgrave.com/page/detail/informal-education-childhood-and-youth-sarah-mills/?K=9781137027726>].

Metadata Record: <https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/2134/15801>

Version: Accepted for publication

Publisher: Palgrave Macmillan. Selection and editorial matter © Sarah Mills and Peter Kraftl. Individual chapters © respective authors

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Please cite the published version.

Bowlby, S, Lea, J. and Holt, L. (2014) in Mills, S. and Kraftl, P. (eds) *Informal Education, Childhood and Youth: Geographies, Histories, Practices* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Learning how to behave in school: a study of the experiences of children and young people with socio-emotional differences.

Introduction

This chapter discusses the ways in which children in school learn the type of behaviours that are socially acceptable within the school environment. It focuses on the experience of students who are defined by teachers as having 'Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties' (BESD)ⁱ in one primary school and one secondary school in the same English Local Authority (LA).

All schools have both formally defined and informal norms of behaviour within the school environment. The ability to enact certain forms of behaviour – such as listening to the teacher, concentrating on a task, being quiet - is widely believed to affect a pupil's ability to learn - and indeed, there is evidence that it does do so (Gutman and Vorhaus, 2012). Moreover, it is considered that the 'bad', disruptive behaviour of some pupils affects the ability of others to learn. Thus, in an environment such as the UK in which schools' academic 'standards' are central to their survival, pupils' behaviour is believed to be of great importance to the schools' overall academic performance (reflected in a plethora of Government guidance on behaviour policies in schools and in the widespread use of the term 'Behaviour for Learning' in schools' policies on behaviourⁱⁱ). An important element of behaviour concerns relationships with other pupils and with teachers. Thus, schools also focus on the social skills of relating to others, resolving disagreements and conflicts with others, making friends and showing concern for the well-being of other people. Many schools have statements about the school as a 'society' or 'community' which emphasise the priority given to harmonious social relationships amongst members of the school. There is a popularly accepted discourse which links together 'good' behaviour in school, learning, and learning to become a good citizen and member of society. Hence, finding ways to ensure that children adhere to particular norms of behaviour, including behaviour towards others, during the school day, is an important preoccupation of educators.

Schools try to inculcate particular forms of behaviour through a mixture of explicit rules, discipline, rewards and exhortation; through informal social pressure; and also, in some schools, the explicit teaching of such skills as containing anger, dealing with conflict and exploring feelings. In this chapter we focus on the interrelations between formal learning of behavioural norms and informal education and learning. We define formal education as situations in which the knowledges and skills to be learned are made explicit and the roles of learner and teacher are formally defined – typically in the classroom. Informal education, by contrast, occurs through informal social exchanges where the learning goals are not explicit. However, formal and informal education are not as clearly separated as this definition implies. For example, informal learning can be part of classroom social relationships and informal relationships can be managed by teachers to achieve particular learning goals. Here we examine how the methods adopted in two particular schools impact upon children who are designated as having BESD. In the following sections we discuss the nature of BESD and the concepts that underpin our study. We next briefly describe the methods used in the empirical study we have carried out before discussing our findings. We finish with a brief conclusion.

Defining BESD: In the UK children with BESD are defined as having a Special Education Need or SENⁱⁱⁱ because their behaviour presents a barrier to their learning. In England, in 2009, children with BESD made up 22.8% of all students with statements of SEN and those with SEN at School Action Plus^{iv} (14.3% and 26% of each individual category respectively) (DCSF, 2009) but the proportion varies markedly from school to school as does the proportion categorised as experiencing SEN. SEN diagnoses relate to physical and/or mental conditions which affect children's ability to learn in the normal classroom environment – for example, they may have such conditions as mobility, hearing or speech impairments, autism or Down's syndrome. Most of these conditions have more or less clear criteria for their diagnosis and they are conditions which pertain beyond the school gates. However, the identification of BESD is **not** linked to a clear set of criteria or clinically identifiable psychological condition – rather it is a term used to describe children who are, within the school: 'withdrawn and isolated, disruptive or disturbing, hyperactive and lacking concentration, [with] immature social skills, presenting challenging behaviour arising from other complex special needs' (Department for Education and

Skills, 2008, p.87). This description covers a very wide gamut of behaviour and depends on the subjective judgement of teachers and other staff. For example, the decision as to whether they have 'immature social skills' will depend on teachers' ideas about appropriate social skills and appropriate social behaviour in school for pupils of a given age. Commentators have noted that such judgements are influenced by classed, gendered and racialised expectations about 'normal' social behaviour. Thus the behaviour of some children diagnosed with BESD may be considered 'normal' and 'acceptable' for children of a particular gender, race and class amongst adults from a similar social background outside school but may be unacceptable within the school environment. In particular commentators have remarked that working class boys, boys of African Caribbean heritage and Traveller children of Irish heritage are more likely to be categorised as having BESD than other children (Youdell, 2011; Lindsay *et al*, 2006; DCSF, 2009).

Many authors would agree with Thomas' (2005, p.77) suggestion that use of the term EBD is a 'confused collation of notions...which, nevertheless share one feature: the attribution of behaviour problems to the disposition of the child and his or her personal circumstances' (see also Youdell, 2006, 2011; Runswick-Cole, 2011). The latter point is very important. First, the problem is seen to reside in the child and her or his 'background'. Secondly, most such children are seen as capable, in principle, of being taught 'how to behave' if they are given the appropriate teaching of emotional and social skills at school and if they, as individuals, are willing to embody such teaching in their everyday behaviour in school. However, it is easy for many teachers and adults in schools to see them as 'irredeemable' because the influence of parents and 'their background' is too strong to be erased. In this case teachers and staff may feel that the influence of such students within the school must be contained or removed in order to prevent them adversely affecting other students (Youdell, 2011). Moreover, judgement of the adequacy of social skills has clear moral and ethical overtones – students who behave in a socially unacceptable way can easily become seen by teachers as unworthy, 'bad' or 'not willing to change'; a set of teacher attitudes that can become self-fulfilling.

In order to challenge the idea that the 'problem' lies primarily within the mind, emotions and body of the child Holt (2010) uses the term 'Socio-Emotional Differences' to describe those categorised as having Behavioural, Emotional and

Social Difficulties. The term *differences* rather than *difficulties* is a strategic attempt to express that the differences are located at least as much in socially constructed, and hence socially and spatially specific, expectations of behaviour and emotional competence as within the young people. The diagnosis of BESD is specifically located within the institutionalised set of practices that are involved in SEN diagnoses and government and school responses to such diagnoses. They cannot be understood as objective and uncontentious 'facts' about particular children and young people.

Norms, friendship and embodied social capital: The existence of norms of acceptable social behaviour which pertain within the school gates is central to the categorisation of children with BESD. Norms are established and maintained within groups both by formal sanctions and rewards and by informal, sometimes beyond-conscious reactions. These communicate to members of the group which forms of behaviour are acceptable or unacceptable. In schools, teachers and other staff are empowered to set formal sanctions and rewards but they and other children will also communicate norms informally. The existence of group norms creates the possibility that those who do not adhere to the norms are perceived not only as 'other' but 'other' in a negative way. Thus, it is not simply that particular forms of behaviour are seen as unacceptable, but that those displaying these forms of behaviour become socially unacceptable and socially excluded. Children and young people categorised as having BESD are therefore at risk of being socially excluded within school – that is, seen by staff and other children and young people as 'bad', undesirable as friends, and excluded from taking part in many informal social activities within the school.

Butler (1997, 2004) argues that humans subconsciously subject themselves to normalisation because human beings' existence and identity is defined in relation to others. We suggest that there is an emotional investment in such identification which is central to the maintenance of group norms and group members ways-of-being that are expressed in Bourdieu's notion of habitus (Bourdieu, 1990; Holt *et al*, forthcoming). Humans' desire to be accepted and their participation in a particular group will result in their adoption of both conscious and beyond-conscious bodily and mental habits that are characteristic of that group. Such a 'habitus' involves the members of the group acquiring embodied social capital (Holt, 2008) which may

affect positively or negatively their ability to take part in particular social practices and so influence the types of embodied social capital they continue to acquire.

Norms are not fixed – they are changeable and often fuzzily defined – and some are more open to modification than others. While those who behave differently may be denigrated and socially excluded, a group also may modify its norms in response to such differences, enlarging the range of social behaviours considered acceptable and allowing those who behave differently to become socially included. Thus norms are open to change through the reactions and innovations of individuals in interaction with one another (Holt *et al*, 2012). Children and young people designated as having BESD are, by definition, not adhering to the norms of social behaviour considered acceptable within the school - at least as defined by school staff, within the context of expectations placed on the school by the broader education institution. However, it is possible that social interactions between children labelled as having BESD, other children and school staff will lead to acceptance within the school of some behaviours previously considered unacceptable.

Acceptance within a group and participation in the activities of that group is important to the ability to make friends with others within the group. Children and young people seen as ‘unacceptable’ in the school environment may find it difficult to make friends – perhaps because they are kept physically away from interaction with potential friends and/or because many of their peers also see them as ‘unacceptable’. Friendship is a relationship that is not given or fixed by virtue of being in a particular family, as are kin relationships. It is not socially prescribed by virtue of having particular social characteristics. Rather it seems to those who are friends that it is a *chosen* relationship which can be revoked if desired (Spencer and Pahl, 2006). Nevertheless friendships are most commonly made between people of similar social status and backgrounds (Bunnel *et al*, 2012). Friendships are important not only because they provide companionship in activities but because they often lead to supportive and caring relationships between friends and provide a source of identity and self-esteem (Bowlby, 2011). For children and young people they are an important indicator of social acceptance by a person or people beyond the family.

In this paper we examine how school staff try to modify the social behaviour of pupils designated as having BESD or severe behavioural problems and ‘teach’ them how to

make and keep friendship. We also examine whether there is evidence that the norms of acceptable behaviour within school are changed in any way to render such children more socially acceptable. Such questions relate to the move that has taken place over the last 18 years towards 'inclusive education'. Some see this primarily as a move to 'include' children with a variety of disabilities in mainstream education through 'assistance' targeted at the individual child. However, this approach to inclusion has been criticised as absorbing 'difficulties that arise in education for a wide variety of reasons within the frame of individual defect' (Ainscow *et al*, 2006, p.17). A broader approach to inclusion focuses not only on disabilities but on the 'barriers to learning and participation that arise in education as a result of the way boys and girls, or children from different class and ethnic groups, are treated within and outside schools (Ainscow *et al*, 2006, p.17). At present, however, policies and practices in schools are constrained within the first, narrower approach to inclusion. In this paper we are concerned with the effects of this type of approach on the ways that children designated as having BESD and similar behavioural problems learn about relationships and the practices of friendship within school. We focus on relationships and friendships because we argue that for children and young people in school having friends and feeling accepted by other children and young people as well as by adults in the school is vital to their participation in other aspects of school, including formal learning. As we will show it is also seen as of central importance by teachers and school staff.

The study

This chapter draws upon data from a larger study of children and young people's friendships and relationships within school. The broader research project focuses upon the inclusion and exclusion of children and young people with and without disabilities and explores their relationships within the school space in the context of their relationships in home and leisure spaces. It seeks to examine how students identified as having particular disabilities were socially valued within school.

The study took place in three LAs within southern England which had differing policies towards inclusion. In each LA three schools were studied – one primary, one secondary and one special school. The schools had a variety of specialist facilities, socio-economic composition and academic performance. Data from the Pupil Level

Annual Schools Census (PLASC) and national census have been analysed to contextualise the case studies.

The discussion in this chapter is based on research in a primary and secondary school within one LA which we have selected because it encouraged schools to focus on the significance of social relationships and social/emotional norms more strongly than the other two LAs. The two schools both draw pupils from areas of deprivation. Primrose School – the primary school – has 37.3% of its pupils entitled to Free School Meals^v (compared with 19.2% nationally in 2011, (DfE, 2011)) and 33.5% of its pupils labelled as having SEN; of those 30.3% had BESD as their primary SEN category. Sorrel School^{vi} – the secondary school - has 16.5% on Free School Meals (compared with 15.9% nationally in 2011), 26.6% of pupils with a SEN diagnosis and of those, 15.0% are recorded to have BESD as their primary SEN category.

In each school in-depth observation of children's and adult's interactions in a range of spaces (classrooms, corridors, assemblies, playgrounds, school trips, breakfast, lunch and after school clubs) were made over a period of at least 30 days. These observations were recorded in a research diary. Children and young people were told of the observation and parents and young people were able to ask for their activities not to be recorded. In addition, about 12 children or young people in each school took part in semi-participatory research designed to enable the children and young people to tell us about their friendships, everyday interactions and activities with others in and out of school. We also carried out semi-structured interviews around themes of friendship, inclusion and special educational needs with: parents of participants; key actors within each school such as the SENCo^{vii}, Teaching Assistants, after school club staff; local actors (e.g. staff from the LEA, local charities and providers of services and leisure activities for young people with disabilities); and national actors (e.g. staff from national charities and interest groups).

In this chapter we explore the nature and impact of interventions to modify the behaviour of children with BESD, drawing mainly on the interviews with adults and our in-depth observations. In subsequent analyses we will examine analyse in more depth the ways in which young people talked about adults' interventions and their own friendships and activities.

Learning to behave

School practices: The LA in which the two schools discussed in this Chapter are located used to send many children with SEN to special schools, often outside the LA. Recently this policy has been changed and the LA now tries to educate the majority of children with SEN in mainstream schools. The LA runs a Behaviour Service for children with SEN and has a close relationship with an active NGO which works with parents of children with disabilities. It also organises regular meetings between SENCOs from clusters of schools where ideas can be exchanged and new initiatives discussed. It provides considerable support and training to all adults (not only teachers) involved with children with SEN and encourages TAs to structure and plan interventions on their own. This was the only LA among the 3 in which research took place where this level of support was given. An annual conference, where academics and experts talk about specific issues that are seen to be pertinent within the LA, is organised by the SEN team. The professional focus on and interest in the significance of social relationships, friendships and social/emotional norms distinguished this LA from the other two that we studied and this approach permeated the approach taken within the two schools

Primrose has adopted a 'whole school' approach to promoting social and emotional wellbeing and good behaviour. That is, all practices concerned with these issues are available to all pupils in the school. The school employs an Inclusion Mentor whose role is to work with those children who have particular behavioural problems, in addition the school employs Learning Support Mentors, Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Individual Needs Assistants (INAs) who give tailored help to individual children with difficulties. Specific practices aimed at supporting 'good' behaviour were: the provision of a room staffed by an adult (most often the Inclusion Mentor) where children could go if they were not able to conform to the demands of classroom behaviour ('the Refuge'^{viii}); a drop-in Breakfast club and drop-in Lunchtime Library club where pupils were supervised; a system where children could put their name down to talk over a problem later in the day with a staff member; the promise of 'Special Time'^{ix} – a session on Fridays when children could chose to spend time of a range of leisure activities - those who behaved badly would lose 'Special Time'; in addition the school ran a nurture group (which was not available to all children and

thus an exception to the whole school policy). Recently the differences of a couple of children from the same class had dominated the activities of the Inclusion Mentor.

At Sorrel the school had special units in three separate areas for learning support, supporting transition and for inclusion. Alongside a more traditional learning support area (where pupils received help with literacy and numeracy), there were two 'transition learning groups' teaching young people moving from Primary school into Secondary school. These took place in two classrooms and these classes had dedicated teachers and teaching assistants. The classroom was organised like a primary classroom with shared tables. Pupils also went to some mainstream classes with the aim of them eventually attending mainstream classes full time. The inclusion unit supported young people throughout the rest of the school who were seen to have behavioural difficulties, and also dealt with punishment for pupils who had temporarily been excluded from school. In addition, the inclusion unit ran 'circle of friends' groups to help isolated young people make friends with peers so that they would feel more socially comfortable in the school, and arranged small group trips (for those seen to be at risk of exclusion) for sporting, musical or art activities outside school to build confidence and team work. An important aspect of the school's approach to teaching about social relationships was the use of approaches derived from restorative justice involving mediation between young people and between teachers and young people involved in disputes with one another. (See Lea *et al* (forthcoming) for a more detailed discussion of the role of the restorative justice approach in another school that we observed).

The amount of time the children and young people spent unsupervised and away from direct adult influence was important in terms of the role that adults had in mediating friendships and social relationships, and was strikingly different at the primary and secondary school. At Primrose almost all the time is supervised directly or indirectly by adults – by the playground supervisors before and after school and during break, in the lunch clubs, in small group working, in the classroom (by teachers, TAs and INAs). Some children who were particularly prone to finding themselves in disputes with their peers had much closer supervision – sometimes one-to-one – so that individual adults had a very large influence on them. This adult supervision can be seen as a mixture of formal and informal education in which were

identified as having control over and responsibility for children's behaviour but with variable levels of informality in relationships and explicitness over behavioural norms. In Sorrel the majority of students were less closely supervised during break and lunchtime. The special units (learning support and inclusion) were not open at lunchtime. However, the students in the primary style transition classrooms were able to attend a lunchtime and break club in their classrooms (children from the wider school were not allowed to attend) so were under a similar close scrutiny as existed in the primary school.

Teaching emotional skills: One of the things that framed these school practices and adult interventions was the 'Social & Emotional Aspects of Learning' (SEAL) programme that was promoted under the Labour Government (DFES, 2005a & b) and derives from Goleman's work in the USA on 'Emotional Intelligence' (Goleman, 1996). This is based on the principle of teaching children and young people emotional and behavioural skills that are designed to allow them to understand and control difficult emotions and bodily reactions and resolve disagreements between themselves and others.

The premise of SEAL is that emotional skills can be and should be taught formally as part of the explicit curriculum. These ideas permeated both schools and were especially evident at Primrose where ideas from SEAL had been promoted throughout the school. However, these ideas did not derive solely from SEAL – as the teacher in charge of its implementation said:

“we spend so much of our school time dealing with children with huge emotional issues that what SEAL did was give us a bit of structure to do it within [...] I think we were already doing a lot of the talk but it gives you a framework”.

An important element of SEAL at Primrose is the use of 'circle time' to talk about managing emotions and behaviour. Observing circle times it seemed that the children who have most difficulties with emotions and behaviour also find joining in the lesson most problematic. For example, in one circle time observed one child will not join the circle and is eventually taken out, another leaves the circle and when he returns is disruptive and evidently not listening. The teacher suggests that those

who stay in the room are *'still listening to all of it and they still know what you've been talking about [...] I think they're accessing it in some way'*. We are less confident of this. However, it was evident that the ideas promoted in circle time were echoed in other lessons and informal interactions with staff.

SEAL is no longer promoted by the DfE but the principles are still used by many schools. It has attracted critical interpretations, which suggest that SEAL was established without clear evidence to support this type of intervention, and indeed that there is no convincing evidence that SEAL and similar programmes are effective. SEAL has been seen as part of a wider tendency to turn 'children's emotional life and their friendships into a problem to be solved' (Craig, 2007, p.60); being seen to promote anxiety in children about emotional competence; and encouraging children to accept rather than feeling able to challenge social norms (Furedi, 2004; Craig, 2007; Ecclestone & Hayes, 2008; DCSF, 2008; Humphrey *et al*, 2010; Watson *et al*, 2012). In contrast to the other 2 LAs in which research was done, this LA did problematize this realm of life, offering counselling in schools, using psychology based tools such as sociograms to map friendships, and SEAL. While this LA had recognised the significance of social and emotional lives to learning, the critiques of SEAL were not recognised, and an uncritical acceptance of the value of such interventions has the potential to be problematic^{xi}.

Modelling norms: In both schools there was an explicit belief in the significance of staff and children 'modelling' appropriate behaviour in non-classroom school contexts – an idea that owes much to theories of Vygotsky. For example in Primrose the Breakfast Club co-ordinator described the value of informal interaction with the children in the following terms:

"we have got those challenging children who come to breakfast club, um, but you want them to be there in a way because they can see that there are certain behaviours that aren't acceptable not just at mealtimes but in general but actually you sit down together and you have breakfast and you've got these good manners, um, and just sort of the sharing of each other's bit of life as well"

Inclusion Mentors, Learning Mentors, and TAs can be important in forging links between the local society of parents and friends in which the child is embedded and the world of school. Many of them come from the local area and are:

“parents that have gone into schools you know, because their kids have gone to school and they’ve become the dinner lady and then the teaching assistant and they’re just, you know, they’re just so good at their job, really, really good.” (LA Learning Mentor Co-ordinator)

At Sorrel this local context is less significant since pupils come from all over the urban area. At Primrose it means that some of the adult ‘models’ of appropriate behaviour come from a familiar social background – as in the case of the Breakfast Club co-ordinator quoted above. It also provides staff with more insight into the home situation of the children and helps establish good relations with parents.

It was also evident that staff managed children’s contacts on an everyday basis - sometimes to facilitate them being with others who might be a ‘good’ influence, sometimes to limit their contact with those who might be a ‘bad’ influence. This was particularly evident at Primrose where the opportunities for such management were greater than at Sorrel because of the high levels of adult supervision.

Making friends: At both schools there were explicit interventions to help children who lacked friends to make and keep them. Helping with friendships was seen as important not simply to reduce conflict within the school and for the welfare of the individual but because staff considered that friendships are important to learning:

“If you’re excluded from friendships it massively impedes their learning [...] you actually want them talking and working together, and if you’re not included in that then, you know, your learning just stops” (Teacher/Personal, Social & Health Education (PSHE) co-ordinator, Primrose).

Inappropriate friendships or the lack of friendships were seen to be particularly important to the school experience of children and young people with behaviour problems:

“those children that are the ones that are heavy on resources, that staff find hardest to manage [...] the ones that don’t make progress, which are all these

kind of EBSDs, school action, school action plus pupils, they're, it's all about friendships, and there are so many of them struggle with their friendships (SENCo, Sorrel)

In both schools children who were seen to be excluded or isolated were taken out of class to work as a group on some non-curriculum activity with children:

“who we think will help them make friends, so good role models, or children who are quite quiet but confident and we have been able to help them by having [...] the learning mentors, work with very small groups for quite a long period.” (Teacher/PSHE co-ordinator, Primrose).

The discussion in one ‘circle of friends’ group at Sorrel that we observed aimed to make the young people reflect on their everyday experiences, set and meet their own targets for activities, build self-esteem by recognising their achievements outside and inside school and to think about family relationships and friendships. The group interactions could also be seen as providing a template for social interaction with friends. For example the rules for the group’s conduct were: *Respect each other; What’s said in the room stays in the room; Listen to each other; Always be nice to each other.* Students told us in interviews that they were aware that the purpose of the group was to help them with social interactions.

Both schools also used approaches based on restorative justice to help students deal with conflicts between each other or conflicts with staff. At Sorrel a new member of staff with experience in restorative justice had recently been appointed to develop this work which was being strongly supported within the school. He described the approach as follows:

“It’s a great opportunity for me to sit down with a young person who is in here, you know, say for verbally abusing the teacher [...] say to them, well OK, what happened, and what were you thinking about at the time, and how do you feel about things now, and what do we need to, what do you think needs to be done to put things right? [...] and then we’ll bring the teacher down, put the teacher and the young person together and let them kind of resolve the conflict between them, with a bit of help from us, you know” (Manager of Inclusion Unit)

At Primrose similar methods were used although explicit use of restorative justice was only just being introduced. Sally and Tracy, who are involved in the incident described below, are both labelled as having BESD.

“..went up to the community room with Mrs X, Sally, Tracy and Lea^{xii} They had had a breaktime altercation when they were playing tag and each had the opportunity to speak and tell what happened. This really did go round in huge circles in that one would say and then another would disagree, or really talk at cross purposes. At one point Sally said she had had enough and walked out. After 2-3 minutes she came back in (the others had carried on talking without her) and they apologised in the end. Lea said she might not play with Sally any more because she always storms off [...] After we went back downstairs I asked Lea and Tracy if it had been useful talking to Mrs X – Tracy said yes and Lea said that it was OK – she would talk to Sally but wouldn’t be her friend.” (Research Diary, Primrose)

The similarity in approach at the two schools stems, in part, from the SENCo meetings arranged by the LA.

In both cases the staff member’s interventions appear to try to promote both understanding and empathy with the experience of others and the ability to make some form of restitution - even if this is simply an apology. This emphasis on empathy and understanding is characteristic of restorative justice.

Concluding Comments

It is clear that in these two schools staff put enormous effort into developing the ability of children with BESD and behavioural problems to behave more acceptably and to help them make friends. Stress is put upon the individual child learning to control their behaviour, to become self-reflexive, to develop empathy with others and to build their self-esteem. Staff provide opportunities for children to make ‘desirable’ friends and to limit contact with ‘undesirable’ friends through both explicit and hidden management of their activities. It was also clear from our observations and interviews that the children and young people generally appreciated these efforts. The provision of space-times in which dominant norms are relaxed provided these children and young people an opportunity, that most of them valued, to build their

social capacities and also to feel 'known' and accepted - but also marked them out as 'different'.

The dominant intent, and effect, of these interventions was to move these children's norms of behaviour towards the mainstream. There was little encouragement for children, young people or staff to question the norms of sociality that pervaded the schools. The interventions did help many of the children we observed with their friendships, although some children and young people remained somewhat isolated. However, the use of the techniques of restorative justice involves an obligation for others – staff and children – to listen to the experiences of children with BESD and hence provides an opportunity for some small shifts in the types of behaviour that are deemed socially acceptable.

Despite the broadly positive reaction of the children and young people we talked with to the types of help they were given we do consider that there may be a danger of concentrating primarily on individual emotional deficit following from the focus on social and emotional issues promoted by the LA and evident in the two school we studied. However, challenging the individual deficit model by changing teaching methods to further expand the inclusivity of the school would be extremely difficult in an educational climate which prioritises achievements in public exams. Tackling the processes producing the social inequalities that are acknowledged to be closely linked to diagnoses of SEN and, in particular, BESD, requires national political commitment that is, at present, lacking.

Footnotes

ⁱ The terms 'Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties' (SEBD), 'Emotional, Social and Behavioural Difficulties' (ESBD) or 'Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties' (EBD) are also used to describe such Children.

ⁱⁱ E.g. 'Behaviour for Learning policy' at Cherwell School
<http://www.cherwell.oxon.sch.uk/content/index.php?page=201for>

ⁱⁱⁱ A child is labelled as having a Special Educational Need (SEN) if they have difficulties in learning that require special educational provision beyond that provided to the majority of pupils. 'School Action' involves extra help being given to a child labelled as having SEN by teachers within the school; When teachers and the SENCo are also given advice about a child's education by outside specialists the child is designated as receiving 'School Action Plus'; a Statement of Special Needs is intended for children with more severe problems and sets out the specific extra help that the Child should receive.

^v In England children whose parents are on one of a range of benefits are entitled to Free School Meals (DfE 2012). The proportion of children on FSM is commonly used as an indicator of deprivation amongst pupils' families.

^{vi} These school names are pseudonyms

^{vii} The SENCo is the member of staff who has responsibility for coordinating the special educational needs provision within a school.

^{viii} Not the real name for this room

^{ix} Not the real name for this time

^x The symbols [...] within a quote indicates that some of the quote has been omitted.

^{xi} Having said this, while SEAL was a prominent feature of the teaching at Primrose it was not strongly in evidence at Sorrel. In this it was similar to many secondary schools in which - perhaps because of the demands of the exam curriculum, or a lack of belief in the programme on the part of teachers, or a lack of resources - the programme has been given only lukewarm support (DCSF 2010).

^{xii} Pseudonyms

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