A Research Study of 36 Behaviour Support Classrooms

Dr Jean Henefer
Research and Development Officer

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Foreword

In February 2005 a Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools was established by the Department of Education and Skills (DES). The work of the Task Force was completed in 2006 with the publication of School Matters: The Report of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools (Martin, 2006). The report recommended that

Schools that cater for numbers of students who regularly challenge acceptable levels of discipline should have a Behaviour Support Classroom, in which students with serious and persistent disruptive behaviour can be placed, with a view to allowing teaching and learning to continue in the regular classroom, while providing an opportunity to support the disruptive student in modifying his/her behaviour in line with socially acceptable norms (p. 144).

Basing their findings on an audit of international models of Behaviour Support Classrooms (BSCs) and in consultation with those professionals with established experience operating this type of provision, the Task Force stipulated that BSCs should not be seen or used as “sin bins” and that attendance should be short-term and part-time (p. 101). Additionally schools allocated resources for BSCs must have a consistent whole school approach to behaviour in place and all members of the school community should be clear about the functions of the provision (p. 102). The Task Force stipulated that students should not be referred to the BSC until all the steps of a school’s ladder of referral i.e. Classroom Teacher, Class Tutor, Year Head, Care Team, Deputy Principal and Principal have been engaged with no success. The report recommended that the needs of each student should be assessed and ideally that an Individual Education Plan (IEP) be devised that would form the foundation of the work and support in the BSC. The purpose of the intervention is “to help the student to develop the requisite dispositions and self-control to behave in a co-operative way in his/her regular class” (p. 144).

Following the publication of the Task Force report, the Minister for Education and Skills established the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) in 2006 with a brief to provide support to those schools experiencing persistent and serious disruptive student behaviour. The mission statement of the NBSS is to promote and support behaviour for learning. It is guided by the key principle that schools can make a difference in young people’s lives and the service bases its approach on the view that a young person can learn to improve her/his behaviour if provided with adequate support and by so doing can experience success in the classroom and in school.

Following an application process in January 2007 a total of 124 schools, nearly 20% of second level schools in Ireland, formally requested the service. In applying for support from the NBSS, schools were offered the opportunity to additionally request the resources to pilot a Behaviour Support Classroom intervention in their schools commencing in the academic year 2007/2008. Of the 124 schools, 94 (76%) indicated that they would benefit from a BSC intervention – 45 VEC schools, 34 Voluntary Secondary schools and 15 Community or Comprehensive schools. From those that requested a BSC intervention, 31 (33%) schools, in geographically diverse areas were selected to pilot the intervention. The first NBSS BSCs “opened”, in the sense of students attending the classroom, in September 2007, with the additional 30 opening throughout the autumn term and early in 2008. In September 2008, resources were made available for the allocation of BSCs in an additional 5 schools. Hence by the end of the academic year 2008/2009, NBSS Behaviour Support Classrooms were in place and working with students in 36 of the 73 post primary schools partnering the NBSS in positive behaviour work throughout Ireland.

The rationale for a study of the establishment, implementation and on-going work of Behaviour Support Classrooms in Ireland is:

- to evaluate an intervention that aims to develop students’ learning behaviour in order to optimise their educational outcomes, and
to explore the range of variables that may be significant in short-term, on-site individually customized academic, behavioural and social and emotional interventions that may enhance the long-term educational experiences of students.

Between January and April 2008, a preliminary exploration was conducted by the NBSS across the existing 31 Behaviour Support Classroom schools. The findings from this work (Henefer, 2008) informed the publication in 2008 of the NBSS’ Behaviour Support Classroom Best Practice Guidelines. Drawing upon both international and NBSS research and the experiences of partner schools, the document provides guidance on best practice with regard to staff requirements; room requirements; systems and structures; entry and exit criteria; the referral procedure; student behaviour plans; curriculum; reintegration procedures; mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation, as well as required forms for the same.

With the dissemination of the Behaviour Support Classroom Best Practice Guidelines to all BSC schools and to BSC staff at NBSS in-service training, the NBSS undertook a more extensive and in-depth exploration of the programme throughout the course of the academic year 2008/2009. A range of research instruments were developed that offered opportunities to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from students, BSC staffs, principals and NBSS personnel who have worked with and supported teachers and students since the inception of the programme. Areas of research included a comparison of the procedures used in different schools to establish and run the intervention; an exploration of the pedagogical methodologies and specific strategies developed and used by BSC teachers; the nature and degree of the challenging behaviours experienced in and identified by each school; the impact of the intervention on students’ learning experiences; the literacy needs of students referred to the BSC and whether students’ attitudes towards school and themselves as learners in school changed as a result of the intervention.

The findings from this research study informs and guides the subsequent and on-going work of the NBSS with schools with BSC provision. NBSS research will continue to evaluate this unique behavioural intervention and, in so doing, carry on the process of supporting young people and schools as well as contributing to the international literature on positive behavioural support in schools.

As this research focuses on the gathering and analysis of specific data, an aspect of our work that is not overly highlighted in this document is how our work sits in tandem with a variety of other services that exist in Ireland to support students and school communities, notably the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the VEC Psychological Services, the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) which includes the School Completion Programme (SCP), the Visiting Teacher for Travellers (VTT) and the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and the Department of Education and Skills’ support services.

Also, as school Codes of Behaviour have been legislated for (section 23 of the Education [Welfare] Act 2000), and schools complete their review of their codes based on the NEWB guidelines (Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools, 2008), we perceive the relevance of our work with behaviour will have wider, or more general, application into the future.

Much recognition and appreciation must go to the students accessing BSC support, the BSC teachers and the principals of the 36 schools where this research took place. With the support and guidance of their teachers, the students took on the personal challenge of adapting or changing their behaviour to improve their learning and overall school experience and in so doing, the teaching and learning experiences of their classmates and teachers. The BSC teachers have collectively shown true professionalism and unquestionable dedication in their work with their students through their shared dialogue as a group of educators and their willingness to independently explore, adapt and evaluate different programmes, strategies and methodologies to meet the needs of their students. The effectiveness of this type of intensive individualised intervention is dependent not only upon the ethos underpinning the work but the ethos of the school as an organisation and the quality of the relationships amongst the key stakeholders. As such, the high level of support for the BSCs from the 36 principals was key to enabling positive attitudes to learning at a whole school level.

Mary Keane
National Coordinator | National Behaviour Support Service
Executive Summary

Introduction

This research study is an evaluation of the establishment, evolution and on-going work undertaken from 2007 to 2009 in 36 post-primary schools participating in the Behaviour Support Classroom (BSC) intervention run by the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS). Drawing upon the Learning Support Unit model in the United Kingdom, the NBSS BSC intervention is the first in Ireland to implement this level of positive behaviour support in post-primary schools.

Forming part of the three levels of the NBSS Model of Support, the BSCs are one of a number of elements that comprise a strategy to enable and encourage whole school communities to embrace and implement evidence-based approaches and methodologies to create and sustain positive teaching and learning environments. As espoused by the NBSS (see section 1.3), within a whole school approach to positive teaching and learning (Level 1), provisions are in place for those students who require additional support in order to enhance their experience of education both in the short-term and in the long-term (Level 2 and Level 3, including Behaviour Support Classrooms).

As well as offering support to the minority of students who persistently present disruptive behaviour within mainstream classrooms, a BSC theoretically can provide a model of effective personalised learning and teaching strategies that could be disseminated and replicated in all classrooms throughout the school.

The following report draws primarily upon data collected during the academic year 2008/2009. The findings presented are informed by preliminary internal NBSS research (2007/2008) with which, where possible, comparisons are drawn in order to identify developments or continued trends in the programme across the two years.

A mixed method approach was used in the current study including a range of instruments to capture both quantitative and qualitative data. The study was made possible by the participation of students, BSC staff, principals and NBSS personnel working with the BSC staff. Included amongst the general aims of the study were to explore:

1. The characteristics of the participating schools, including: student enrolment, staff, geographical location, socio-economic catchment area, additional resources and provision available to each school in terms of learning and behavioural support.
2. The nature and degree of the challenging behaviour experienced in and identified by each school.
3. The range of alternative strategies and interventions that have, and continue to be used in each of the schools.

Key findings:
1. Overview of International and National Findings
2. Models of Staffing and Support
3. Students
4. Literacy
5. BSC Implementation
Conclusion
4. The criteria and procedures each school has established for student referral to BSCs.

5. The policies and methodologies each school has developed for monitoring progress within the BSCs and reintegration from BSCs to mainstream classrooms.

6. The pedagogical methodologies and specific strategies selected for use in each BSC.

7. The academic (including literacy) needs of referred students prior to their attendance in the BSC.

8. The extent to which additional internal and external supports (including psychological assessments) are available to referred students.

9. The extent to which the intervention positively affects students’ educational experience.

10. Students’ attitudes towards school and themselves as learners in school both prior to and during the intervention.

Key Findings

1. Overview of International and National Findings

International literature on Social, Emotional and Behaviour Difficulties (SEBD) (Jack et al., 1996; Montague & Rinaldi, 2001; Panacek & Dunlop, 2003; Sutherland & Wehby, 2001a) reports that children with these difficulties frequently undergo, from an early stage, negative experiences of education because they:

- Have few positive interactions with teachers.
- Receive less praise from teachers.
- Face obstacles (for a variety of reasons) in forming strong social networks with their peers.

Over time the child may be increasingly aware that within the school community they are perceived in a negative light, thereby the development of their self-esteem is affected, resulting in further alienation and marginalisation from the school community. In defining how schools can encourage positive behaviour, The Scottish Executive (2001) stated that:

Children and young people should learn in an environment which offers well-judged praise and recognition of achievement, and which looks for and focuses on their strengths, takes them seriously and shows a genuine interest in them (p. 9).

More specifically, Sproson (2004) states that a Behaviour Support Classroom (LSU in the United Kingdom) is an intervention comprised of “rigorous learning” that “supports pupils in mastering the challenge of school and raises their self-esteem and motivation in a caring and positive atmosphere” (p. 169).
An overview of the findings of this study indicates that the work being done in the BSCs has helped many students to better meet the challenges of school that had, prior to the intervention, proved impossible for these young people to address. The attention and time that BSC teachers gave to the explicit teaching of learning behaviour skills, social and emotional skills, curricular materials and literacy would suggest that the BSCs are very much centres of ‘rigorous learning’.

2. Models of Staffing and Support

At the initiation of the BSC programme, the Department of Education and Skills provided each school with a material grant of €10,000 for the initial outfit of the BSC and subsequently a €2,000 grant for social and emotional, mathematical and literacy resources. In 2007/2008, NBSS personnel reported that 83.9% (N=26) of existing BSCs (totaling 31 at that time) had physical properties that facilitated the support work being done in the schools. However, it was reported that adequate resources were not in place in a number (16.1% [N=5]) of the classrooms in that year.

Over the course of the second year (2008/2009), it is clear that to a great extent this situation has been rectified with staff in the 36 BSCs reporting that generally resources are, at the very least, adequate for the work that they do. Additional important resources, identified primarily through the development or emergence of needs as the work evolves over time, have been highlighted in this report and will require consideration both by the NBSS and the managements of the schools in question.

In terms of BSC staffing and staff contact time, in 2007/2008 schools reported a range of different models. Contrary to international best practice recommending two fully qualified teachers in the classroom (Hayward, 2002), over a third (38.7% [N=12]) of the schools employed 4 to 8 staff in the BSC with a range of contact times – the maximum being between 9 to 16 hours per week. It is clear from the data submitted in 2008/2009 that staffing and time allocations have become more standardised across the schools (as recommended in the NBSS publication Behaviour Support Classroom Best Practice Guidelines [2008]). For example, in the majority of schools (50.0% [N=18]), the BSC is staffed by two post-primary teachers. Of the remainder, 17 (47.2%) have three timetabled members of staff, and only one school (2.8%) allocated four teachers to the Behaviour Support Classroom.

Qualitative data from the preliminary research (2007/2008) demonstrated that there was no consensus amongst BSC teachers as to the merits of having a full contact timetable in the classroom. This would be borne out with the findings of this study that show that half of the BSCs employ a full timetable model, whilst others have a range of different allocations.

The benefits (and/or detriments) of the full timetable model, from the perspective of teachers’ views of their ability to conduct work in the BSC, their own professional development and job satisfaction, as well as whether this has any tangible effect on the progress students make over the course of the intervention, would be an aspect of the programme that could be investigated in more depth in the future. Data provided by some teachers also indicate that in addition to their Level 3 work, they have been involved and/or conducted Level 1 and Level 2 work, allowing for the sharing across the school of the methods and approaches to developing positive learning behaviours used in the BSC.

Following from a consideration of teachers’ full-time or part-time presence in the classroom, the model of student attendance in the BSC was additionally a variable that was measured both in the preliminary research and in this study. McSherry (2004), in identifying the key aspects of an effective Learning Support Unit, includes students’ “continued attendance at successful lessons” (p. 5), whilst receiving individualised behaviour support. Data from the preliminary research revealed that almost a third (32.3%) of BSCs initially had operated a full-time attendance model with their students, although little information was provided about how this was applied and its efficacy.

Nevertheless, the findings from the preliminary study supported international research that in most cases part-time attendance with a gradual reintegration worked most effectively. Hence, during the second year of the BSC programme, a shift took place in terms of student attendance models with only a small percentage (5.6% [N=2]) employing full-time attendance. Most BSCs now implement a part-time attendance model. The qualitative data suggest that decision-making about attendance has become more flexible. Based on the evidence they collect, BSC staff assess and address the particular
needs of each individual young person when developing a programme of work in the BSC.

3. Students
In terms of the number of students who attended a BSC during the academic year 2008/2009, it was reported that across the schools the total was 648. The average number of students who attended a BSC across the schools was 18 (this compares to a mean of 12.4 students in 2007/2008). By gender, the 2008/2009 cohort was approximately one-third female (34.6%) and two-thirds male (65.4%). In terms of year groups, Junior Cycle students accounted for 96.9% of the cohort, with 2nd year students predominant at 40.4%. Of the Senior Cycle students who attended the BSC, the majority (N=16) were in 5th Year and accounted for 2.5% of the overall total of students in 2008/2009.

BSC teachers were asked to indicate if they had identified any particular educational patterns or difficulties across their students. The majority of respondents stated that they had, citing most frequently literacy, difficult home circumstances, attendance, numeracy and special educational needs.

4. Literacy
There is a lengthy history of research studies providing evidence that academic problems promote, or at least exacerbate behavioural problems (Byrne & Smyth, 2010; Miles & Stipek, 2006; Martela, Marchand-Martela, 2002; Trzniewski et al., 2006; Verdugo & Schneider, 1999). A particularly critical, albeit not unanticipated, finding from both the preliminary and the current study was the extent of the difficulties these students experience with reading.

Through analyses of chronological and reading ages of students (submitted to the NBSS) who have attended BSCs, it emerged that 5.2% were reading at or above their chronological ages and over three quarters of the students, according to their reading assessments, were reading three or more years below their chronological ages. These findings present a somewhat worrying view of these young people’s past and current experiences in the educational system, and how their day-to-day encounters with curricular tasks may impact not only on their educational progress, but also on their self-esteem and beliefs in their self-efficacy.

Since the dissemination of similar findings from the preliminary study, the data from the current research indicate that additional work and resources were invested by NBSS and BSC staff in 2008/2009 to address the literacy and learning needs of many of the students. Examples include the increase in number of BSC teachers requesting reading assessments of students; additional funding for literacy and learning resources; NBSS literacy and learning in-service training and publication of teacher and student resources; school-based literacy and learning action research projects and the additional time allocated in the weekly timetable for literacy and study skills work.

5. BSC Implementation
The Behaviour Support Classroom Best Practice Guidelines (produced by the NBSS in 2008) supports the international literature (Hayward, 2002; McSherry, 2004, 2005; Ofsted, 2006; Sproson, 2004; Thompson, 2000) in stipulating that there should be clear criteria and procedures in place for evidence-based referrals to a BSC. The preliminary study found that during the first year of the programme many of the schools had developed systematic procedures for the referral process. Less clear was the degree to which these procedures were evidence-based – i.e. the extent to which student profiling was completed systematically for all students referred to the BSC.

Similarly, that research found that while specific procedures for referrals existed and could be articulated, the criteria for the selection of students were less clear. It was recommended that, as the BSC is the third level of behaviour support in a school, it is essential for all schools to clearly identify, document and disseminate the nature and degrees of disruptive behaviour that warrant this intervention (as opposed to an alternative programme), and that these are understood by all members of the school community. The preliminary study concluded that with the support of the NBSS, BSC staff should continue in their efforts to encourage their colleagues within their schools to complete adequate student profiling for all students identified as most likely to benefit from the support.

The NBSS Best Practice Guidelines reflect these recommendations in that clear direction is provided to schools and BSC staff on the documentation that must be completed for each student prior to and following attendance in the Behaviour Support Classroom.
Classroom. The data from the current study would indicate that schools have become more methodical in referral procedures and assessments with student profiling drawing upon a range of different sources of information, including the subject teachers who work with a particular student. Based on the data provided, the majority of schools would appear to have effective, systematic procedures for this preliminary stage of the intervention. However, in places there continues to be periodically inadvertent inconsistencies or gaps, and some instances whereby systems are by-passed to accommodate needs that have been perceived as particularly unique or critical.

In its guidance on pre-entry procedures, the Best Practice Guidelines states that a “Student Behaviour Plan (SBP) is completed and agreed with student, parent/guardian and communicated to relevant staff”. The preliminary research found that during 2007/2008, while the majority of BSCs had a procedure to draw up some type of plan, there was little evidence about the nature or consistency of this documentation. It was recommended that the NBSS should have the ability to work in a more concentrated manner with schools to facilitate and ensure the creation of evidence-based SPBs for all students enrolled in the BSCs in order to appropriately address students’ needs.

With the publication of the Best Practice Guidelines (containing a SBP template) and through relevant in-service training, the thorough preparation of SBPs seems to have become more consistent across the schools – the data from the current study indicating that 94.4% of the BSCs complete SBPs for every student receiving the intervention. It would also appear from the data that this process is increasingly informed by the data collected as part of the referral procedure, as well as through discussion with the particular student.

The preliminary research found that there had been on-going experimentation during the first year of the programme with regard to the balance of academic and behavioural/social skills instruction that had taken place in the BSCs. In its 2006 review of LSUs, Ofsted stated that to be effective LSUs should ensure that:

- strategies for improving learning are given equal weight to those for improving pupil’s behaviour and attendance; teaching and curriculum programmes help pupils to develop their literacy skills; pupils and mainstream teachers are prepared well for reintegrating pupils from the LSU and well-developed procedures are in place for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the LSU (p.4).

The findings from this study of the BSC programme suggest that achieving the balance between academic and behavioural/social skills instruction can still be challenging for staff. However, it would appear that the most effective strategies employed have been those that set out to teach social and learning behaviour skills through the mainstream curriculum.

Directly related to the issue of curricular balance in the BSC, is the difficulty some BSC staff have experienced in obtaining adequate resources and information from their colleagues for the delivery of mainstream curricular subjects. Half of the BSC staff that participated in the current study reported that few or none of their colleagues automatically provide them with the materials they need to ensure that students are not at a disadvantage academically when they reintegrate. Typically, in these cases, requisite texts, materials and assessment guidance must be sought out from colleagues. Bearing in mind the scope of the work that BSC teachers are undertaking with their students as well as the importance of ensuring that students are not placed at an educational disadvantage, it would be beneficial for steps to be taken to bridge this gap in those schools where there are difficulties gaining mainstream support and resources.

The final phase of the BSC intervention is the student’s reintegration into mainstream classes. The NBSS Best Practice Guidelines describe reintegration as “the fundamental goal of any Behaviour Support Classroom”. McSherry (2004) states that key to successful reintegration are: the setting of clear exit criteria “agreed prior to the intervention” (p. 34) and careful planning with the student’s view taken into account.

The 2007/2008 preliminary study of the BSC programme found that reintegration in many of the schools at the end of the first year could be described as a ‘work in progress’. At that time it was unclear whether any of the schools were engaged in the level of criteria identification and
planning that McSherry recommends. In terms of reintegration procedures in that period, over half of the schools (58.1%) were reported to have clear procedures developed and implemented for the reintegration process.

Based on the data collected for the current study, it would seem that the area of reintegration, as an element of the intervention, has improved with the majority of respondents reporting that not only are clear criteria and procedures for reintegration in place, but they are also being consistently used in the schools. While a great deal of work has been done within schools to resolve the difficulties encountered with reintegration in the first year, there remain problematic issues. These would include:

- Unrealistic expectations of change held by members of the school community which can (and do) descend into negativity.
- Recidivism and/or re-referrals for Level 3 support.
- Students’ difficulties consistently translating the skills they have acquired during the intervention across all learning environments.
- Due to their concern for the latter, the risk that BSC teachers will become over-stretched in the effort to provide long-term Level 2 support to their students whilst providing intensive support to newly referred young people.

Generally speaking, the model of reintegration that has developed across the 36 BSC schools could be described as gradual, phased, flexible and supportive. The majority of respondents (BSC staff, principals and NBSS personnel) reported that in 2008/2009 some or most of the students had reintegrated successfully after working in the BSC. Perhaps one could assert that alongside the development that has taken place in the schools during the two years of more transparent and systematic procedures related to the intervention, is an evolution in the manner in which ‘reintegration’ is conceptualised. Sproson’s (2004) research indicates that there is no clear evidence that this type of short-term, intensive intervention manages to “cure” students and move them back away from the need for support (p. 173).

Thus, it may be more appropriate to define ‘reintegration’ in a broader, more flexible manner to better respond to the specific strengths, abilities and circumstances of each student. Hence, measuring the ‘success’ of reintegration in terms of the extent to which BSC students are fully reintegrated into mainstream classes after a period of support may be counterproductive and limiting. While it is clear that additional effort will need to be invested in a number of schools to continue embedding good practice with respect to reintegration procedures, the evidence shows that planning and support for reintegration (see 4.7) undertaken by BSC teachers in most schools is extensive, thoughtfully implemented and consistently informed by the specific needs of the student. The data collected for this study show that the planning, resources and time required to undertake this additional element of support prove extensive, and to some degree are either minimally acknowledged or tacitly assumed.

**Conclusion**

Particularly because of the quality of the work that is being undertaken in the BSCs, it is essential that the intervention is not regarded or measured as a ‘quick fix’ or add-on for a complex and recurring issue that exists in many schools in Ireland. The intervention proves the necessity for addressing behavioural issues in a respectful, systemic and developmental manner.

What is clear from the data gathered in this study is that over the course of the two years, Behaviour Support Classroom teachers – by building and developing communication channels, modelling positive support methodologies, actively teaching academic literacy skills and explicitly teaching social and emotional skills – have been successful to varying degrees in bringing about an alteration in how ‘change’ is defined within school communities with respect to behaviour.
In his review of post-primary educational provision across Europe, Kallen (1997) emphasises the increasing centrality and importance of secondary education. He relates this increase to statutory compulsion to receive an education: “...it is now for all adolescents – and no longer for just many of them – an obligatory stage in their educational career and the one that is most consequential for their later life” (p. 9). Compulsory education (or, in some cases, compulsory schooling) has formed part of the socio-legislative framework in Europe since the 19th century.

The introduction in the Republic of Ireland of free secondary education in 1967 and the ratification of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 (raising the legal school leaving age from 15 to 16 years, and/or the equivalent of three full years of second level education) illustrates how educational obligation currently manifests in Irish law. Pursuant to Article 28(b) UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the legislation in Ireland reflects the country’s commitment to ensuring that all children are provided access to the educational opportunities that will enable them to “…enjoy a fulfilling childhood and realise their potential” (National Children’s Strategy, 2000, p. 5).

While European compulsory secondary education legislation has been defended as yielding invaluable contributions to society as a whole – politically, economically and culturally (OECD, 1983) – arguments against the extension or duration of the provision have been made. Included amongst these are those that concentrate primarily on inequitable educational outcomes associated with socio-economic strata and what could be described as related deficits of compulsory universal secondary schooling, i.e. absenteeism, early school leaving and disruptive behaviour in schools (Kallan, p. 44).

While Wearmouth and Glynn (2004) acknowledge that challenging behaviour has increasingly become the focus of attention since the development of compulsory education in the United Kingdom (1870), they argue that behaviour in schools has a historical basis, noting its recognition as an issue in English public schools as far back as the 17th century.
Nevertheless, over the course of the 19th and early-20th centuries, policy-makers, in an effort to address the perceived difficulties of universal educational access, created separate facilities for those children whose behaviour within schools was categorised as “maladjusted” (Wearmouth & Glynn, p. 2).

In the latter half of the 20th century, the UK reflected the developments made in this area across Europe in its legislation. The Warnock Report (1978) argued not only the case for integration, as opposed to segregation, but also that Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) be seen as a Special Educational Need (SEN) and, therefore, addressed accordingly.

Integration, or the aspiration to develop more inclusive societies, has led to efforts in most countries to open up ‘mainstream schools’ to all children. In Ireland, the Education Act (1998) legislates that, amongst their responsibilities, schools “ensure that the educational needs of all students, including those with a disability or other special educational needs, are identified and provided for...” (Part II, ix[a]).

The definition, and subsequent provision for EBD (more recently termed Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties – SEBD) within schools has proved problematic over time. In 2001, the Scottish Executive Board, endeavouring to provide some clarity on SEBD, stated that students experiencing SEBD may “be unhappy, unwilling and/or unable to work; receive less praise for their work and have fewer positive child/adult interactions; have learning difficulties or be underachieving; have poor social skills and fewer friends; have low self-esteem; be emotionally volatile; be easily hurt” (Scottish Executive, 2001, para 2.14).

Typically, there has been a trend to characterise students with SEBD according to a deficit model – the difficulties defined as being intrinsic to the individual and/or their circumstances outside the school environment. A number of studies (Gonzales-DeHass et al., 2005; Mortimore et al., 1988; Rutter, 1983; Rutter & Maughan, 2002; Vissers, 2003) argue that those students’ behaviours that would be termed challenging or disruptive, are likely to be attributable to a range of factors, including the nature of the school and classroom environments.

Despite evidence that generally student behaviour in schools has not deteriorated in recent years (Achenbach et al., 2002; Ofsted, 2005; Hallam & Rogers, 2008; Steer, 2009), there is recognition that most schools experience some form of disruptive behaviour. The nature, causes, extent and severity of that disruptive behaviour vary across schools. Emanating from this acknowledgement is the response of governments, educators and stakeholders to address the issue of challenging behaviour in schools.

This report documents the implementation and development of one of a range of initiatives being piloted in Ireland – the Behaviour Support Classroom – to address the needs of secondary school students whose behaviour impedes their educational progress.
In July 2006 the Minister formally established the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) in response to the Task Force’s recommendations. It was indicated that the NBSS was an element of the wider framework of support being offered to schools with regard to behaviour. Such supports include the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the VEC Psychological Service, the National Educational Welfare Service (NEWB), as well as the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL), the School Completion Programme (SCP), the Visiting Teachers Service for Travellers (VTST) (each of which are under the NEWB since 2009), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), Department of Education and Skills Support Services and a variety of other services.

Comprising a National Co-ordinator, four Assistant National Co-ordinators, a team of Regional Development Officers, a Literacy Development Officer, a Research and Development Officer and other professionals, the NBSS’s brief was to provide support to those schools experiencing persistent and serious disruptive student behaviour through the identification of needs on a macro and micro level within the schools and the development and implementation of strategies to address those needs. The NBSS bases its approach on the view that a young person can learn to improve her or his behaviour if provided with adequate support and by so doing can experience success in the classroom and in school.

By January 2007 a total of 124 schools had applied for the service – almost 20% of second level schools in Ireland. In terms of applications 58 VEC (Vocational Education) schools, 44 Voluntary Secondary schools, 20 Community or Comprehensive Schools and two Special Schools made formal requests for the service.1 From the schools that applied, 50 (40.3%) were identified as those that would benefit most from immediate intensive support to commence the academic year 2007/2008. In September 2008, the number of schools receiving NBSS support was increased from the original 50 schools to 62, with that number rising to 73 schools (58.9% of the original applicants) during the academic year 2009/2010.

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1 In Ireland the second level sector comprises secondary, vocational, community and comprehensive schools. All of these schools provide the Certificate courses prescribed by the Department of Education and Skills, enter their students for the same national examinations, and are subject to inspection by the Department.
1.3 The NBSS Model of Support

Fundamental to its vision\(^2\) as a support service, the NBSS strives to help schools to create and maintain positive teaching and learning environments. In so doing, the NBSS has drawn upon international research (Bonhanon \etal\., 2006; Carr \etal\., 2002; Hawken & Horner, 2000; Lewis & Sugai, 1999) to develop the following model of support it provides to partner schools.

Informed by the international models, the on-going evidence-based work of the NBSS and the existing good practice in partner schools, the NBSS offers schools three levels of support with respect to behaviour:

- **Level 1**: Whole School Support
- **Level 2**: Targeted Intervention
- **Level 3**: Intensive Individualised Intervention.

Hence, the nature of behavioural support offered is comprised of three levels depending on the particular needs of the partner schools. The three levels of support that form the NBSS model are customised to the specific characteristics, needs and requirements of each partner school on an ongoing basis as change occurs.

For example, all schools receive Level 1: Whole School Support – this involves positive behaviour support that highlights effective work done in a school as well as developing and disseminating evidence-based good practice, identifying the behavioural issues adversely affecting the teaching and learning environments in a school and working with management and staff members to address these issues.

Supported by international research and practice (the Birmingham Framework, Solution Oriented Schools, Whole School Positive Behavior in Schools) and philosophically-grounded in the view that positive teaching and learning behaviours are dependent on the nature of the organisation as a whole, the NBSS advocates a whole school approach – in this instance defined as working with schools on vision, systems, structures, policies and practices.

The second level of support the NBSS provides to partner schools is described as Targeted Intervention behaviour support. This level of support involves working with specific groups of students and/or the teachers of particular groups of students.
students that collectively present behaviours that impede teaching and learning in the classroom. The work involves developing, implementing and monitoring programmes and approaches to address students’ needs; offering opportunities for teachers to explore alternative methodologies; introducing effective social/behavioural materials and encouraging the continuous professional development of staff.

Level 2 targeted interventions to date have included work on respect; rules and routines; rewards and consequences; organisational skills; self-esteem; motivation and peer conflicts. Depending on the nature of the intervention and the views of the school staff, the NBSS work at Level 2 consists either of supporting teachers as they conduct the intervention themselves or co-operatively partnering teachers in the classroom. Throughout the duration of Level 2 interventions, NBSS personnel work with staff to establish and implement methods to monitor and evaluate student progress and to measure the degree to which behavioural outcomes are achieved. The NBSS assists teachers in developing the methods and materials that will best serve the needs of students as they engage in the Level 2 work.

Key to the third level of the NBSS model, Intensive, Individualised behaviour support is that the work undertaken is tailored specifically to the unique needs of the individual student. This level of support is offered to the small number of students who, notwithstanding whole school behaviour support and targeted interventions, continue to experience difficulty. Level 3 support is provided for students who typically demonstrate a range of challenging behaviours in school in areas such as social skills; relationships with adults and peers; absenteeism; consistent concentration and attention difficulties. In many instances these are students who are frequently at risk of suspension and, in some cases, exclusion. Students who may benefit from Intensive, Individualised behaviour support are those whose classroom behaviour not only hinders their own educational progress but which may also impede that of their peers. In the 36 schools under consideration in this research study, the third level of NBSS behavioural support is provided through full-time Behaviour Support Classrooms.

...students who typically demonstrate a range of challenging behaviours in school in areas such as social skills; relationships with adults and peers; absenteeism; consistent concentration and attention difficulties...

1.4 NBSS Behaviour Support Classrooms

In proposing a continuum of provision to address the needs of students and ensure that schools become, and continue to be, effective and positive teaching and learning environments, the Task Force recommended that “schools with a high intake of difficult students should have a Behaviour Support Classroom” (p.144). The report stipulates that Behaviour Support Classrooms (BSCs) are not being proposed as an intervention for all schools, but rather “located in those schools that cater, on a regular basis, for numbers of students whose behaviour is unsupportable within the confines of a mainstream classroom” (p. 144).

Schools, in applying for support from the NBSS were offered the opportunity to additionally request the
In the school year 2010-2011, only qualified post-primary teachers will be employed in Behaviour Support Classrooms. Of the 124 schools that initially applied for NBSS support, 94 (76%) indicated that they would benefit from the BSC intervention, comprising 45 VEC schools, 34 Voluntary Secondary schools and 15 Community or Comprehensive schools. From their applications it emerged that 25% of these schools were already operating some form of on-site provision, although the extent to which these were structured and run as recommended in School Matters (Section 2.1) is uncertain.

From those that requested BSCs, initially 31 (33%) schools, in geographically diverse areas were selected to commence the pilot of this behavioural intervention. The first NBSS BSC ‘opened’ – in the sense of students attending the classroom – in September 2007, followed by another 30 opening throughout the autumn term (2007) and early in 2008. In September 2008, five additional partner schools were allocated resources from the Department of Education and Skills to establish Behaviour Support Classrooms.

Supported by international research (Hayward, 2002; McSherry, 2004; Sproson, 2004) as well as from preliminary research findings in Ireland (Henefer, 2008), the NBSS advises that the BSC should be an integral part of a whole school approach to promoting positive behaviour. It should only be implemented as an intensive, short-term, individualised intervention for those students who consistently are unable to respond to alternative behavioural supports provided in their school. Staffed by fully qualified post-primary teachers and other suitably trained professionals, the NBSS recommends that ideally the BSC should be seen, across the whole school community as a centre of “rigorous learning” (Sproson, 2004, p. 169).

The purpose of this report is to document and assess the first stage of the pilot NBSS BSC intervention based on research conducted from April 2008 to August 2009. Chapter 2 presents an overview of the national and international literature concerning this model of on-site provision for students with persistent disruptive behaviour. Themes and issues of relevance to the continued operation of BSCs in Ireland, emerging from international studies in the United Kingdom and North America will be highlighted. Chapter 3 describes the Research Design and Methods that were employed to monitor and evaluate the intervention. Chapter 4 presents the findings from the range of data collection instruments employed for this study. This report concludes with a discussion of the findings from this first stage of the BSC research in Chapter 5, as well as recommendations for ways in which the NBSS and partner schools can work in forthcoming years to refine and develop this behavioural intervention for the benefit of both students individually and for their school communities as a whole.

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3 In the school year 2010-2011, only qualified post-primary teachers will be employed in Behaviour Support Classrooms.
In conducting a literature review about this particular type of on-site provision for children and young people whose social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties require intensive individual support, a variety of terms are used to define the intervention (including “support classroom”; “learning support unit”; “EBD classroom” and “self-contained, on-site classroom”).

Nevertheless, increasingly there exists a wide range of studies investigating different elements of BSCs, including issues related to staffing and qualifications; the timetabling of academic and behavioural curricula; literacy and numeracy; teaching methodologies within the support classroom; procedures for student reintegration; the ethics of inclusive education; social networks and teachers’ continued professional development. While the research reviewed in this research study is predominantly international (UK and US), it is of value to first outline how the Task Force initially perceived the BSC intervention in an Irish context.

Additionally, the Task Force stipulated that schools allocated resources for BSCs must have a consistent whole school approach in place and that all members of the school community are clear about the functions of the provision…

2.1 Behaviour Support Classroom as Defined by the Task Force

The Task Force based their findings on an audit of international models of BSCs as well as from consultation with those professionals with established experience operating this type of support. While recommending this as an intervention on their continuum of provision, the Task Force emphasised that BSCs should only be set up in schools that have “a genuine need for them” (p. 102). These are defined as those schools that consistently have on roll significant numbers of challenging students. The report states that BSCs should not be seen as or used as ‘sin bins’ and that attendance should be short-term and part-time (p.101).

Additionally, the Task Force stipulated that schools allocated resources for BSCs must have a consistent whole school approach in place and that all members of the school community are clear about the functions of the provision (p.102).

The report states that students should not be referred to the BSC until all steps of the ladder of
Evaluating Educational Inclusion – Guidance for Inspectors and Schools (2000), the UK Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) define educationally inclusive schools as:

- in which the teaching and learning, achievements, attitudes and well-being of every young person matter.
- Effective schools are educationally inclusive schools. This shows, not only in their performance, but also in their ethos and their willingness to offer new opportunities to pupils who may have experienced previous difficulties. This does not mean treating all pupils in the same way. Rather it involves taking account of pupils’ varied life experiences and needs (p. 7).

The concept of ‘inclusive education’, in which all schools must provide education for all children and young people, has informed the development of policies and practices in the United Kingdom (Skidmore, 2004). The UK National Curriculum sets forward in its statutory inclusion statement that in offering an inclusive curriculum for all students schools must “set suitable learning challenges; respond to pupils’ diverse learning needs; overcome potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils”. More particularly, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act of 2001, Part 1 (summarised by the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education in 2002) fortified the entitlements of individuals with Special Educational Needs (SENs) to gain access to mainstream education. Additionally, as part of the effort to ensure educational inclusion, attention has been given to improving school attendance, behaviour in schools and reducing the number of permanent exclusions throughout the UK. The Social Exclusion Unit reported that:

- a prisoner is 10 times more likely to have been a regular truant and five times more likely to have been excluded in school in comparison with the general population (Margrave, 2002, p.2).

The Behaviour and Discipline Pilot Projects (1996-1999) and the Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiative (March 1999) were established by the UK Department of Education and Employment (now the UK Department for Education and Skills) as pro-active methods to achieve inclusive education with particular attention to children and young people who were experiencing difficulties in mainstream schools.

### 2.2 International Research

#### 2.2.1 Inclusive Education

In Evaluating Educational Inclusion – Guidance for Inspectors and Schools (2000), the UK Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) define educationally inclusive schools as one in which the teaching and learning, achievements, attitudes and well-being of every young person matter. Effective schools are educationally inclusive schools. This shows, not only in their performance, but also in their ethos and their willingness to offer new opportunities to pupils who may have experienced previous difficulties. This does not mean treating all pupils in the same way. Rather it involves taking account of pupils’ varied life experiences and needs (p. 7).

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Effective schools are educationally inclusive schools....

it involves taking account of pupils’ varied life experiences and needs...
2.2.2 Whole School Systems for Positive Behaviour Improvement

The research shows that as the discourse evolved from educational segregation to inclusivity, the perception of what constitutes the appropriate response to, and provision for, students’ needs (educational, social, emotional and/or behavioural) also proceeded from a fixation on the ‘deficits’ of the individual to a recognition that the school as an organisation and community plays a vital role in determining the nature of both collective and individual behaviours (Rutter et al., 1979; DES, 1989; Griffin & Shevlin, 2007). By acknowledging that behaviour is determined by a range of variables, both within and outside the physical premises of the school itself, it becomes clear that a multi-faceted approach to challenging behaviour is called for. Watkins and Wagner (1995), in delineating a whole school approach to behaviour state that responding to students’ behaviour:

- may involve thinking about and intervening on almost every aspect of the way the school is run. This may include:
  - ... pupil behaviour (that is learning and social behavior, individually and in groups);
  - ... teacher behaviour (such as approaches to managing classrooms, styles of responding to difficulties, and so on);
  - and ... school behaviour (such as the style of the organisation and how it typically responds when difficulties or concern are raised). (p. 55).

Through its programme Social Justice: A Scotland Where Everyone Counts (initiated in 1999), the Scottish Executive Education Department provided resources to education authorities to reduce the number of exclusions from schools. Head, Kane and Cogan (2004) analysed the range of behaviour supports employed by one education authority (21 secondary schools) over a three-year period, which was funded by the scheme. While the most widespread strategy adopted by the participating schools was student withdrawal from mainstream classrooms, for small group or individual work with a behaviour support teacher team teaching (“co-operative teaching”, p. 46) was identified by teachers as the most effective strategy.

Co-operative teaching consisted of behaviour support teachers working alongside subject teachers to develop both the curriculum and methodologies to improve students’ access to learning. The authors conclude that in this case, a reduction in school exclusion rates is attributable to a system of behaviour support that entails “the development of ethos, curriculum and pedagogies better to provide for diversity” (p.47) encapsulating what O’Brien (1998) defines as a “collective school consciousness”.

The critical value of whole school systems for positive behaviour improvement as the bedrock for specific behavioural support interventions, is reiterated in the literature specifically dedicated to the assessment of the English equivalent to the BSC, Learning Support Units (LSUs). In their longitudinal qualitative study of 20 EiC LSUs, Wilkin, Hall and Kinder (2003) found that LSU personnel held the view that this provision should not be seen as a “universal panacea” (p. 79), but as part of “an umbrella of support” (p. 27) across the school communities as a whole.

Similarly, the EiC guidelines for LSUs state that one end product of the initiative is that within a school there is “… evidence of improvements, likely to be long lasting, that have been made at a whole school systems’ level” (McSherry, 2004, p. 3). Most recently, the UK Department for Education and Skills in Guidance for Establishing and Managing Primary and Secondary Learning Support Units (LSUs) (2005) sets forth as the first criteria of an effective LSU that:

- it is part of the whole school policy and strategy for behaviour for learning and inclusion. This should be designed following consultation and participation with appropriate stakeholders, which could include governors, all school staff, pupils and parent/carers. Appropriate tools such as a behaviour audit and reference to ECM 7 will assist this process.

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7 “Every Child Matters: Change for Children” (http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/)
In conducting their research School Attendance, Truancy and Exclusion, Kinder, Wakefield and Wilkin (1998) assessed strategies that were employed in 40 schools to address issues of student disaffection. Within that study, an evaluation was conducted of new initiatives that had been implemented in schools with ‘Grants for Educational Support and Training’ (GEST [1994]) funding. Amongst these was the ‘Within School Units’ initiative. As of 1998, the authors found that there was a great deal of diversity across the models adopted by the schools associated with the perceived purpose of the intervention. The operational procedures for each unit were dependent on what Kinder, Wakefield and Wilkin define as the Unit’s ethos or “value system” and “…whether its underlying purpose was ultimately to support and protect staff and other pupils (and maintain the school discipline system), or to assist pupils whose behaviour was a recognisable ‘special’ need” (p. 37). Schools subscribing to the latter view tended to implement procedures for part-time attendance over longer time periods with activities related to behaviour and learning support with trained staff.

Subsequently, Hallam and Castle (1999) conducted an investigation of 50 GEST projects, including the piloting of “in-school centres for pupils at risk of exclusion” (p. 1). While the authors likewise found that there was variation across projects, in-school centres did have an impact on exclusion rates and were 30-40% less costly than funding educational provision off-site for excluded students. Amongst their main research findings, Hallam and Castle stated that:

The success of the individual projects did not depend upon any specific type of implementation, but on the extent to which all staff in the school became committed to the project. This subsequently led to long-term change in the school as a whole... Successful in-school centres were characterised by the existence of an appropriately staffed, physically separate centre; the adoption of an approach which combined withdrawal of pupils with support for them within normal classes and flexibility in the provision of support (pp. 2,3).

Drawing upon the research evidence of best practice in ‘Within School Units’, the then Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) allocated resources to introduce Learning Support Units to schools in the Excellence in City (EiC) initiative. As part of the effort to achieve inclusive education, the DfEE established the EiC initiative in March 1999. It set out to improve the attainment of students in schools located in the most deprived cities, towns and villages in England.

Implemented in 1,300 second level schools and 3,600 primary schools the initiative, through substantial financial investment and support in developing new classroom methodologies, aimed to impact the educational experiences and outcomes of students defined as disadvantaged. The introduction of LSUs in English schools was a result of the EiC initiative. The Department for Education and Skills (DFE) defines LSUs as:
Draw upon the range of evaluations that have been conducted on Learning Support Units over the past decade (Hallam & Castle, 1999; Kinder & Wilkin, 1998; Ofsted, 2006; Wilkin, Hall, & Kinder, 2003; Steer, 2005), the DES, in its Guidance for Establishing and Managing Primary and Secondary Learning Support Units (LSUs) (2005), establishes the primacy of the core values of this form of support. At the outset of this document it states “LSUs have an ethos that promotes positive attitudes to learning and accepts each person as a unique individual capable of change” (p. 1).

The ongoing research on LSUs would support a number of Hallam and Castle’s findings (1999). The latter found, in terms of exclusion rates that the most effective model was that in which work was conducted on three levels, whole school, classroom and individual support. Emphasis was placed on the development over time of consistent communication and collaboration systems across the whole school. These systems served to better recognise those students who were in need of individual behavioural support, offered methodologies for establishing targets and monitoring progress, as well as disseminating developments and successful strategies throughout the school community.

The authors highlighted those pilots that, through the procedures put in place, had succeeded in laying the groundwork for fundamental change within their schools in this way:

*Successful projects changed practice, embedded the changes within the ethos of the school so that they became the norm.*

*This involved working on the basis of planned withdrawal. This was achieved by working with teachers enabling them to perpetuate and replicate the work, providing materials to be used after the completion of the project and changing understandings and attitudes towards pupil at risk of exclusion (p.3).*

According to the Department for Children, Schools and Families’ Standards website by July 2008 there were approximately 1,500 LSUs in England (the majority, but not all, in EiC schools) with approximately 120 of these in primary schools.
2.2.4.2 Recommendations for Good Practice

More recently, Hayward (2002) conducted a study of 64 primary and secondary EiC schools with LSUs. Extensive data collection included the use of semi-structured interviews with adults and students, the completion of written questionnaires by teachers and students, observation and case studies. She reported that across the 64 schools in her study, that students experienced improvement in self-confidence, behaviour, social skills and attendance. Progress in basic skills was made by most students and, in some cases, GCSE\(^9\) results benefitted from the intervention. Her analysis presented in Good Practice Guide – Learning Support Units (delivered in Microsoft Powerpoint), lists what she found to be the “critical success factors” for good practice in LSUs.\(^{10}\) These include the following:

- **Time for planning.**
- **Whole school understanding of the role and function of the LSU and of the staff.**
- **Regular whole school training and behaviour management practices, policies and systems.**
- **A positive whole school climate and ethos.**
- **Clear entry and exit criteria with an emphasis on reintegration.**
- **Reintegration policy and staffing to support its successful implementation.**
- **Clear, effective Line Management.**
- **Coherent whole school approaches to referrals, recording, action planning, communication and target setting.**
- **Suitably qualified and experienced full-time LSU managers and staff.** There needs to be two full-time teaching members of staff in the Unit in addition to support staff and access to Learning Mentors and mainstream staffing.
- **Access to training and network opportunities.**\(^{11}\)
- **Good family and multi-disciplinary understanding.**
- **Monitoring and evaluating systems and strategies.**

In addition to critical factors for success, Hayward also identified the “key barriers”, emerging from her data that inhibited the effectiveness of some LSUs in her sample. Included in these were the following:

- **Isolation from the main school and personal isolation.**
- **Returning students to teachers who are not prepared to adapt their teaching and curriculum approach to accommodate different pupils’ needs.**
- **Lack of clear criteria for entry and exit.**
- **‘Sin Bin’ facility and a host of unplanned referrals.**
- **Difficulty in recruiting suitably trained and experienced teachers and managers.**
- **Lack of support for reintegration.**
- **No whole school approach or consistency in dealing with behavioural difficulties.**

Hayward emphasises the critical necessity for whole school training and reiterates the need for at least two full-time teaching members of staff in the LSU with mainstream teachers additionally being given time to deliver aspects of the curriculum in the LSU. While her findings on the typical length of time students spend in the LSU vary, Hayward argues that “sessional” or part-time attendance has proven more successful with respect to students’ reintegration. Additionally she states that from her data it is clear that “flexible, part-time arrangements are preferable so pupils maintain contact with tutor groups, staff, classmates and curriculum”. In her sample, students generally attended the LSU for half a term (six weeks).

...typical length of time students spend in the LSU vary, Hayward argues that “sessional” or part-time attendance has proven more successful with respect to students’ reintegration...

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\(^9\) The General Certificate of Secondary Education is typically taken in a number of subject areas by students in Years 10 and 11 attending schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

\(^{10}\) While most authors provide recommendations for good practice in LSUs, there is an acknowledgement that there is “no blueprint for all” (Wilkin et al., 2003, p. 15), and that effective LSUs recognise and respond accordingly to the particular needs of both their schools and students.

\(^{11}\) Wilkin, Hall and Kinder (2003, p. 19-20) in their study of LSUs in EiC schools found that there was no co-ordinated national training programme for LSU personnel and that there was a view that staff’s continued professional development needed to be addressed both at a local and national level.
A Research Study of 36 Behaviour Support Classrooms

2.2.4.3 Reintegration

The consensus from the literature is that the fundamental, critical goal of any LSU intervention is the student’s full-time reintegration into all mainstream lessons. Hayward concludes her Good Practice Guide highlighting the factors, emerging from her data, that most assist successful reintegration. These include the following:

- Close cooperation and support from class teachers and pupils.
- A reintegration plan.
- There should be levels of reintegration identified (completely unsupported; completed supported; gradual support).
- Regular monitoring and tracking.
- If reintegration breaks down a review must be immediately undertaken.
- Contracts and targets.
- High expectations of improving work and good behaviour.
- Part reintegration.
- Realisation that no pupil returns ‘cured’ and may still need ongoing support and understanding.

Many of Hayward’s recommendations with respect to reintegration are supported by McSherry (2004; 2005). Drawing upon case studies written by a number of LSU teachers, McSherry argues that it is “vital that throughout the intervention pupils continue to attend those mainstream lessons where they are successful” (2004, pp. 35-36), and that the views of the student need to be taken into account particularly with respect to reintegration. She states that several elements of the procedure need to be carefully planned prior to reintegration. Included amongst these are the following aspects:

- To consider whether any aspects of the programme need to be continued, and how this can be done.
- To establish how and when will (sic) the pupil will be reintegrated, who will support it, and what needs to be done before it starts.
- To make the teachers aware that the pupil is returning.
- To make sure the pupil is clear about the process and the support available; and what to do if things go wrong.
- To make sure the parents are aware of the process and ways they could support their child (2005).

Evaluations of the EiC LSU project (Wilkin et al., 2003; Ofsted, 2006) highlight the complexity of issues related to reintegration and its successful outcomes. LSU staff found that reintegration was not formulaic in that the planning and implementation of the process worked best when it was aligned to the particular needs and circumstances of individual students.

Ofsted (2006, p.2) found that in almost 50% of the schools studied, reintegration was not successful for all students either because the students had not fully developed the skills they needed to learn in all mainstream subjects and/or because classroom teachers did not use, or were not aware of, the teaching strategies that would best support reintegrating students. Drawing upon the experience of 12 EiC LSUs, Ofsted concluded that reintegration was at risk when:

- Not all teaching staff were aware of the strategies used in the LSU to manage pupils’ behaviour and were unable to build on these approaches.
- Not all teaching staff welcomed pupils back to their classes.
- Some pupils stayed too long in the LSU and were unable to readjust to mainstream classes.
- Reintegrated pupils were not effectively supported or monitored on their return to mainstream classes (p. 8).

Similarly, Sproson (2004) echoes some of the issues raised above in describing his own efforts to evaluate LSUs in a particular London Educational Authority (LEA) in England. The difficulty in attempting to measure the tangible impact of the intervention on specific students as well as the impossibility of prescribing a generic, infallible reintegration model are highlighted in this way:

I have no evidence that any of this work has reduced the number of students requiring ‘education otherwise than at school’ (EOTAS), or that the days lost to exclusion has significantly reduced. Although the data collection exercise produced much that is positive, the evidence that LSUs have managed to ‘cure’ students and move them back away from the need for support within two terms is not clear… Well laid reintegration plans have rarely worked (p.173).
As part of its exploration of pupil behaviour in primary and secondary schools, the Steer Report (2005) evaluated the implementation and development of LSUs in England. While the report recommends the continued expansion of LSUs nationwide and highlighted evidence of effective procedures, the authors commented that “…we are concerned to note the variable quality of provision and that some inappropriate practice continues to exist” (p.80). Additionally the report, recognising the significant resourcing issues for schools not in receipt of EiC support to operate an LSU, observed that the sustainability of many LSUs may be uncertain once EiC funding ends.

In its recommendations, the authors state that “wherever possible, all secondary school pupils should have access to a LSU, either in their own school or elsewhere among the local partnerships of schools” (p.82). In follow-up assessments (2008; 2009) of the progress made in the proposed recommendations of the 2005 report, Steer reiterates the crucial role of teaching in this way:

Consistent high quality teaching is the single most important factor in raising standards... Much poor behaviour has its origins in the inability of the child to access learning, rather than as a result of an unchangeable character defect (pp. 42, 45).

Reviewing the 2005 report, Steer (2009) reasserted that it should be a requirement that all schools have a written learning and teaching policy (Recommendation 6, p. 34) to set forward each school’s core educational goals, methods and strategies. It is emphasised that while this instrument is not to be used as an alternative to a separate behaviour policy, it should be consistently reviewed in terms of its effect on student behaviour. Steer (2008) reported that in England the development and consistent implementation of learning and teaching policies has been erratic.

Similarly, both reviews of secondary level LSUs, (Ofsted 2003; 2006) highlight the critical association between teaching, learning and behaviour in schools. In 2003, Ofsted reported that while EiC LSUs were effective in terms of giving behavioural support to their students (with a subsequent decrease in exclusions), some could have done more to assist students in their learning (Wilkin et al., 2003, p. 3). In their 2006 report, the inspectors stated that to be effective LSUs should ensure that:

strategies for improving learning are given equal weight to those for improving pupil’s behaviour and attendance; teaching and curriculum programmes help pupils to develop their literacy skills; pupils and mainstream teachers are prepared well for reintegrating pupils from the LSU and well-developed procedures are in place for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the LSU (p.4).

Across the schools inspected, it was Ofsted’s view that the most effective LSUs were those in which teachers focused on helping students to improve their basic skills, particularly literacy. The report provides the following example of what the inspectors considered a very effective LSU:

There was a clear focus on the core subjects of the National Curriculum, with good resources and effective access to information and communication technology (ICT). The academic curriculum was given the same emphasis as the work done with pupils on their social, emotional and behavioural skills, and on improving their ability to learn. As a result pupils’ achievement, standards, personal development and well-being were good (p.4).

Ofsted found that many of the LSUs had assisted their students not only in terms of their academic achievement but also in developing their confidence and self-esteem through concerted work on improving literacy standards. Equally, work in the LSUs that was undertaken to help students to participate in and complete their public examinations were defined as positive in that the students’ academic progress was specifically and continuously valued.
2.3 North America

While the literature reviewed from the United Kingdom predominantly dealt with the evolving model of BSC (or LSU) support and assessments of systems, protocols and procedures that appear to be better than alternatives, the research emanating from North America is more multi-faceted.

Equally though, the concept of a Behaviour Support Classroom in these studies fluctuates and may not be as contextually analogous to the models initiated in Ireland as those in the United Kingdom. Literature from North America focuses on ‘EBD classrooms’ that vary in terms of models and procedures for attendance, curriculum and placement within mainstream schools. Nevertheless, the studies do provide evidence-based insights into a range of issues that would be pertinent to the development of BSCs in Ireland and are, therefore, of relevance to this study. In terms of the literature accessed, only one study was found, with the search terms used, from Canada. An English translation of this research was not available and so has not been included in this review.

In the United States, the Individual Disability Education Act (IDEA, 1997, 2005) includes emotional/behavioural difficulties as one of 12 disability categories defined as “a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree which adversely affects school performance: (a) an inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors, (b) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers, (c) inappropriate types of behaviour or feelings under normal circumstances, (d) a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression, (e) a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems” (Reddy & Richardson, 2006. p.379).

According to Crimmins and Farrell (2006), the aim of the IDEA was, similar to legislation in the United Kingdom, to guarantee that all children and young people had access to education in mainstream environments, both to ensure educational inclusion and to enhance the educational experiences and outcomes of students who are described as having disabilities. IDEA is described as a civil rights law in that its purpose is to safeguard the entitlements of individuals who have been defined as having disabilities to have the same access to educational opportunities as their peers.

Literature emerging from the United States in this area addresses the statistical record of progress of EBD (Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties) students over the past 40 years. Neel (2006), involved in the field of Special Education since the 1960s, presents a brief overview of provision for EBD students in the United States. During the 1960s EBD students were not able to attend public schools. From the early-1970s, these students were, in theory, entitled access to mainstream public schools. Neel states that from this point through to the 1990s the focus of work with EBD students was on developing assessment procedures and interventions specifically related to social behaviour. He takes a somewhat guarded view of the progress that has been made in this area, citing the professional and public discourses during the 1990s of the prevalence of challenging behaviour, as well as the increasing incidents of violence in schools. He offers the following observations:

> we know that many students with EBD aren’t in school. Three-quarters of them are suspended or expelled (Bradley, Henderson, & Monfore, 2004), and in 2000 less than 48 percent of them left school with a diploma (U.S. Department of Education, 2002)…We still are debating whom we are going to serve and how and where we will serve them. On the whole children with emotional and behavioral disorders are underrepresented (Kauffman, 2005). Yet while minorities, especially African American males, are overrepresented in classrooms for children with EBD, even with the increased attention given to gender issues females are underrepresented (Bradley, Henderson, & Monfore, 2004). Additionally, a majority of teachers in general and special classrooms report they feel inadequately prepared to teach the children they are assigned (Jones, Dohm, & Dunn, 2004; Sachs & Cheney, 2000) (p.533).
Tournaki and Criscitiello (2003) report that research in the United States has found that EBD students “... fail more courses, miss more school days, receive lower grades, are retained more in a grade level, and drop out at higher rates than any other disability group” (U.S. Department of Education, 1998, p.22). Ryan, Reid and Epstein (2004) concur, stating that research has shown that by the time EBD students attend high school they are academically 3.5 grade levels behind the mainstream (Coutinho, 1986), and that compared to all other groups, EBD students’ rate of graduation (41.9% compared to an overall figure of 86.5%) was significantly worse than other minority groups.

Gunter, Coutinho and Cade (2002) concur with this observation and add that up to five years after leaving school half of those students with EBDs were found not to have obtained meaningful employment nor were in a position to live on their own. This figure compares with one of 30% for students with learning disabilities three to five years after school.

A number of authors (Benner, Lane, & Nelson, 2004; Cereijo, Pemberton, & Tyler-Wood, 2004; Lane, 2007; Neel, 2006; Panacek & Dunlap, 2003; Ryan, Reid, & Epstein, 2004) indicate that traditionally the philosophy in the United States, to date, has been that EBD students’ academic outcomes would improve once inappropriate behaviours were modified. Thus, work in the EBD classroom has emphasised the teaching of the social skills, behaviour management, etc., at the expense of teaching academic skills and the curriculum. Wehby, Lane and Falk (2003) summarise the situation as follows:

As stated, the term emotionally disturbed refers to students whose educational achievement is adversely influenced by some type of inappropriate behavior. Unfortunately, it appears that the focus on inappropriate behaviors that affect achievement has led to an almost exclusive focus on behavior problems, with little attention given to the educational needs of this population (p. 194).

Neel (2006) reports that one-sixth of EBD classrooms in the United States teach no academic curriculum. In his evaluation of over 800 meta-analyses of the variables that affect student achievement in school, Hattie (2009) cites the survey of research conducted by Sabornie, Cullinan, Osborne and Brock (2005) that found of students “75 percent of those labeled learning disabled and 75 percent of those labeled as having mild intellectual disabilities surpassed the average student with emotional behavioural disabilities in achievement” (Hattie, 2009, p. 43). Benner, Lane and Nelson (2004) state that academically speaking, EBD students had achievement deficits of between 25% and 97%, and unlike students with learning disabilities, these deficits did not improve, and in many cases, worsened, over time.

The authors additionally indicate that during the last 30 years there have been 55 studies only of the use of academic programmes in EBD classrooms in the United States, and along with other researchers in this field, call for a shift in the balance of emphasis in the EBD classroom:

Our finding that students with E/BD are likely to exhibit academic deficits very early in their school careers supports proponents of prevention programs (e.g., Nelson, Martella, & Marchand-Martella, 2002)… Unfortunately, relatively little research has been conducted with this population of students to determine if current instructional programs and interventions will work. Research in the area of reading indicates that students with E/BD may need unique instructional approaches because children with behavior problems were generally unresponsive to effective pre-reading and reading intervention (Al Otaiba & Fuchs, 2002; Nelson, Benner, & Gonzalez, 2003). Our findings that students with E/BD are likely to experience academic achievement deficits in all areas suggest that instructional programs will not only have to be intensive, but also comprehensive. Additionally, our results suggest that the achievement issues of students with E/BD who exhibit externalizing deficits may be more pronounced. With these students, effective instructional programs may play, at least in part, a role in improving their social skills. Beyond cognitive factors (e.g., perceived competence), academic skills are likely to be reinforced by teachers and parents and, thus,
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act as alternatives to problem behaviors
(Kohler & Greenwood, 1986, p.68).

Those educators and researchers in the United States who have called for a change in the philosophical and methodological approach to teaching in EBD classrooms (Cereijo, Pemberton, & Tyler-Wood, 2004; Deno 1998; Kauffman & Davis, 2001; Lane, 2007) argue that the research evidence shows that often behaviour and learning difficulties are inter-related, and that when a student is succeeding academically she or he is not as likely to engage in inappropriate behaviours. Throughout the literature the issue of literacy arises, the difficulties EBD students experience with their reading skills being well documented (Maughan, Pickles, Hagell, Rutter, & Yule, 1996; McMichael, 1979; Richmond & Blagg, 1985; Staunton, Feehan, McGee, & Silva, 1990). Strong, Wehby and Falk (2004) observed the:

need for additional research in the area of reading instruction is particularly true for adolescents with E/BD. The reading failure of secondary students with behavioral problems has been consistently documented (Coutinho, 1986) and, as reported in the findings from the National Longitudinal Transition Study (Malmgren, Edgar, & Neel, 1998; Wagner, D’Amico, Marder, Newman, & Blackorby, 1992), these reading deficits likely contribute to the dismal outcomes for these students such as high dropout rates, grade retention, and overall poor achievement (p. 561).

In their meta-analysis of research studies testing an integrated model of three levels of reading and behaviour support, Stewart, Benner, Martella and Marchand-Martella (2007) explored the results of research findings in which interventions, representing behavioural and literacy support on whole school, group and individual bases were conducted. Drawing upon the evidence, they proposed that an integrated approach is more effective generally and specifically in terms of literacy, and concluded that “the integrated model appeared to produce larger improvements in reading skills than reading-only or behavior-only approaches” (p. 249).

2.4 NBSS BSC Research

The National Behaviour Support Service works with selected schools in piloting the introduction of this type of learning behaviour intervention in Ireland. The rationale for a research element to the establishment and procedural implementation of Behaviour Support Classrooms in Ireland is:

- To provide a systematic methodology for producing and assembling data that will allow for both the consistent monitoring and essential evaluation of an intervention that

  ...the integrated model appeared to produce larger improvements in reading skills than reading-only or behavior-only approaches...

  aims to develop students’ learning behaviours in order to optimise their educational outcomes.

- To explore, in depth, the range of variables that may be significant in contributing to the degree of success participating schools achieve through the use of this intervention in enhancing the long-term educational experiences of students by short-term, on-site, individually customised academic and behavioural programmes.
Drawing upon the literature presented in this chapter and in order to provide a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating BSCs, NBSS research initiated during the academic year 2007/2008 explores:

1. The characteristics of the participating schools, including student enrolment, staff, geographical location, socio-economic catchment area, additional resources and provision available to each school in terms of learning and behavioural support.
2. The nature and degree of the challenging behaviour experienced in and identified by each school.
3. The range of alternative strategies and interventions that have, and continue to be used in each of the schools.
4. The extent of policy development and implementation in each of the schools with respect to a whole school approach in creating and maintaining a positive learning environment.
5. The criteria and procedures each school has established for student referral to BSCs.
6. The policies and methodologies each school has developed for monitoring progress within the BSCs and reintegration from BSCs to mainstream classrooms.
7. The pedagogical methodologies and specific strategies selected for use in each BSC.
8. The academic (including literacy) needs of referred students’ prior to their attendance in the BSC.
9. The extent to which additional internal and external supports (including psychological assessments) are available to referred students.
10. The extent to which the intervention positively affects students’ educational experience.
11. Students’ attitudes towards school and themselves as learners in school prior to and during the intervention.

A preliminary investigation of many of the above-mentioned themes was initiated in the first year of the pilot NBSS Behaviour Support Classroom programme (2007/2008) (Chapter 3: Research Design and Methods). The findings of this initial phase of the research were presented in an internal report “...turning around unacceptable student behaviour” The NBSS Behaviour Support Classrooms: A Study of the Initiation of the Pilot Project (Henefer, 2008).

While the data collected during this first stage demonstrated that on the whole in their first year of operation, BSCs and their staff had contributed positively to the learning experiences and behaviour skills of many students, as well as successfully negotiating the establishment and early implementation of these individualised interventions within whole school communities, there were areas that would require additional development and support both from the NBSS and the schools themselves.

In response to this need, the NBSS, drawing upon both international and indigenous research, compiled and published Behaviour Support Classroom Best Practice Guidelines (NBSS, 2008). The Guidelines as well as recommendations on resourcing, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and standardised documentation for use throughout the intervention (reading and learning resources, curricular activities and useful publications) were disseminated to all BSC staff and schools in January 2009.

The current report, while presenting and analysing the BSC research conducted by the NBSS during the academic year 2008/2009, refers where appropriate and informative to specific findings from the first phase of the research (2007/2008) in order to help position recent developments within a logical context and, where applicable, to more clearly illustrate aspects of the programme that may have evolved or changed during this second year.
Chapter 3: Research Design and Methods

3.1 Aims of the Research

The NBSS research framework has been developed to enable the service and partner schools to systematically identify areas of behaviour, on both whole school, group and individualised levels, that would benefit from support and to implement a methodological approach to monitoring and evaluating applications and programmes to measure the efficacy of interventions for students as well as school communities.

Survey research conducted by the Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland (ASTI, 2005) and the Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI, 2006) found that most teachers (97% – TUI, 2006) report that they experience disruptive behaviour in their classroom, with 71% (ASTI, 2005) describing this as a continuous occurrence. ASTI cites amongst its key principles for improving behaviour that within schools there should be a “commitment to developing whole school responses to the needs of young people…” (p. 15). In December 2005 (some 18 months prior to the implementation of BSCs in Ireland) the TUI recommended that all schools in Ireland should have a Behaviour Support Classroom.

“Research is a systematic, formal, rigorous and precise process employed to gain solutions to problems and/or to discover and interpret new facts and relationships” (Waltz & Bausell, 1981, p. 1). Regarding the explicit concern within the professional education community and across society as a whole about both the general and specific behavioural issues related to youth, this research study undertakes to explore, in one context, possible “solutions to problems”.

The methods adopted in this study were first developed to provide a descriptive account and analysis of the establishment, implementation and effects of this DES-funded behavioural intervention, the Behaviour Support Classroom (BSC). Areas of investigation included the range of behavioural and/or educational issues addressed in BSCs; the nature and extent of additional supports and interventions provided to students; the resources available and used within BSCs; staffing and student demographics, as well as evidence of the effects of the intervention on students’ learning, behaviour and attitudes towards school.

Equally though, by attempting to “discover and interpret new facts and relationships” this research endeavours to make a contribution to the on-going international study of positive behaviour support in schools (Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Rosenberg & Jackman, 2003; Steer, 2005; Sugai, 2008; Wilkin, Hall, & Kinder, 2003). The research seeks to identify effective practices and strategies to address the diverse needs of students in receipt of Level 3 support, as well as to investigate the ways in which this individualised behavioural support intervention might meaningfully contribute to the development of whole school positive behaviour support within schools in Ireland.
3.2 Methodological Framework

In constructing a methodological framework for the study, a multiple case study approach was selected. Research in the Social Sciences, particularly in the fields of education and psychology, has made extensive use of the case study approach. The case study allows the researcher to study a phenomenon in detail and explore, in depth, the intricate network of variables that together determine the nature of that particular phenomenon. In this instance, the phenomena under study were 36 NBSS Behaviour Support Classrooms. A range of different methods, or triangulation, was used to gather data. Social Science researchers are increasingly using both qualitative and quantitative methods to resolve their research questions (Berkowitz, 1996; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Flick, 1998), as triangulation is seen as a way to address the limitations of a single method, extend the scope and depth of the findings and strengthen the scientific rigour of the study.

With a view to the multi-faceted aims of the research (3.1) and cognisant of the demands BSC staff would encounter, not only in terms of creating, organising and administering the classrooms but in the intensive nature of their daily work supporting students, it was the intention to structure data collection in ways that would not be overly intrusive. Therefore, research instruments (3.3) were devised that would allow for the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data from BSC staff, principals, students and NBSS personnel without the use of more time-intensive qualitative instruments (such as formal, structured interviews or focus group work). It is anticipated, as the BSC programme evolves, that more in-depth qualitative research can and will be conducted.

3.3 Procedure

For the most part, the research instruments employed in this current study are refinements and additions to those that were used in the preliminary data collection during the first year (2007/2008) of the NBSS Behaviour Support Classroom pilot project. These included the following:

1. **My Work at School Questionnaire (MWAS)** (Appendix A). This 14 item questionnaire was designed to measure students’ attitudes towards school and their view of themselves as learners. Students were asked to complete the questionnaire prior to, or at the start of attendance in the BSC and after they had reintegrated into mainstream lessons. BSC staff were encouraged to use the MWAS questionnaire periodically during interventions if they felt that it would be of value to both themselves and their students.

2. Following on from an extensive questionnaire for principals during the first year of the project, an abridged questionnaire including multiple choice and open-ended questions was distributed to principals at the end of the academic year 2008/2009 (Appendix B). Additionally, as part of the documentation required in *The Best Practice Guidelines* (2008), principals were requested to complete the Behaviour Support Classroom End of Year Overview (Appendix C) providing statistical data with regard to areas such as student demographics, additional supports, referrals and attendance.

3. Two separate instruments were used to gather both quantitative and qualitative information from BSC teachers. These consisted of two questionnaires (Appendices D and E), one of which was to be completed with their BSC colleagues within the school, the other individually by each teacher.

4. At the end of the first year of the programme (2007/2008), NBSS personnel who had worked extensively with staff in the (then existing) 31 BSCs, were asked to complete a sizeable interim report (Appendix F) providing information about the establishment and implementation of the intervention in each
school. As a follow-up to this data collection procedure, this instrument (Appendix G) was abridged for completion by NBSS personnel at the end of the academic year 2008/2009 for the 36 BSCs.

5. As an element of the referral procedure, The Best Practice Guidelines (2008) provide schools with a Student Profile form to be completed for each student referred for the intervention. Amongst the data to be included on the profile are the student’s reading age and the date of the most recent reading assessment. Reading ages of students attending BSCs were provided to the NBSS for research purposes since April 2008.

6. Over the course of the academic year 2008/2009, the NBSS researcher made a number of visits to 12 (33.3%) of the BSC schools across the country. These visits enabled the researcher to observe the accommodation, resources and procedures in place in each of the 12 sites; to informally discuss with staff their work, interests and plans; to meet students attending the BSCs (in some cases providing them with an opportunity to show the researcher the work they were doing in the BSC), and to advise and assist BSC staff about issues and concerns related to data collection. Field notes were taken by the researcher at the conclusion of each visit.

7. In addition to the data gathered from the dissemination of NBSS research instruments, at the end of 2008/2009 the researcher was provided with qualitative data collected by BSC staff from students in one school. These data, drawn from a questionnaire developed by the BSC teachers (Appendix H), offer some insights, from one school, of the impact of the intervention in the view of the students concerned.

…triangulation is seen as a way to address the limitations of a single method, extend the scope and depth of the findings and strengthen the scientific rigour of the study...

3.4 Data Analysis

As data from the range of research instruments were collected, data sets were created in SPSS Version 17 software for the statistical analyses of the quantitative data (MWASs; elements of principals’, teachers’ and NBSS personnel’s documentation and reading ages). Frequency analyses and, in some instances, tests of central tendency were conducted on the quantitative data. For example, in terms of the data provided in completed MWASs, tests of central tendency were conducted on pre- and post-intervention findings for the 14 attitudinal statements that comprise the MWAS. Each of the 14 statements was coded consistently with the Likert Scale used (i.e., 1 = always, 2 = most of the time, 3 = sometimes, 4 = hardly ever and 5 = never). Therefore, a post-intervention score lower than a pre-intervention score would reflect positive attitudinal change over the course of the intervention. Subsequently, calculations were undertaken with the data to measure the effect size (Effect size = Difference between mean score pre- and post-intervention/Standard Deviation).

Epstein, Pierce and Reid (2004) state that the American Psychological Association (2001)
Behaviour Support Classrooms

recommends that in evaluating the degree of change in outcomes, one would consider effect sizes of 0.8 or greater as strong, 0.3 to 0.8 as medium and 0 to .3 as small. In his meta-analysis of instructional interventions, Hattie (2009, p. 9) points out that when determining the weight of effect size there is, when reviewing the literature, some variation amongst authors. For example, some researchers would categorise $d=0.6$ as a large effect while others stipulate $d=0.8$ only as large. Additionally, Hattie advises the reader of this type of educational research to be cautious in oversimplifying the interpretation of effect sizes, stating that “…there are many examples that show small effects may be important” (p. 9).

In order to ensure that ethical procedures were implemented, data emanating from individual schools were identified and entered according to a random numerical code in order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Similarly, an identical coding system was employed when entering the qualitative data (again, aspects of the principals’, teachers’ and NBSS personnel’s instruments; researcher’s field notes and student questionnaires) for analysis in NVivo7 software to identify and explore emerging themes and trends in the data.

The final element of the data analysis was with the data provided by BSC staff detailing students’ chronological and reading ages. Both an initial frequency analysis and a test of central tendency were conducted on data for a total of 539 students accessing BSC support. Similar tests were conducted on the data to determine how many of the 539 students (according to the results of the reading assessments used within the schools) were reading at, or above their chronological age and how many were reading three or more years below their chronological age.
Chapter 4: Findings

This section presents the findings from the research undertaken by the NBSS during the academic year 2008/2009. As indicated in section 2.4, where appropriate or in order to more fully illustrate developments in the BSC programme since its inception in 2007, reference additionally will be made to findings from data collected in the first year of the project (Henefer, 2008). As the range of data collection instruments employed in this study, along with the nature of the data provided by respondents, were diverse and extensive, the analysis techniques used varied (3.3). As a result, the presentation of the findings will reflect this diversity in that sections will in some cases draw upon qualitative and quantitative data from a number of instruments. For example, the reader will find in 4.1 both demographic statistics as well as descriptive, qualitative information about the 36 BSCs from a number of different sources. In other sections, quantitative or qualitative data specifically from one instrument will form the basis of the content (4.3 Reading Assessment Results).

4.1 General Characteristics of the 36 Behaviour Support Classrooms

This section, drawing upon data provided by BSC teachers, principals and NBSS personnel, presents findings related to the general characteristics of the 36 Behaviour Support Classrooms. This includes information about the quality of the physical facilities provided for the BSCs, the nature and extent of the resources available to the BSCs, staffing provision and timetabling, as well as aspects of any of the aforementioned that may require review, attention or development.

At the start of the programme, the Department of Education and Skills provided each school with a material grant of €10,000 for the initial outfit of the BSC, and subsequently a €2,000 grant for social and emotional, mathematical and literacy and learning resources. In 2007/2008, NBSS personnel reported that 83.9% (N=26) of the then current BSCs had physical properties that facilitated the support work being done in the schools. Amongst the features that were highlighted as contributing substantially to a positive working environment were a central location (within the school complex), adequate light, heat and furniture as well as sufficient space to conduct both individual and group work.

The importance of these factors, along with the importance of the arrangement of the working space and décor were reiterated in the data provided for this study (2008/2009), for example:

*The classroom is bright, with natural light. It has recently been decorated. It is of good size and is suitable for individual and team work with individual tables and a large table. It is situated in the main building and appears to be ideally located for its purpose and helps with mainstream integration. There is adequate space to facilitate individual and group work. It is laid out similar to a mainstream classroom... The classroom is very well equipped. There are PCs, a laptop, subject textbooks, literacy/numeracy resources, etc. They have recently purchased specific programmes to address behavioural issues and social skills programmes.*

During the first year of the programme, NBSS personnel voiced their concerns about what they considered to be inadequate physical facilities in
16.1% (N=5) of the BSCs, including the absence of a dedicated space for the BSC and unwelcoming décor and furniture. In comparison, in 2008/2009, the physical facilities of only one BSC were described by NBSS personnel to be inadequate in this way.

For the current research study, BSC teachers across the 36 schools were asked whether they felt that they had adequate resources to do their work. The majority of teachers responded that they felt resources were adequate, good or very good. One BSC teacher commented:

In my opinion there are adequate resources for us to work effectively. When it comes to books, computers, room space then, yes, it is good, but like every job there could always be more in order to improve all the time.

Particular reference was made by a number of BSC staff respondents to the value of receiving a NBSS literacy grant (€2,000 per BSC). “The purchase of literacy resources has very much improved the teaching and learning in this area”, according to one respondent. A number of teachers (20.0% [N=14]), while welcoming these supplementary resources, felt that additional literacy (and numeracy) resources and training would be welcome. Teachers from two of the BSCs referred specifically to their continued lack of access within their classrooms to IT resources including PCs, printers and the internet, while some teachers (7.1% [N=5]) indicated that they felt they would benefit from additional funding to supplement photocopying, stationery costs, art materials and educational trips or outings for their students.

Social skills, emotional literacy and/or anger management materials were cited by some teachers (28.6% [N=20]) as ‘resource banks’, and seen as areas that they would like to develop through further training. Additionally, some of the BSC teachers (22.9% [N=16]) stated that they felt there was a need for increased information about, and access to, psychological and/or counseling services and assessments to better support their students.

In terms of whether there were adequate resources available in the BSC generally, one BSC teacher made the following observation:

Yes. Staff are the best resource here. Have built up good relationships with the students. Since people are the best resource we have, I think we are lucky in having very skilled people involved here.

In terms of BSC staffing and staff contact time, in 2007/2008 schools reported a range of different models. Over a third (38.7% [N=12]) of the schools employed 4 to 8 staff in the BSC with a range of contact times including, in some cases, a maximum contact time of between 9 to 16 hours per week. It is clear from the data submitted in 2008/2009 that staffing and time allocations have become more standardised across the schools as reflected in Tables 1 and 2:

### Table 1  BSC Staff 2008/2009

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Staff in the BSC</th>
<th>Percentage of BSCs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.0% (N=18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>47.2% (N=17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.8% (N=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0% (N=36)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other' contact hours predominantly provided for one teacher to have a 22 hour contract with a range of various other hourly arrangements for one or two additional members of staff (for example, one BSC had one teacher with 22 hours, a second teacher with 18 hours and a third with four contact hours).

Table 2: BSC Staff Contact Hours 2008/2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact Hours</th>
<th>Percentage of BSCs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22 hours each (2 teachers) per week</td>
<td>50.0% (N=18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 hours one teacher, 11 hours one teacher</td>
<td>8.3% (N=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 hours one teacher, 11 hours two teachers</td>
<td>16.7% (N=6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other(^{13})</td>
<td>25.0% (N=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0% (N=36)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{13}\) ‘Other’ contact hours predominantly provided for one teacher to have a 22 hour contract with a range of various other hourly arrangements for one or two additional members of staff (for example, one BSC had one teacher with 22 hours, a second teacher with 18 hours and a third with four contact hours).
In terms of gender, across the schools overall, males accounted for approximately two thirds (65.4% [N=648]) of all students in receipt of BSC intensive individualised support during the year. At the time of writing, 61.1% [N=22] of the 36 BSC schools were co-ed with the number of single sex schools each representing 19.4% [N=7] of the total. In terms of student attendance in the BSC 2008/2009, a frequency analysis of the attendance data submitted by the 36 schools found that a total of 648 students attended Behaviour Support Classrooms over the course of one academic year. The minimum number of students attending in schools was 9 students (5.6% [N=2]) with a maximum attendance of 35 students (again, reported by 2 schools). The mean total attendance was 18 students (the median was 17 and the mode was 14 students [16.7%, N=6]). In 2007/2008 the mean for student attendance (across 31 BSCs) was 12.4. Additionally, the principals were asked to provide statistical information concerned with the number of male and female students who had attended the BSCs. Table 3 presents the findings of the analysis by gender of students attending the BSC in the 36 schools.

### Table 3: Attendance by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Females Attended</th>
<th>Males Attended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (x)</td>
<td>7.72</td>
<td>14.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>34.6% (N=648)</td>
<td>65.4% (N=648)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In reviewing the total number of students who had attended the BSC, principals were also asked to provide the data as per year group to the NBSS. Tables 4 and 5 provide an analysis of these data categorised as Junior Cycle (1st, 2nd and 3rd Years) and Senior Cycle (4th, 5th and 6th Years).

---

14 The NBSS recommends that schools establish a Referral Group whose responsibility is to oversee procedures for referrals, student selection, entry and exit criteria, as well as students’ reintegration: see section 4.4.1.

15 Measurements of central tendency allowed for the 14 single sex schools (7 boys schools and 7 girls schools).

16 All quantitative data presented in the Figures and Tables in this document reflect SPSS Version 17 statistical calculations and are rounded to one decimal place.
### Table 4: Junior Cycle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>1st Years Attended</th>
<th>2nd Years Attended</th>
<th>3rd Years Attended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (x)</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>7.28</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>3.00 (N=6)</td>
<td>10.00 (N=5)</td>
<td>5.00 (N=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>0.00 (N=4)</td>
<td>1.00 (N=1)</td>
<td>0.00 (N=8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>15.00 (N=1)</td>
<td>15.00 (N=1)</td>
<td>17.00 (N=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>32.4% (N=648)</td>
<td>40.4% (N=648)</td>
<td>24.1% (N=648)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Figure 4: Junior Cycle

- 1st years
- 2nd years
- 3rd years

### Table 5: Senior Cycle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>4th Years Attended</th>
<th>5th Years Attended</th>
<th>6th Years Attended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (x)</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>0.00 (N=34)</td>
<td>0.00 (N=29)</td>
<td>0.00 (N=36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>0.00 (N=34)</td>
<td>0.00 (N=29)</td>
<td>0.00 (N=36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>3.00 (N=1)</td>
<td>4.00 (N=1)</td>
<td>0.00 (N=36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>0.6% (N=648)</td>
<td>2.5% (N=648)</td>
<td>0.0% (N=648)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Figure 5: Senior Cycle

- 4th years
- 5th years
The data provided by the principals indicate that across the schools, the focus of the behavioural intervention work has been predominantly in the Junior Cycle. Third Year students represented just under a quarter of all students who attended the BSC in 2008/2009. Over a third of the total number of students attending the BSCs were drawn from Second Year groups, with First Year representation almost on a par. Junior Cycle students represented 96.9% (N=628) of the total number of students attending BSCs over the course of the year. Attendance from the Senior Cycle was minimal with less than a quarter (22.2% [N=8]) of the principals reporting Senior Cycle data. Of these year groups, Fifth Years were the most frequent recipients of the behavioural support.

In order to gain a more detailed demographic picture of student attendance, BSC teachers were asked to provide an estimate of the approximate number of students who were “present in the BSC” (i.e. receiving Level 3 support) at any one time during the year. While responses were frequently qualified in terms of statements such as “varies from class to class”, “but others coming and going all the time” and “this is max… often less”, the data submitted by 70 BSC teachers can be categorised as follows:

### Table 6 Approximate Number of Students in BSCs at Any One Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approximate Number of Students</th>
<th>Percentage of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 3 students</td>
<td>14.3% (N=10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 4 students</td>
<td>25.7% (N=18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 5 students</td>
<td>10.0% (N=7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 6 students</td>
<td>40.0% (N=28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 7 students</td>
<td>1.4% (N=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 7 students</td>
<td>7.1% (N=5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1.4% (N=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0% (N=70)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 6: Approximate Number of Students in BSCs at Any One Time](image-url)
According to the teachers’ responses, the maximum number of students present in a BSC at any one time in 2008/2009 was 12 (2.9% [N=2]). While more than a third of the teachers (40.0%, [N=28]) indicated that they had worked with 6 students at any one time in the BSC, this number was usually identified as the maximum number of students. More typically, teachers estimated that they worked with groups of between 3 and 4 students (40.0% [N=28]).

In endeavouring to establish, across the cohort of students receiving BSC interventions in 2008/2009, whether there was an association between behavioural and academic difficulties, BSC teachers (N=36) were asked to indicate if they had identified any particular educational patterns or difficulties across their students. The majority of respondents (80.6% [N=29]) stated that they had discerned patterns of educational difficulties amongst their students. The most commonly cited difficulties (in order of frequency) were literacy, difficult home circumstances, attendance, numeracy and special educational needs.

### 4.3 Literacy and Learning

An integral element of NBSS research is the exploration of the association between challenging behaviour and literacy and learning skills difficulties and the ways in which the learning needs of BSC students can best be served. As part of the data collection procedure, BSC teachers were asked to submit each student’s chronological and reading ages to the NBSS (information they would have obtained for their preparation of each Student Behaviour Plan prior to the commencement of an intervention). The NBSS received reading results for 539 students. Table 7 presents the chronological ages of the students at the time of their reading assessments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>2.6% (N=14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>14.8% (N=80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>36.9% (N=199)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>31.7% (N=171)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>12.2% (N=66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>1.3% (N=7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 years</td>
<td>.4% (N=2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0% (N=539)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The frequency analysis of the data supplied indicates that students, chronologically ranged from 11 years to 17 years old at the time of their reading assessments. Of the cohort, 80.9% (N=436) were aged 13 to 15 years with 17.4% (N=94) aged 11 to 12 years old. The mean, median and mode chronological ages of the cohort at the time of their reading assessments were all 13 years. Table 8 presents the frequency analysis of the reading ages of the 539 students as provided by BSC teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Age</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>3.3% (N=18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>5.8% (N=31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>15.6% (N=84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>21.9% (N=118)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>22.3% (N=120)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>16.5% (N=89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>9.1% (N=49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>2.6% (N=14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>1.7% (N=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>1.3% (N=7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0% (N=539)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The frequency analysis of the reading ages provided by BSC staff members indicates that the majority of the students (68.8% \([N=371]\)) had a reading age of 10 years or less at the time of their assessment. Over three quarters of the cohort (85.3% \([N=460]\)), according to their reading assessments, were reading at or below the age of 11 years. The mean reading age of the cohort was 9 years with a median and mode reading age of 10 years. Table 9 presents the frequencies of reading ages in categories of 10 years or less across the cohort.

### Table 9: Categories of Reading Ages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 to 8 years</td>
<td>24.7% ((N=133))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 9 years</td>
<td>46.6% ((N=251))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 years</td>
<td>68.8% ((N=371))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 10 years</td>
<td>31.2% ((N=168))</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 8: Reading Ages](image1.jpg)

![Figure 9: Categories of Reading Ages](image2.jpg)
Hence, while the majority (80.9% \([N=436]\)) of the students were chronologically aged 13 to 15 years, almost a quarter (24.7% \([N=133]\)), according to their assessments, had a reading age between 6 and 8 years, with nearly half (46.6% \([N=251]\)) reading between 6 and 9 years. Figure 10 provides a comparison of the percentages of chronological and reading ages across this cohort.

### Table 10: Comparison of Chronological and Reading Ages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Chronological Age</th>
<th>Reading Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3.3% ((N=18))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>5.8% ((N=31))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>15.6% ((N=84))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>21.9% ((N=118))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>22.3% ((N=120))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>2.6% ((N=14))</td>
<td>16.5% ((N=89))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>14.8% ((N=80))</td>
<td>9.1% ((N=49))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>36.9% ((N=199))</td>
<td>2.6% ((N=14))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>31.7% ((N=171))</td>
<td>1.7% ((N=9))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>12.2% ((N=66))</td>
<td>1.3% ((N=7))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>1.3% ((N=7))</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 years</td>
<td>.4% ((N=2))</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0% ((N=539))</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0% ((N=539))</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 10: Chronological and Reading Ages**
The data for those students who had reading ages of 10 years or less (because the cohort’s chronological ages start at 11 years) were withdrawn from the data set in order to ascertain the percentage of students in the cohort who were reading at, or above their chronological age at the time of their assessments. A cross-tabulation of the remaining chronological ages and reading ages demonstrated that 5.2% (N=28) of the 539 students were reading at or above their chronological ages. Additionally, it was found that over three quarters (76.0% [N=407]) of the 539 students were, according to their reading assessments, reading three or more years below their chronological ages.

Additionally, principals were asked to “identify the number of students attending the BSC who were also in receipt of other school interventions and/or supports, e.g. resource/learning support, SCP etc”. Of the 648 students cited as receiving a BSC intervention in 2008/2009, a total of 448, or 69.1% had, according to their principals, received additional internal school interventions and/or supports. Table 11 presents an analysis of the percentage of BSC students within each school who had received additional supports.

Table 11  Percentage of Students Receiving Additional Internal School Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of BSC Students</th>
<th>Percent of Principals’ Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 50% of the students</td>
<td>22.2% (N=8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 50 and 74% of the students</td>
<td>36.1% (N=13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 75 and 99% of the students</td>
<td>11.1% (N=4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All of the students</td>
<td>30.6% (N=11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0% (N=36)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nearly a third of the principals reported that all students who had attended the BSC during the academic year 2008/09 in their school received additional internal interventions and/or supports, with the number rising to nearly half (41.7% [N=15]) who stated that three-quarters or more of the students who attend BSCs also are provided with other internal school supports. While many of the respondents did not outline the range of those additional supports offered to BSC students, those principals that did cited Resource/Learning Support (47.2% [N=17]); School Completion Programme (38.9% [N=14]); Counseling (25.0% [N=9]); Junior Certificate School Programme (13.9% [N=5]); Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) (8.3% [N=3]); Literacy and/or Numeracy Interventions (5.6% [N=2]); Home School Liaison (5.6% [N=2]); Music Therapy, Anger Management, Homework Club, Festina Lente, Blue Box and “small classes” (all at 2.8% [N=1]). Additionally, principals were asked to identify the number of students who had accessed BSC support in their schools during 2008/2009 who were also assigned SNA hours by the NCSE. Table 12 provides the frequency analysis of these data.

17 School Completion Programme.
18 One principal responded “In the context of this school the NCSE do not assign specific hours to specific children. We have had three SNAs consistently over the last couple of years and these have been left to us irrespective of particular students”. These data were not included in the analysis presented in Table 12.
Thus, 65.7% (N=23) of the principals indicated that one or none of their students who attended the BSC had been assigned Special Needs Assistant hours by the NCSE.\textsuperscript{19} This figure can be juxtaposed to the mean number, across all schools, of 18 students attending the BSC in 2008/2009.

### Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Percentage of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No students assigned Special Needs Assistant Hours</td>
<td>31.4% (N=11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 student</td>
<td>34.3% (N=12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 students</td>
<td>8.6% (N=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 students</td>
<td>11.4% (N=4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 students</td>
<td>2.9% (N=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 students</td>
<td>2.9% (N=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 students</td>
<td>8.6% (N=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0% (N=35)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 12:** BSC Students Assigned Special Needs Assistant Hours by NCSE

Thus, 65.7% (N=23) of the principals indicated that one or none of their students who attended the BSC had been assigned Special Needs Assistant hours by the NCSE.\textsuperscript{19} This figure can be juxtaposed to the mean number, across all schools, of 18 students attending the BSC in 2008/2009.

### 4.4 BSC Implementation

From the inception of the BSC programme in 2007, the NBSS provided schools with advice, drawn from international best practice, on systematic and transparent procedures to most effectively implement the intervention. Based on NBSS preliminary research, the support service established a five-step implementation procedure to be followed by all schools with NBSS BSC provision (\textit{Behaviour Support Classroom Best Practice Guidelines}, 2008). These steps included:

1. Data Gathering
2. Referral Group Meeting
3. Pre-entry Procedure and Development of Student Behaviour Plan (SBP)
4. Student Attends Behaviour Support Classroom
5. Reintegration.

\textsuperscript{19} One principal wrote “Although psychologists’ reports have recommended SNAs for a number of students, the school has not been granted this allocation (as of yet)”.
4.4.1 Data Gathering and Referral

As highlighted in the Best Practice Guidelines, the importance of schools having clearly established and agreed BSC entry and exit criteria, as well as consistent referral procedures for every individual case (pp. 12-13) are critical to ensure the most effective implementation of the intervention. While suggestions (as to possible criteria that might be used) were presented in the Guidelines (p. 12), schools typically drew upon their own experience and behaviour systems to establish both entry and exit criteria. In order to establish whether there was a commonality and/or general pattern of the reasons why students were referred for this intervention across the 36 schools, the BSC teachers were asked to select from a list of 12 items those that related to any of their students this year. Table 13 presents the data provided by the BSC teachers as well as the findings from the preliminary research conducted in 2008.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persistent Disruptive Behaviour</td>
<td>100.0% (N=35)</td>
<td>100.0% (N=31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disaffection</td>
<td>57.1% (N=20)</td>
<td>77.4% (N=24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demotivation</td>
<td>62.9% (N=22)</td>
<td>87.1% (N=27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Underachievement</td>
<td>40.0% (N=14)</td>
<td>61.3% (N=19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration/Listening Skills</td>
<td>80.0% (N=28)</td>
<td>87.1% (N=27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Personal Organisation</td>
<td>91.4% (N=32)</td>
<td>90.3% (N=28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention Seeking</td>
<td>82.9% (N=29)</td>
<td>83.9% (N=26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Withdrawed</td>
<td>34.3% (N=12)</td>
<td>48.4% (N=15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADHD</td>
<td>54.3% (N=19)</td>
<td>45.2% (N=14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Attendance</td>
<td>57.1% (N=20)</td>
<td>67.7% (N=21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Educational Needs</td>
<td>31.4% (N=11)</td>
<td>41.9% (N=13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult Home Circumstances</td>
<td>62.9% (N=22)</td>
<td>80.6% (N=25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Reasons</td>
<td>31.4% (N=11)</td>
<td>25.8% (N=8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 13: Referrals to BSCs

In each instance, respondents selected a range of reasons from the list provided.

Data from preliminary research drawn from reports completed by NBSS personnel in consultation with BSC teachers.

Staff from one BSC did not complete and return the research instrument (Appendix E).
Persistent disruptive behaviour has remained constant across the two years as the most commonly cited reason for students’ referral to BSCs. In endeavouring to identify possible patterns of behaviours and/or issues leading to referrals, during the first year of the programme, poor personal organisation; concentration/listening skills; demotivation; attention seeking; difficult home circumstances and disaffection all featured strongly in the data (cited by more than 75% of the respondents). Using the same measurement criteria (i.e. >75%), in 2008/2009 the most common reasons for referrals included poor personal organisation; attention seeking and concentration/listening skills. Poor personal organisation, attention seeking and concentration/listening skills remained fairly constant across the two years. Amongst the ‘Other Reasons’ for referrals provided by the respondents were:

- Aggressive behaviour, bullying.
- Aggression/anger issues in class.
- Violent behaviour/language.
- Lacking in the social skills needed to cope in mainstream classes.
- Cultural differences.
- Refusal to go to school.
- Failure to do any homework or study.

In offering guidance for the referral process, the NBSS recommends that schools establish a Referral Group whose responsibility is to oversee procedures for referrals, student selection, entry and exit criteria as well as students’ reintegration. Critical to determining not only the appropriateness of this type of behavioural intervention for an individual student but, also for developing a suitable and effective plan for the intervention, is the Referral Group’s collection of relevant information. The Best Practice Guidelines state that:

> the NBSS Learning Behaviour Checklist… must be completed by all of the referred student’s subject teachers and returned to the Referral Group for analysis and decision making. Additionally, it is essential that the NBSS Student Profile… is completed in detail to facilitate the group’s assessment and intervention planning (p. 13).

Other possible sources of information highlighted in the Guidelines include professional assessments, lesson observation and reports by external agencies. In theory, the gathering and analysis of the data should assist the Referral Group in determining the best response and appropriate intervention for individual students (whether it be the BSC or an alternative school support) in such a way that can be transparently disseminated to all relevant parties.

In order to assess the degree to which data gathering and referral procedures, as outlined in the Best Practice Guidelines, were in place in the 36 BSC schools, both BSC teachers and NBSS personnel were asked to comment on entry criteria and referral procedures. From the information provided, it would seem that generally there is agreement between both sets of respondents in terms of the nature of the procedures currently in place in schools. For example, from the teachers’ own accounts and based on those of NBSS personnel, of the 36 BSCs, over a quarter are currently implementing all procedures as stipulated in the Guidelines. Key to the procedures adopted in these schools is the existence of a dedicated Referral Group or team and the systematic collection of relevant data:

> Students are initially identified by the Year Heads and this information is passed on to the Care Team where the Lead Teacher in the BSC is a member. The benefits of the students attending the BSC is discussed at the Care Team. The lead BSC teacher then carries out the relevant ‘Learning Behaviour Checklists’, ‘Reading Assessments’, ‘Student Profiles’. With this information the students are placed, or not, in the BSC.

Most of the accounts provided suggest that the majority of schools have developed a system for referrals (to different degrees reflecting the Guidelines) that are working effectively for both students and staff, described in one research response in this way:

> A system has been developed with a team in the school, including a teacher who co-ordinates the Discipline for Learning approach. She uses a system where students are given … [a points system]… for behavioural issues in the classroom. When a number of these are collected, the student is referred to the BSC.

The existence and employment of ‘a referral system’ in the majority of schools has ensured that the criteria used to determine the appropriateness of

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23 NBSS student questionnaire, My Work at School (MWAS) – Appendix A.
the intervention for individual students, as well as the planning that is undertaken to implement the support, is objective, consistent and transparent. Through the process of taking part in this study, all of the BSC schools have, to varying degrees, undertaken the level of data collection required in the Guidelines. While the data from both the BSC teachers and NBSS personnel indicate that substantial work has been invested in schools to develop criteria, systems and procedures for referral to the BSCs, a number of concerns were raised by both sets of respondents such as the following:

We do have clear criteria and a strategy team to manage referrals but sometimes the process is subverted, e.g. a student was referred to BSC by a senior staff member who had explained what BSC was in a negative light and sold it as a ‘last chance saloon’ option before we had a chance to have any contact!

A little more clarity is needed around the Referral Group. BSC staff has expressed concern that some students identified by them as people who would benefit from BSC intervention are not being referred. There still seems to be some confusion regarding the role of the strategy group versus referral group.

4.4.2 Pre-entry Procedures

The preliminary research conducted in 2008 found that many BSC teachers were developing effective methods to plan, record and disseminate to relevant stakeholders, the specific elements of the intervention prior to students’ attendance. For example, 83.9% (N=26) of BSC staff were reported to use some form of behaviour plans for their students, with 96.8% (N=30) of the classrooms employing target setting and evaluation as a procedure throughout the course of the intervention. However, the findings did reveal that, in general, during the first year of the BSC programme, there was a marked variation across schools in terms of the consistency and depth of approach taken in establishing and implementing pre-entry procedures. It was clear from the data that there were numerous examples of constructive and effective strategies that could be productively replicated in other schools. Likewise, from that research, it was concluded that this would be an area that could be improved comprehensively throughout all BSC schools through additional support and guidance from the NBSS.

In response to this aspect of the preliminary research, the NBSS, in its guidance on the implementation of a BSC intervention, highlights the importance of pre-entry procedures. The Best Practice Guidelines stipulate the following as requisite steps in this aspect of the intervention:

- Acquisition of the informed consent of parent(s)/guardian(s).
- Student completes My Work at School questionnaire.
- Student Behaviour Plan (SBP) written and agreed with student and parent(s)/guardian(s).
- Communication with relevant staff (including subject teachers) regarding the SBP and the curricular needs of the student.
- Timetable planned.

Hence, the core element of this stage of the support given to students – that which is most critical in guiding the work that will transpire during the intervention and after – is the development of the Student Behaviour Plan (SBP). Ideally informed by and based on the range of sources collected during the Referral Process (Learning Behaviour Checklists, Student Profile, assessments, reports, observations, etc.), it is advised that the SBP is recognised as a proactive working document that may periodically alter to reflect the evolving needs and circumstances of the student. Developed in such a way to be practical and understood by all concerned parties, particularly the student, the SBP should:

- identify the personal strengths of the student, the behaviour(s) causing concern in subject classes and around the school and the targeted plan of action and support for behaviour improvement.

A SBP is both a product and a process because it states desired outcomes and identifies achievable targets for behaviour improvement involving the student, his/her parents/guardians, the school and BSC staff within a set time frame (p. 14).

24 Strategy teams are comprised of members of the school community and work with the NBSS to develop positive behaviour on a whole school basis.
During the second year of the BSC programme, the practice of consistent, individual development of SBPs for students attending the classrooms has become widespread with 94.4% (N=34) of the staff reporting that this procedure is undertaken for all their students (one staff member stated that, to date, this was done only for “some students”, and one BSC staff did not respond to this question). Parental involvement, during this planning stage, has expanded in a number of schools. In addition to establishing contact to gain informed consent for the intervention, some BSC teachers have encouraged parent(s)/guardian(s) to take an active role in the planning and evolution of the work, as described by one respondent: “Parents are invited to meet BSC staff prior to entry. They are invited to be involved in putting in place a behavioural plan”. The data clearly demonstrate that many BSC teachers are integrating an evidence-based approach to their planning and work, as reflected in the following observation by a NBSS respondent of the methodology employed in a particular BSC:

Good systems and structures are in place regarding student targets and learning.

In order to facilitate effective and relevant planning for the support intervention, the NBSS has encouraged BSC teachers to collect data related to their students’ academic needs through consultation with colleagues who have conducted recent in school educational assessments. Over the course of the two years, there has been a slight increase in the number of staff undertaking this work with 91.4% (N=32) of BSC staff reporting that they request, consult or conduct educational assessments with their students prior to, or on entry to, the BSC (as compared to 80.6% [N=25] in 2007/2008). Table 14 presents an overview of the range and frequency of assessments consulted and/or undertaken in 2008/2009 as part of the planning phase of the BSC intervention.

### Table 14: Educational Assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Percentage of BSCs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>62.9% (N=22)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literacy and Numeracy</td>
<td>11.4% (N=4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy and Psychological Assessment</td>
<td>14.3% (N=5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy, Numeracy and Psychological Assessment</td>
<td>2.9% (N=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Assessments</td>
<td>8.6% (N=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0% (N=35)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 14: Educational Assessments](image)

25 Learning Behaviour Checklist (in Guidelines, Appendix A) and My Work At School questionnaire, Appendix A.
During the first year of the BSC programme (2007/2008), the research explored the model of attendance and the duration of the intervention for students generally, amongst other aspects of the provision. The findings from the preliminary research demonstrated that there was a degree of variation across the original 31 BSC schools. For example, almost a third of the BSCs (32.3%, N=10) operated an attendance model whereby students were in the classroom on a full-time basis. In contrast, 67.7% (N=21) were reported to employ a part-time model, or depending on the particular needs of their students a mixture of full-time and part-time. In general, the part-time model appeared to consist of students attending the BSC during those mainstream lessons in which they experienced difficulties with reintegration conducted on a gradual basis. At that time, few insights were provided into how the full-time model was structured and operated.

In setting forth the steps inherent in the implementation of the intervention, the Best Practice Guidelines offers the following guidance on models of attendance:

Best practice shows that sessional and part-time placements have a greater degree of success in terms of student reintegration. The emphasis needs to be on reintegration, moving the student on and making progress. Flexible part-time arrangements are preferable so that students maintain contact with tutor groups, staff, classmates and the curriculum. Students should continue to attend the subject classes in which they are working well (p. 17).

Findings from the current research indicate that there has been a significant change in the model of attendance adopted by BSC schools. Table 15 presents a comparison of the models used over the two-year period.

### Table 15 Models of Attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>32.3% (N=10)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>54.8% (N=17)</td>
<td>60.0% (N=21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>12.9% (N=4)</td>
<td>34.3% (N=12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0% (N=31)</td>
<td>100.00% (N=35)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Figure 15: Models of Attendance
Thus, it would seem that over the course of the two years, many BSC staff have initiated a more flexible model of attendance than a strict full-time placement. In describing the changes implemented in one BSC, a NBSS respondent commented that:

*The staff in the BSC have worked extremely hard over the past year and they feel that they have learned a lot in that time. Their experience with the first cohort who attended full-time led them to having students attend on a part-time basis in the future. They also agree that careful consideration needs to be given to the choice of students for attendance as the dynamic of the group can be a major factor in how successful the intervention is.*

Centralising the needs of the individual student would appear to be the ‘operating principle’ in the majority of schools when planning for the nature of a BSC placement. Increasingly, decisions are based on evidence collected during the referral process as well as on an on-going basis throughout the intervention. This is illustrated in the following return from one BSC teacher:

*Students are withdrawn part-time. It depends on the needs of the student. They are withdrawn from the classes in which they are struggling. A discussion with the class teacher, along with the information from the Learning Behaviour Checklist will determine the classes they are withdrawn from.*

In addition to recommending a part-time, flexible model of attendance, the *Best Practice Guidelines* state that the “duration of stay for a student should typically not exceed 6-8 weeks, with BSC teachers continuing to support the student in his/her subject classes” (p.17). The principals of BSC schools were asked to provide the NBSS with an estimation of the average duration of attendance (in weeks) for students. Table 16 presents the frequency analysis of the data submitted by the principals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Weeks</th>
<th>Percent of Schools</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 weeks</td>
<td>5.6% (N=2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>2.8% (N=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>11.1% (N=4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 weeks</td>
<td>8.3% (N=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 weeks</td>
<td>27.8% (N=10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 weeks</td>
<td>8.3% (N=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 to 6 weeks</td>
<td>5.6% (N=2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 to 8 weeks</td>
<td>8.3% (N=3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 to 10 weeks</td>
<td>5.6% (N=2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 2 terms</td>
<td>2.8% (N=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>2.8% (N=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All year/ “part-time”</td>
<td>5.6% (N=2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Varies”</td>
<td>5.6% (N=2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0% (N=36)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on the data provided by the principals, the most frequent duration of attendance across the 36 schools was 6 weeks (27.8% [N=10]. Despite the variety of responses provided, it would appear that in the majority of schools (69.4% [N=25]), the average BSC intervention, in terms of a student attending the classroom for individualised, intensive behavioural support in 2008/2009, ranged from four to eight weeks.\(^{26}\)

Regardless of the specific length of the intervention or the particular attendance model employed in individual schools – i.e. full-time, part-time or combined – as an outgrowth of drafting individual SBPs, staff in the 36 BSCs have developed the practice of negotiating specific behavioural targets with their students over the course of the intervention. They have also developed methods for systematically monitoring their work to achieve their targets whether within the BSC or in their mainstream classrooms.

Guided by the NBSS recommendation to employ a Solution Focused approach,\(^ {27}\) the number of targets set for each student varies. The targets are initially based on the data already collected to inform the drafting of the SBP, including the use of the Learning Behaviour Checklists and My Work at School questionnaires, and characteristically evolve over the course of the intervention. Methods for highlighting and recording targets include the use of individual ‘target diaries’; daily monitoring sheets; student folders (containing all the work the student does in the BSC); student journals; target (or ‘report/monitoring’) cards and booklets:

- Tracking booklet – three targets each week and assessed in every class via the tracking booklet. At the end of the week the students assess their targets with us. They can see what targets they have achieved and what they are struggling with. When targets are achieved they are changed.

Changing targets is often related to building on the success that the student has achieved early in the course of the intervention in that “…the targets tend to be easily achievable for the first week and get more difficult as the time in the support class progresses”. Methods used by BSC staff for mapping students’ progress with their targets include:

- Written report to be completed every day by teachers
- Observation
- Skills score card
- Formal and informal conversations with staff and parents
- Meetings with class tutors
- Care team meetings
- Behaviour Checklists
- Notes in journal
- My Work at School cards
- Tracking and Scaling models
- Behavioural contracts.

Monitoring and evaluation of target achievement during the intervention is usually on a daily (or twice daily) basis, many teachers allocating specific times throughout the day where “we talk through the successes and ‘failures’...congratulate them on successes and encourage them to work on the

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\(^{26}\) This would not include additional support that is provided once a student has reintegrated into mainstream classes (4.8).

\(^{27}\) Solution Focused Theory was developed at the Brief Family Therapy Center, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA. It originated in an interest in the inconsistencies to be found in problem behaviour and in the notion of ‘exceptions’: however serious or chronic the problem, there are always exceptions and these exceptions contain the seeds of the solution.
aspects that didn’t work for them”. Many BSC staff cited ‘student self-evaluation’ (4.7) as an integral part of their target procedure.

A more formal review of targets, with the participation of the student and, in some instances parents/guardians, pastoral staff and/or members of senior management, during the intervention occurs frequently – often on a weekly basis. Transparency, communication and flexibility are built into the target procedure as described by one school as follows:

Each student attending the Behaviour Support Classroom has a clearly defined Student Behaviour Plan. In the Plan the individual student’s targets are clearly identified and how these individual targets are monitored is clearly stated in the Plan. As in line with the training the BSC teachers have received, each SBP is a ‘working’ document and reviews – as and when necessary – are built into the SBP. If necessary, new targets are clearly set whilst if no progress is made with initial targets the BSC staff look clearly at how success can be achieved by adapting their approach. For example, they are learning to ‘break down’ targets into steps where the students begin to experience success.

Despite the variation across the 36 schools, in terms of the amount of time throughout the school day in which students are timetabled to attend the BSC, respondents from both the years covered in this study\(^{28}\) were asked to estimate the approximate percentage of time that was spent in the BSC on teaching five different curricular areas. Tables 17 to 21 present a comparison of the frequency analyses that were conducted on both data sets for the curricular areas:

- **Mainstream Curriculum**
- **Literacy**
- **Numeracy**
- **Social Skills**
- **Learning Behaviours.\(^{29}\)**

Several respondents, while not providing a specific percentage on their questionnaires, indicated that skills, such as learning behaviours and social interaction, were taught as inherent components of all lessons. It is anticipated that this would be the case for most teachers in the BSCs.

### Table 17: Mainstream Curriculum

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<td>7.1% (N=5)</td>
<td>13.9% (N=5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-10%</td>
<td>9.7% (N=3)</td>
<td>20.0% (N=14)</td>
<td>11.1% (N=4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-20%</td>
<td>3.2% (N=1)</td>
<td>18.6% (N=13)</td>
<td>13.9% (N=5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30%</td>
<td>3.2% (N=1)</td>
<td>8.6% (N=6)</td>
<td>22.2% (N=8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40%</td>
<td>16.1% (N=5)</td>
<td>10.0% (N=7)</td>
<td>11.1% (N=4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>41-50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>51-60%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-70%</td>
<td>16.1% (N=5)</td>
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<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71-80%</td>
<td>3.2% (N=1)</td>
<td>1.4% (N=1)</td>
<td>5.6% (N=2)</td>
</tr>
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<td>81-90%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.4% (N=1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>91-100%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Response(^{30})</td>
<td>22.6% (N=7)</td>
<td>15.7% (N=11)</td>
<td>11.1% (N=4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{28}\) During the preliminary phase of the research (2007/2008), NBSS personnel consulted timetables and BSC teachers to estimate the percentage of time weekly that teachers devoted to different aspects of the curriculum in the BSCs.

\(^{29}\) Defined as those behaviours, such as staying on task or working without direct supervision, that will enable the student to optimise their educational progress.

\(^{30}\) ‘Other Response’ represents those responses that could not be included in the frequency analysis of the data because no mathematical data had been provided. These would include responses along the lines that the percentages vary depending on the particular student or that it would be impossible to isolate specific percentages as all elements are taught simultaneously.
Table 18  Literacy

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<td>1-10%</td>
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<td>37.1% (N=26)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-20%</td>
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<td>34.3% (N=24)</td>
<td>55.6% (N=20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30%</td>
<td>3.2% (N=1)</td>
<td>5.7% (N=4)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40%</td>
<td>3.2% (N=1)</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.8% (N=1)</td>
</tr>
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<td>41-50%</td>
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<td>2.9% (N=2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>51-60%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
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<td>61-70%</td>
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<td>71-80%</td>
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<tr>
<td>91-100%</td>
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<td>0.0%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Response</td>
<td>22.6% (N=7)</td>
<td>15.7% (N=11)</td>
<td>11.1% (N=4)</td>
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## Table 19: Numeracy

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<td>11-20%</td>
<td>16.1% (N=5)</td>
<td>20.0% (N=14)</td>
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<td>21-30%</td>
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<td>Other Response</td>
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## Table 20: Social Skills

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<td>15.7% (N=11)</td>
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</table>
A Research Study of 36 Behaviour Support Classrooms

Table 21: Learning Behaviour Skills

<table>
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<td>91-100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Response</td>
<td>22.6% (N=7)</td>
<td>15.7% (N=11)</td>
<td>11.1% (N=4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 20: Social Skills

Figure 21: Learning Behaviour Skills
While these findings (Tables 17-21) concerning weekly timetabling should be seen as no more than a general estimation, a comparison of the data demonstrates trends that may provide insights both into the focus of work undertaken across most of the BSCs, as well as the evolution of practice over the two-year period of the programme so far.

For example, with regard to the amount of time that is given to the teaching of the main curricular subjects, a change in emphasis appears. During the first year of the programme, it was reported that the majority of BSC staff (51.6%, N=16) spent over 30% of the weekly timetable teaching mainstream curricular subjects. While it is clear from the ‘Other Responses’ and the percentages provided that BSC staff teach their students mainstream curriculum, the estimated percentage of time spent by more than half of the BSC staff (54.3%/61.1%) in 2008/2009 on this area was less than 30% of their weekly timetable.

Additionally, based on the data provided, it would seem that more attention has been given to literacy instruction during the second year of the programme, with the majority of the BSCs (77.1%/80.6%) allocating up to 30% of the weekly timetable to literacy instruction compared to 38.7% of the BSCs in 2007/2008.

Similarly, the allocation of time for work on numeracy skills would, from the data, seem to have increased since the preliminary research with 72.9% (N=51) of the BSC staff in 2008/2009 reporting that they spend up to 30% of their weekly timetable on numeracy.

The emphasis given to teaching social and learning behaviour skills, in contrast, has remained fairly consistent over the two-year period. For example, respondents during both phases of the research indicated that the majority of BSC staff (74.2%, 81.4% and 80.6%) allocate up to 60% of their weekly timetable for social skills instructions.

Similarly, the teaching of learning behaviour skills comprises a meaningful component of the timetable with similar numbers of staff (77.4%, 82.9% and 83.3%) reporting up to 60% of lessons during a week focusing on learning behaviour instruction.

While the amount of time during the week allocated specifically for teaching mainstream subjects has decreased in many BSCs, this aspect of the curriculum continues to be, and in a number of cases is expected to be, a core element of the work that is undertaken in the classroom. BSC staff are professionally representative of the range of academic disciplines found in second level schools in Ireland, including individuals whose academic training and teaching qualifications include English, Maths, Science, Home Economics, Geography and Art, amongst others.

In highlighting the necessity for a BSC to cover a multi-faceted, appropriately challenging and well-taught curriculum to meet the specific needs of individual students, the Best Practice Guidelines advise that because students need to be able to access the academic curriculum being taught to their peers, it is of “extreme importance that subject teachers, when requested, provide BSC teachers with the necessary information and resources for teaching aspects of their subject in the BSC” (p. 18). In order to gain a sense of the degree to which BSC teachers were facilitated in this aspect of their work with students, respondents were asked to assess approximately the number of subject teachers who automatically provide them with subject-specific work for their students while attending the BSC.

### Table 22 Provision of Subject-Specific Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers Providing Work</th>
<th>Percentage BSC (N=35)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Teachers</td>
<td>11.4% (N=4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Teachers</td>
<td>11.4% (N=4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Teachers</td>
<td>25.7% (N=9)</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Few Teachers</td>
<td>37.1% (N=13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Teachers</td>
<td>14.3% (N=5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0% (N=35)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thus, while the teaching of mainstream subject curriculum is an integral component of the weekly work that is conducted in the classroom, there would appear to be no consistency across the schools in terms of the support provided by subject teachers to their colleagues in the BSC. Some respondents commented that this is an area that has developed over time, frequently with the impetus coming from the BSC staff, i.e. specific requests for texts, worksheets and lesson plans. A number of respondents referred to incidents where this cooperation had yielded positive results for their students, examples of which follow:

*Most staff are aware of our work and assist in the implementation of such.*

*Schemes of work are provided so that we can plan our in class time effectively.*

*Also language teachers provide extra resources to meet the students’ needs.*

*Maths for Fun/Paired Maths and Paired Reading – these were particularly satisfying and successful with good engagement and results. The positive outcomes seem to have lasted!*

*One Junior Certificate student has improved academically this year as a result of contact with us. The subject teachers gave us specific work for him. His mock-Junior results were quite good.*

*Upon reintegration of a particularly high risk student I was able to get the student up to speed and even ahead of the class so that he could answer questions none of the rest could and so gain praise (which I talked to the teacher about before class) and this helped integration for that child in that class to be a success.*

While it would seem that in some schools the degree of cooperation and communication regarding delivery of the mainstream curriculum in the BSC is growing, 51.4% (N=18) of the BSCs staff report that few or none of their colleagues automatically provide them with the materials they need to ensure that students are not at a disadvantage academically when they reintegrate. Some respondents stated that work for students in 3rd year (i.e. year of sitting the Junior Certificate examination) was frequently easier to obtain, while others experienced difficulties across all years.

*BSC staff are also concerned about the lack of information regarding work to be covered by students while attending BSC from mainstream class teachers.*

*BSC teachers have tried a number of different approaches but still find that teachers are very reluctant to give this information. This is frustrating for BSC teachers especially when class teachers complain that students have fallen behind in their subjects on return to class.*

*I believe there needs to be better support in providing work for students in the BSC. Teachers don’t seem to understand the importance of this.*
Regardless of the extent to which support and resources are provided by teachers in subject areas throughout the school, since the inception of the programme BSC teachers have utilised, tested and developed a range of programmes and teaching methods/strategies to support the needs of their students across the five areas measured. Amongst the programmes that respondents highlighted throughout this period as being particularly effective are:

- Check and Connect
- One-to-one mentoring
- CAM programme for anger management
- High Interest Low Level Readers
- SRA Reading Lab
- Retracking
- Circle Time
- Crucial Skills
- The Anger Management Workout Book for Teenage Girls
- Talkabout (Social Communication Skills Programme)

...importantly the student felt as if the student had some place to go just to hear ‘Good ma...’

Important

- Art Therapy
- Assessment for Learning
- Solution Focused Therapy
- Restorative Practice
- Cooperative Learning
- The SALT programme
- IT programmes – Word Shark, Number Shark
- Scaling
- Sleep Diaries
- Anger Management Log
- Fast Forward (IT game for literacy, concentration, observation and behaviour)
- Chalkface Project
- Paired Reading Programme
- Maths for Fun Programme
- Peer Mentoring
- Life Skills Programme
- Equine Assisted Learning
- Fighting Words

- Lexia Reading Programme
- Don Johnson Reading Programme
- Behaviour for my Future – Susie Davis
- Out and About (CD – social skills)
- SPHE programmes
- Escape from Exclusion
- Story Chest
- Spelling Workshops
- Oxbbox Maths
- ANT
- Fixed Up (Anger Management programme)
- How Does it Feel (Social Emotional Literacy programme)
- Wordstart
- On My Own Two Feet (DES – teaching interpersonal/intersocial and personal development)
- www.skool.ie (for curriculum subject materials)
- Sanctuary Programme
- Acceleread/accelewrite
- Books on Tape

- EyeSpy
- Music Workshops
- Behaviour Modification Programme
- Counselling Programme
- Drama Therapy
- Person Centred Approach (Rogers)
- Clicker
- Glasser
- Decoding Skills
- Prime Ed books
- Style
- Cracking the Hard Class – Rogers
- Jenny Mosely books and resources
- Mindful meditation
- Taming Anger programme
- www.changesinme.com (programme teaching the social, emotional and physical changes associated with adolescence)
- Rules and Routines
- Shared Reading Club.
In addition to programmes that had been found effective, BSC teachers were asked to describe any teaching methods or strategies they had used that had worked particularly well with their students. The following accounts (drawn from data provided by both BSC teachers and NBSS personnel) offer a flavour of the approaches that teachers have developed, in all curricular areas, to best address the needs of their students:

Team teaching in the BSC with a group for enhancing their social skills, turn-taking, communication, etc. Some enlightening, rewarding and very funny moments experienced by all. Check and Connect system enabled BSC staff to judge the mood of a student, but more importantly the student felt as if there was someone or more importantly, some place to go just to hear ‘Good man, you’re set for the day’ Important words.

Teaching behaviour/social skills as a subject under various headings. Students responded very well to the Centre of Excellence idea and priority was placed on building relationships and providing support and information. This enabled the focus to be on completing tasks and new learning. The use of the novel has been very effective in developing an interest in reading… IT is used effectively in the development of literacy, particularly the use of Powerpoint. The Learning Behaviour Checklist for teachers has also been developed into a very effective lesson. This gives students an insight into the various areas of behaviour which are observed and noted by teachers.

I also found using novels/reading as a safe way to explore issues with the student as well as engaging them on their hobbies and personal interests… Reading for Pleasure; visits to the park for walks, reading outside; gallery trips to Hugh Lane, National Museum; Art activities – paper making and journals, marbling for memory boxes; jewellery making – kids are so calm during this activity.

To improve literacy and create an interest in reading and writing, we got the students to dictate short stories to us, we typed these and then the students read them back to us. There stories were so good we had the idea to create a book with all the short stories included. The students illustrated the covers. We had a very successful book launch with students, parents and teachers.

Use of visual strategies; differentiation; routine every day in subject; small group work; KWL.  

The KWL (KnowWorkLearn) strategy aims to improve comprehension by activating the student’s background knowledge. The first step (“K”) involves clarifying what the student already knows about the topic. This is followed by identifying what the student wants to learn about the topic (the “W”). The work is concluded with the student writing what they learned (the “L”).
Support students we would have 2 to 4 positive peers.

BSC staff have excellent relationships with students in BSC. Students and BSC staff play games, e.g. chess/draughts, etc, and this gives BSC staff many opportunities to teach social skills. Students regularly make tea for each other and/or visitors and BSC staff. Once again, this is a useful opportunity to teach social skills. One-to-one mentoring takes place with students who have previously attended BSC and conversations are guided through the use of skills cards. This is proving very effective and helpful to students. Students are taken out on a trip/hike at the end of their time in the BSC. This helps them to develop skills of communication, teamwork, perseverance, tolerance and following instructions. Mentors from the LCA are brought on this trip also which has proved highly successful for them and for the BSC students.

The following teaching approaches or strategies also featured consistently in the data:

- Project work based on students’ needs
- Making posters/charts/booklets
- Achievable targets worksheets
- Keyword displays
- Flashcards
- Mind Maps
- One-to-one teaching
- Regular daily contact
- Tiny, tickable tasks
- Group work
- Target setting and incentives
- Allowing students to identify strengths and weaknesses of other students
- Team teaching
- Social skills games – jigsaws, Scrabble
- Emotional Literacy cards
- Strengths worksheets
- Voice volume exercises
- Diary writing by students and parents
- Checklist scores and positive/negative reinforces based on these
- Pair work
- Role play
- Study plans/timetables for exam groups
- Detailed tracking of student behaviour in the classroom
- Positive learning rewards
- Use of IT
- Relaxation for anger problems
- Circle Time
- Solution Focus approach
- Anger management and de-escalation
- ‘Calm, quiet approach’
- Feedback to students
- Validating success
- Empathy
- Tactical ignoring
- Rules and routines
- Neutral stance
- Incidental teaching opportunities
- Student involvement in planning.

### Reintegration

The *Best Practice Guidelines* (p. 17) identifies reintegration as the “fundamental goal” of the intervention and highlights the importance of co-operation and support across the school community. As a BSC student’s reintegration into mainstream classes is so critical, planning and provision for its successful undertaking are essential throughout all phases of the BSC intervention.

While a student is accessing support from a Behavioural Support Classroom, the practices, attitudes and expectations of their teachers and peers in the mainstream may require, and benefit from, attention – in terms of providing assistance with the student achieving his/her targets during the intervention and ultimately in their future reintegration into full-time mainstream classes.

BSC staff were asked to indicate whether they had organised and conducted parallel work with their students’ subject teachers and peers collectively and/or separately prior to reintegration. From their responses it would seem that 51.4% (N=18) have undertaken this type of work to assist with their students’ reintegration (this is compared with 38.7% [N=12] of staff engaging in this work during the first year of the programme). The nature of the work differs from school to school. Some BSC teachers identify “parallel work” with subject teachers as a process of on-going dialogue with colleagues to keep them informed of students’ progress that can

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lead to “sharing teaching methodologies/strategies which have worked in the BSC”.

Other approaches have included encouraging subject teachers to teach in the BSC (while their lessons are taught by BSC teachers); team teaching; co-ordinating Circle Time, paired reading or maths with subject teachers and providing written updates and reports. Despite evidence of the effectiveness of this work, it has been reported that in some cases “subject teachers are reluctant to avail of this support”. Some BSC staff described their programmes of parallel work in these ways:

We do group work with the classes that these students come from. We offer teachers the chance to teach the students within the BSC setting to build a relationship with them. We regularly communicate with the teachers on the work we do with the girls and we look for feedback on their progress in the mainstream class. We also help with activities that a teacher may run with their classes.

We would keep in contact with the class groups of the students that attend the BSC. Mainly see what the atmosphere/mood/behaviour of class is with/without students in BSC. Also an activity day was organised for the class group where most of our clients came from. We organised a team building day for these students.

In addition to the one-to-one support BSC staff provide to students referred to the classroom, teachers have worked with extensive numbers of students throughout the school community – one NBSS respondent cited a BSC that, through parallel work to support reintegration over the school year, “has worked indirectly with up to 100 students” (4.7). The parallel work undertaken by BSC staff with students’ subject teachers and peers is an aspect of the planning procedures that are in place in some schools for student reintegration.

As reintegration is the key objective of the work undertaken during the BSC intervention, it is critical that clear, consistent and operative criteria and procedures are in place in schools for this process. Drawing upon the data provided by the BSC staff, it would seem that in the majority of schools (71.4% [N=25]) clear criteria and procedures exist and are implemented (similarly NBSS personnel indicated that this would be the case in 86.1% [N=31] of the schools).

While it is difficult to determine from the data whether there are any consistent patterns of set criteria for reintegration across the schools, apart from the implicit achievement of targets as stipulated on an individual SBP, it would appear that reintegration tends to operate on a gradual, phased basis in most schools. Within that, there are a range of approaches adopted, some reflecting a systematic, universally applied procedure, others more flexible in that they are based on, and respond to, the particular needs of each student individually.

The following respondents’ returns indicate this:

Weck 1-3: Full-time in BSC, return to some classes. Week 4: Full-time but students return to classes that they have difficulty in. Week 5-6: Return fully to class with BSC teacher team teaching. Students can still return to the BSC room in those weeks if having any difficulty.

1. Student achieving targets in BSC
2. Student achieving targets in classes attended
3. Formal review meeting with Management.

Teachers involved informed and procedure that worked in BSC given to them. My Work at School card to be signed in every class. Check and Connect policy continued every morning and every evening. BSC staff check on casual and structured basis with subject teachers.

Students are initially given a fixed period in the BSC. If reintegration breaks down they may be given a further referral.

Use of Monitoring Cards with targets. Scores are tallied and students must achieve 100% on targets before they are fully reintegrated.

After the course the students get target sheets. The student, a BSC team member and the subject teachers meet to discuss the targets and any issues before the student rejoins the class. During the first
week of reintegration a BSC member will return often to the class to see if targets are reached and see if any other problems arose. After the first week the student will check in daily for the next three weeks and the target sheets will be used to assess the child’s progress. If there are more persistent difficulties, the Check and Connect model can be attuned to suit child’s needs. As the child is back in the mainstream for a few weeks the support will be slowly removed and personal responsibility for the child will take over. The child will be reviewed 4 to 6 weeks back in the mainstream.

Begin integration with subject(s) student feels most successful in – one or two classes on first day. Add in other classes within short time period – 2 to 3 days. Give each student booklet with their own targets laid out. Each teacher scores student’s ability to reach/aim towards targets on 1 to 5 basis. Review these booklets each day and send home to parents also. As targets achieved, or on review of behaviour plan, removed.

Student reintegration management plan is completed thoroughly before student is reintegrated. Strategies that have been successful in BSC and triggers that BSC staff has noticed are highlighted. Teachers complete student target sheet after every class.

Not very clear but hugely linked to the relationship with the teacher and the BSC staff member. There is a lot of support given to students during this time but there is not a formal shape to it, but it works well due to the level of relationship and care that is present in the school.

The programme is designed to facilitate reintegration. Week 1 = Total immersion – students attend BSC for all classes. Week 2 students attend a minimum of three mainstream classes-based on students’ strengths and PE for most. A colour-co-ordinated timetable is given to all students showing them what classes they may attend and what periods they are in the BSC... After 20 days full attendance in the BSC the reintegration process is accelerated on a class-by-class basis, starting with the classes the students choose and the ones in which they are achieving their targets.

Model used has been: 1 week full-time in BSC, then 1 week back in subject classes part-time, then 3rd week fully reintegrated. Has worked well in this school.

In describing how reintegration is conducted within their schools, some respondents indicated that clear criteria and procedures were not applicable per se, to the model that they operate. For example, one teacher wrote “Because we extract students from certain subjects on a daily basis and continue working with these students for the year this does not strictly apply”. On the other hand, other respondents identified ways in which they felt this area of their work would need to be addressed as follows:

At the discretion of Behaviour Support Team… however, this will be reviewed.

… influenced by subject teachers’ views. BSC staff often accept the problem-focused approach of some other staff. It has been difficult for the BSC teachers to reintegrate some students because of this.

The BSC will need continued support in the next year as the school environment is not responsive to reintegration.

There are set criteria and procedures, but there is difficulty with them being implemented. The rate of reintegration of students back to mainstream has not been quick enough. As a result it was insisted that some students must return to mainstream in order to create space for new students.

Monitored when integrated but this is something that we need to develop further.

Varies for each student and planned individually. This is an area which needs more work.

No – we need help and guidelines here. We seem to be dealing with extreme cases and so reintegration has not been an issue as we cannot reintegrate them yet.
Students are encouraged to self-monitor their progress with the use of target sheets for subject teachers as a method for assessing reintegration...

Despite concerns raised by some respondents about the need for additional work on setting consistent and achievable criteria and procedures, it is clear from the data that BSC staff have worked to establish a range of support mechanisms to facilitate their students’ successful reintegration. The extent of pre-planning for reintegration, in a number of cases specifically identified as the completion of a plan (or “Student Reintegration Management Plan” as contained in the Best Practice Guidelines, pp. 44-45), forms the initial level of support that is provided to the student and would seem, from the data, to be systematic and comprehensive in many schools.

Respondents stated that plans for reintegration are routinely discussed and shared with the relevant subject teachers (along with regular conversations and updates). In some cases regular formal meetings during reintegration are held with members of the pastoral team, management and parents. A system of Check and Connect with the student is used widely during reintegration, often on daily or twice daily basis. Students are encouraged to self-monitor their progress with the use of target sheets for subject teachers as a method for assessing reintegration. In some cases, BSC teachers undertake continuous data collection, through use of the NBSS’s Learning Behaviour Checklist (LBC), to track the reintegration process. BSC staff, in addition to continuous communication with subject teachers, report using methods such as shadowing, team teaching and observation to assist their students with reintegration, examples of which follow:

- Students are reintegrated back into classes they can cope with (i.e. experience success personal to the students). Class teachers are informed in advance of student return – meet with BSC teacher here. Teacher cooperation vital to student reintegration success. Discussion with class teacher on how to work successfully with student is completed in advance. Closely monitored here. Teacher verbal feedback also helpful.

- Team teaching for two weeks during reintegration. Helps the teacher also when I have removed students from class if misbehaving.

- The students are aware of the fact that an integration process is in place for them after they have spent time in the BSC and it is made clear that it is part of the success criteria. They are made fully aware of the procedures... Regular meetings take place with the student and the BSC teachers are flexible in their approach as to how much time each student will spend in mainstream. I am aware of instances where the student has been given more time in the BSC during the reintegration process. Monitoring takes place through the SBP, team teaching, regular teacher feedback both orally and via the LBC and through regular student meetings.

- A memo of each student’s reintegration management plan is given to all relevant staff with tips on how to deal with/manage the student’s behaviour.

- Each student attends a mentoring session with a member of BSC staff... The students are welcome to drop into the BSC, and depending on feedback from class teachers, are invited for one period per week to have a cup of tea and a chat.
A student reintegration management plan is completed for each student. Strategies and triggers are highlighted for information for class teachers. A skills monitoring card is given to each student being reintegrated and teachers assess whether or not they have achieved their targets… regular contact with parents.

Consistent data collection continues during reintegration. LBCs are collected and monitored. The BSC team visit students in subject areas during the day, the team also calls parents and meets with them to support the student at this time. Extra supports continue such as pastoral care and counseling where needed. Data are collected from the post reintegration checklist, this indicates student's progress and if additional support, such as increased check in/check out is needed.

All targets are recorded and communicated to subject teachers. There are regular reviews with the students and parents are encouraged to attend. Progress is monitored with input from students and class teachers… Each week the students are encouraged to evaluate their own progress. This is sometimes helped by scaling (solution focused approach). Also My Work at School is completed and used as a method of mapping progress. The Learning Behaviour Checklist is used in the same manner… Reintegration is gradual with intensive support offered to the students. After 2 weeks they are normally reintegrated but ongoing Level 2 support is offered (often Check and Connect model, individual session to set targets, peer work, etc). This will continue until it is felt that the students are managing the reintegration.

As often as possible a BSC staff member will sit in on classes to observe the reintegration process. The students are given a Tracking Booklet for six to eight weeks after the BSC programme is complete and check in with BSC teachers on a daily basis. This accounts for the two hour administration above contact hours. There is also daily contact with the Year Head. There are weekly phone calls home to inform parent about the progress being made.

As illustrated by this range of procedures that are in place in many BSC schools to support students in their reintegration to subject classes, it is clear that the role and participation of mainstream staff is critical in the process. Both BSC staff and NBSS personnel were asked to assess the number of mainstream staff who could be said to be supportive of the reintegration process. Table 23 presents the frequency analysis of the data provided:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff Supportive of Reintegration Process</th>
<th>Percentage of BSCs (BSC teachers)</th>
<th>Percentage of BSCs (NBSS Personnel)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Answer</td>
<td>11.4% (N=4)</td>
<td>0.0% (N=0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Staff</td>
<td>17.1% (N=6)</td>
<td>13.9% (N=5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Staff</td>
<td>45.7% (N=16)</td>
<td>75.0% (N=27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Staff</td>
<td>20.0% (N=7)</td>
<td>8.3% (N=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Few Staff</td>
<td>5.7% (N=2)</td>
<td>2.8% (N=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Few Staff</td>
<td>0.0% (N=0)</td>
<td>0.0% (N=0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0% (N=35)</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0% (N=36)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Research Study of 36 Behaviour Support Classrooms

As a result of the number of ‘No Answers’ from BSC teachers to this question, it is difficult to draw clear comparisons between the data submitted by both sets of respondents, particularly with regard to the second category, i.e. ‘Most Staff’ [is supportive of reintegration]. There is a difference in terms of the third and fourth categories (“Some Staff” and “A Few Staff”) with 25.7% (N=9) of the BSC staff selecting these categories, compared to only 11.1% (N=4) of the NBSS personnel. Nevertheless, while mainstream support for reintegration appears to have been mixed, in the majority of BSC schools (62.9%/88.9%), all or most mainstream staff are perceived by respondents as supportive of the process.

In terms of reintegration and the number of students who had received BSC support in 2008/2009, principals were asked to provide the NBSS with the “number of students who are now fully reintegrated into subject classrooms”. A frequency analysis of the data submitted indicated that according to the principals, 76.9% (N=498) of the 648 students who had attended the BSCs were fully reintegrated. Nearly a third of the principals (27.8% [N=10]) stated that all of their students who had attended BSCs were fully reintegrated, while the majority of respondents (77.8% [N=28]) indicated that this was the case for 50.0% or more of their students.

Additionally, in terms of reintegration, principals, BSC teachers and NBSS personnel were asked to evaluate the degree to which reintegration was successful for students who had attended the BSC during 2008/2009. Table 24 presents the frequency analysis of the data provided.

### Table 24: Success of Reintegration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful for</th>
<th>Percentage of BSCs (Principals)</th>
<th>Percentage of BSCs (BSC Staff)</th>
<th>Percentage of BSCs (NBSS Personnel)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Answer</td>
<td>0.0% (N=0)</td>
<td>11.4% (N=4)</td>
<td>0.0% (N=0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>11.1% (N=4)</td>
<td>0.0% (N=0)</td>
<td>0.0% (N=0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most/Many Students</td>
<td>50.0% (N=18)</td>
<td>51.4% (N=18)</td>
<td>72.2% (N=26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Students</td>
<td>36.1% (N=13)</td>
<td>28.6% (N=10)</td>
<td>22.2% (N=8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Few Students</td>
<td>2.8% (N=1)</td>
<td>8.6% (N=3)</td>
<td>5.6% (N=2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Students</td>
<td>0.0% (N=0)</td>
<td>0.0% (N=0)</td>
<td>0.0% (N=0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0% (N=36)</td>
<td>100.0% (N=35)</td>
<td>100.0% (N=36)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Again, the lack of response to this question by some BSC staff affects drawing a number of comparisons across the data sets. Equally, in interpreting the data, one would need to allow for alternative interpretations of the phrase ’successful reintegration’ (see 4.8 Strengths and Challenges) depending on the respondent’s role within the school. However, there does appear to be a consensus amongst the majority of respondents that most, or at least some, of the students who had received intensive, individualised support in the BSCs had successfully reintegrated into their mainstream lessons at the conclusion of the work.

4.5 My Work at School and Student Responses

As part of the systematic approach to the referral and planning procedures recommended by the Best Practice Guidelines (p. 13), students selected to attend the BSC, are asked to complete the My Work at School questionnaire (Appendix A) prior to the development of their Student Behaviour Plan. The responses students provide to this document are to be used to assist both the BSC staff and the students themselves in identifying areas that might benefit from targeted work during the intervention. The questionnaire has been used in practice to help students identify their perceptions of themselves as learners and, when used at appropriate intervals, to chart how these views evolved over the course of the intervention. Additionally, the NBSS has recommended that students complete the questionnaire at an appropriate and/or relevant time after the intervention, so to gauge the young person’s own response to the work they did in the BSC.

For each of the 14 statements comprising the document, student respondents were asked to select answers that best described how they perceived their own attitudes and/or behaviours on a five point Likert Scale (1 = always, 2 = most of the time, 3 = sometimes, 4 = hardly ever, and 5 = never). Over the course of the data collection period, questionnaires for a total of 363 students were returned to the NBSS. Of these, 80.2% (N = 291) were used for an analysis of central tendency representing the number of returned sets of pre- and post-intervention questionnaires completed fully.

As each of the 14 statements were coded consistently with the Likert Scale used on the questionnaire, a post-intervention mean score lower than a pre-intervention mean score would reflect a positive attitudinal and/or behavioural development over the course of the intervention. Effect sizes calculated were similarly interpreted according to the scale suggested by the APA (3.4) of ≥ 0.8 as strong, 0.3 to 0.8 as medium and ≤ 0.3 as small. Table 25 presents the findings from the analysis of the 291 pre- and post-intervention questionnaires, as well as the calculation of effect size for each of the 14 attitudes and/or behaviours.

33 Full description of research instrument, measurement and analysis procedures is presented in Chapter 3.
To the extent that the data can provide insights into the students' attitudes towards school and their perception of themselves as learners, it is interesting to note that the two statements rated on average by the 291 students, both prior to and after the BSC intervention, as school-related attitudes and/or behaviours they held most strongly were the desire to do their best at school (2.04/1.96) and the enjoyment of learning new things (2.04/1.93). Apart from one instance ("I like school"), the mean score for all statements both pre- and post-intervention indicates students had what could be described as positive attitudes towards their work at school "most of the time" ("2" on the Likert Scale). Nevertheless, the pre-intervention data do highlight attitudes and behaviours related to work at school that could be addressed as part of the support programme undertaken in the BSC. These included the students’ general enjoyment of and contentment in school ("I like school" 3.34; “I feel happy at school” 2.95), their communication and social skills (“I talk to my teachers” 2.87; “I work well in a group in class” 2.71; “I follow instructions in class” 2.71) as well as the organisational skills needed to succeed in school (“I complete my homework” 2.86; “I follow the school rules” 2.86). It is clear from the means analysis of the post-intervention data from the 291 students, that there had been a positive shift in each of the 14 attitudes and/or behaviours related to their work in school. Of the seven highlighted above as those that might have benefited most from BSC support, a medium effect was suggested in terms of their willingness to talk to teachers (.2845), the quality of their work in a group setting (.3221), their readiness to follow instructions in class (.3509) and their ability to follow school rules (.3098). The analysis would indicate that the intervention was less effective in terms of changing the students’ attitude towards completing homework (.1112) and improving their enjoyment and contentment in school (.1243/.1435).

These findings are supported by qualitative data collected in one school over two years (2008 and 2009) by two BSC teachers from the students who attended their classroom. A total of 22 students, from both 1st and 2nd years, completed the student survey prepared by this BSC staff. The questionnaire combined multiple choice and open questions to gain the students’ views on the work they did in the classroom and if, and in what ways, their experiences in the classroom had helped them

Note: Table 25 is not included in the text but is mentioned as a reference.
school. In some cases the teachers transcribed student responses. Copies of all completed instruments were forwarded on to the NBSS for inclusion in the research. The following represent the types of responses students gave with respect to their work in the BSC:

Before I thought school was boring and stupid because I was getting into trouble a lot. It is better now. Not slagging classmates as much as before and treating people with greater respect.

Now I don’t get involved in messing in class before I’d be starting it.

I learned how to think before doing stupid things that would get me into trouble.

I was learning how to be good and not messing all the time in class. I can control it [behaviour] by not getting angry.

I think it was a very good programme. It taught me [sic] to listen a bit more and be more respectful to teachers and students. I learned that you should always have respect and be faithful [sic] for what you get. I also learned to do all my work.

My advice to every new student coming in – you just have to show respect to the teachers and the teachers will show you respect and just do the work and get over it...pay more attention to the work...

If a new student came up to me and asked me what it [the BSC] was all about I would tell him its for people who mess in class, who doesn’t pay attention, who doesn’t do his work and never listens in class. I would also tell him to always do his work because there’s no point being bold anymore because you will get nothing out of it.

...the effectiveness of this type of intensive, individualised behavioural intervention is dependent upon the ethos underpinning the work ... the dissemination and acceptance of that ethos and the quality of the relationships amongst stakeholders particularly matters...

4.6 Ethos & Relationships

As the effectiveness of this type of intensive, individualised behavioural intervention is dependent upon the ethos underpinning the work (2.2.4.1) the dissemination and acceptance of that ethos and the quality of the relationships amongst stakeholders particularly matters. All of the research participants were asked to assess a number of variables associated with these areas. Responding to the question in the 2008/2009 research “Generally speaking, do you think that your colleagues teaching in subject areas have a good understanding of the work you are doing in the BSC?”, the majority (60.0% [N=42]) responded affirmatively. Over a quarter (27.1% [N=19]) described the degree and extent of understanding as uneven with some colleagues more aware than others. Several respondents (12.9% [N=9]) stated that only a few or none of their colleagues understood the work that they do in the BSC.

Qualitative data provided by both BSC teachers and NBSS personnel highlighted the challenges BSC staff have encountered in this regard over the two-year period. Developing effective, bilateral, varied
and regular channels of communication, along with creating opportunities to engage mainstream teaching staff in the day-to-day activities of the intervention, would seem to be successful methods for not only disseminating the ethos and work practices of the BSC, but also for gaining the understanding and acceptance of both by members of the school community. The following responses offer examples of how this is mediated amongst the 36 schools:

Very clear structures and procedures in place in BSC. BSC staff has a very high profile among mainstream staff therefore communication both ways is excellent.

We have a notice board in the staff room and everything is communicated to staff. Also in staff meetings we give a brief overview of what the BSC is doing. We have also invited teachers into the BSC. We speak in an informal capacity to many teachers. We have given written and oral reports at staff meetings in order to keep staff informed. As time has gone by, their understanding is increasing and is now at a good level.

Teachers who visit the room frequently and become involved with our work have a hugely positive impact on students. Team teaching also has worked well. Completing projects with both mainstream and BSC teachers. Open communication.

Being open and asking teachers to become involved in the target setting process (giving their opinion and having a conversation around that with the student).

Ensuring that vital information is shared and passed on (on an hourly basis when necessary). All the work carried out in the BSC involves some level of collaboration and so it is difficult to identify or isolate a particular example. I think collaboration with subject teachers is vital and consider that I have established a good working relationship with staff over the past year.

Myself and my colleague in the BSC made very worthwhile presentations to all staff on a few occasions this year. This helped greatly in their understanding of the BSC programme and our aims. The majority of staff has “come on side” with us in our work with the students – also the junior cycle heads are very supportive of our programme. My colleagues and I worked extremely well together in the BSC to get mainstream teachers on side. At present we have approximately 80% of the teachers working with us and they use us as a resource when needed.

I feel they are better informed and have a better understanding. As the BSC has grown and developed in the school, so too has the understanding of teaching colleagues. They are a little more positive about the benefits of the BSC.

It is clear that this process of gaining colleagues’ understanding, acceptance and engagement with the work being done in the BSC is on-going and dependent, to an extent, not only on the communication skills and efforts of the BSC staff but also to the longevity of the resource within a school. The latter point was raised by one NBSS respondent, who wrote:

…. as this BSC is relatively new (November 08) the focus so far has been on the smooth day-to-day running of the BSC. It is hoped to disseminate BSC work practices and ethos to mainstream staff in the next academic year.

While both the quantitative and qualitative data indicate that in general the work being undertaken by BSC teachers to gain and secure the understanding and support of their mainstream colleagues is effective and may, in some instances, be contributing to developments throughout the school community (4.7 Extending Beyond Level 3 Interventions), it would be misleading to conclude that this is the case uniformly across the schools. Information provided by both BSC staff and NBSS personnel suggests that in a number of schools the former continue to experience anything from colleagues’ indifference to negativity/obstacles to the work they are doing with their students:

Very mixed – some colleagues interested and involved, others are more negative. 50:50 – some colleagues go out of their way to help and find out what we do. Others are less interested especially once they realized they could not dump students in the BSC indefinitely.
I speak at staff meetings and give them memos updating them on the work being done. Some of them choose to inform themselves, some choose to ignore it.

...there are some who have no idea what our work entails, e.g. subject teaching, target setting, etc. A majority of staff have a good understanding. However, I feel there are still a few that don’t – especially those staff we have little contact with.

Some still insisting we need a 'sin bin' as they thought the BSC was going to be!

Generally speaking most do. But like everything there are exceptions which think its learning resource, extra curriculum opportunities and expecting miracles (the student cured of bad behaviour).

It doesn’t matter how many times a presentation/report is given at staff meetings, unless they are directly involved, they don’t understand what we do.

...some are still resistant to teaching methods to help the student adapt/reach his/her potential and reintegrate successfully ... unless our work directly relates to them, e.g. if they are tutor to a class... the feeling is very much detachment from the process and many teachers don’t care to be involved at all. They’re happy to have “trouble-students” removed but less happy to finish relevant paperwork, etc...

The majority of subject teachers have a good understanding – this has resulted from team teaching approach. Some teachers are less engaged and suspicious of the programme.

Unfortunately some teachers (5% approximately) are slow to accept change and a new approach but hopefully over time this barrier can be eroded.

Some of the teachers are very cooperative and encouraging but many are under pressure and don’t have the time to reflect on what’s happening in the BSC Room. Many teachers need training in the importance of teaching positive behaviour across the curriculum. Also a lack of understanding of what behaviour support means.

As effective formal and informal communication channels are critical in this work, in order to triangulate the data, NBSS personnel were asked to assess from their perspective the levels of communication and information exchange between the BSC and mainstream staff. Table 26 presents a frequency analysis of the data with regard to the degree to which BSC staff communicate and/or liaise with their mainstream colleagues while Table 27 depicts the NBSS personnel’s assessment of the quality of mutual communication and cooperation between the BSC teachers and subject teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Communication/Liaison</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicates/Liaises with the Mainstream Staff</td>
<td>36.1% (N=13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicates/Liaises with Most of the Mainstream Staff</td>
<td>44.4% (N=16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicates/Liaises with Some of the Mainstream Staff</td>
<td>19.4% (N=7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicates/Liaises with Few of the Mainstream Staff</td>
<td>0.0% (N=0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not Communicate/Liaise with the Mainstream Staff</td>
<td>0.0% (N=0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0% (N=36)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Figure 26: Communication and/or Liaison with Mainstream Colleagues

Table 27 Mutual Communication and Cooperation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality of Communication/Cooperation</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>25.0% (N=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>36.1% (N=13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>33.3% (N=12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>5.6% (N=2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>0.0% (N=0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0% (N=36)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 27: Mutual Communication and Cooperation
The NBSS personnel’s assessment that 80.6% (N=29) of the BSC staff have developed effective methods and practices of sharing information and approaches with all or most mainstream colleagues supports the qualitative accounts provided by BSC teachers themselves. As both the qualitative and quantitative data suggest, this is an area that requires continual effort in finding opportunities to do so both formally and informally. Similarly the quantitative data from the NBSS respondents that in over half (61.1% [N=22]) of the schools communication and cooperation between BSC and subject teachers are either ‘Excellent’ or ‘Very Good’ would also confirm the qualitative evidence that a great deal of effort has been given to disseminating the ethos of the intervention and building positive working practices in relation to the intervention across schools.

Critical to the understanding of the BSC ethos and its acceptance by the whole school community is the degree to which the Senior Management of the school is supportive of the objectives of the classroom and the work undertaken by its teachers with students. In order to obtain an objective view of the level of support provided by Senior Management to the BSC staff and the work they do, the NBSS personnel were the only group of respondents asked to assess this variable. Table 28 presents the frequency analysis of the data provided.

### Table 28 Management Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Support</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely supportive</td>
<td>50.0% (N=18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very supportive</td>
<td>25.0% (N=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>22.2% (N=8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes supportive</td>
<td>2.8% (N=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not supportive</td>
<td>0.0% (N=0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0% (N=36)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, drawing upon their observations and experiences working within the BSC schools, the NBSS respondents hold the view that the majority (75.0% [N=27]) of senior managers are very or extremely supportive of the BSC and the work that is done by the staff. This finding is supported by qualitative data submitted by the principals themselves (4.8 Identifying Strengths and Challenges) as well, indirectly, by quantitative data they provided. Principals were asked to assess both the degree to which the BSC was effective in teaching and supporting students’ positive behaviours as well as in supporting their learning needs. Table 29 presents the findings from the data submitted by the principals with respect to these two questions.

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![Figure 28: Management Support](image-url)
The majority of principals who responded to the questionnaire stated that the BSC staff in their schools are either extremely effective or very effective both in helping their students to learn positive behaviours for school (72.2% [N=26]) as well as in supporting their learning needs generally (69.4% [N=25]). These findings support the data provided by the BSC staff regarding the allocation of their teaching timetable to the five curricular areas (4.4.3).

In addition to the importance of gaining the support of professional colleagues, an equally vital component of the network of relationships critical to the progress of the work in the BSC is that which is established with the students’ parents/guardians. The need to inform and involve parents/guardians in the planning and implementation of the intervention is emphasised in the Best Practice Guidelines where it is stipulated that parents/guardians are included in the development of the Student Behaviour Plan, as well as kept informed of developments as the SBP is reviewed during the intervention (p. 11). BSC teachers were asked to estimate the frequency with which they communicate with the parents/guardians of their students over the course of an intervention. Respondents reported as follows:

Table 29: BSC Supporting Positive Behaviour and Learning Needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effectiveness</th>
<th>Teaching/Supporting Positive Behaviour</th>
<th>Supporting Learning Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Effective</td>
<td>22.2% (N=8)</td>
<td>27.8% (N=10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Effective</td>
<td>50.0% (N=18)</td>
<td>41.7% (N=15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>22.2% (N=8)</td>
<td>25.0% (N=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes Effective</td>
<td>2.8% (N=1)</td>
<td>2.8% (N=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Effective</td>
<td>0.0% (N=0)</td>
<td>0.0% (N=0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Answer</td>
<td>2.8% (N=1)</td>
<td>2.8% (N=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0% (N=36)</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0% (N=36)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Communicating with and providing feedback to parents/guardians would seem to be a regular aspect of BSC practice, with the majority (65.7% [N=23]) of the BSC staff being in contact with their students’ parents/guardians on a daily or weekly basis. While frequent and regular communication with parents/guardians across the majority of BSCs is consistent, the methods employed by BSCs to facilitate this interchange vary. Often BSC staff implement a weekly, scheduled phone conversation with the students’ homes (and less formally when needs arise). Additionally, other BSC teachers keep parents/guardians informed of the progress their child is making by sending home completed monitoring sheets or target cards that they are asked to return with their signature. Notes in journals or postcards home to report positive developments are also used widely.

A number of the respondents reported that parents/guardians are invited (and encouraged) to attend the regular review meetings staff have with the student during the intervention. Some BSC staff, in order to allay concerns or doubts that parents/guardians may have about the intervention, have worked to involve them more directly in the activities in the classroom. For example, one teacher described the following procedure in his school:

*Parents are included from the beginning of the process. They are kept informed on a regular basis of their child’s progress in the BSC and are invited to attend a coffee afternoon every Friday to chat with BSC staff. Initially attendance at these afternoons was poor however, more and more parents are now attending on a...*
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regular basis and are very supportive of the BSC. Students respond very well to this initiative and are benefiting positively from the interest and support of their parents… The BSC staff report that it is having a favourable impact on student behaviour… students enjoy seeing their parents visit the BSC and hear about their achievements and successes.

In terms of the response of parents/guardians to the intervention, BSC staff were asked whether there had been any positive or negative reactions from parents. The majority (65.7% \(N=23\)) reported that the responses had been positive, one teacher observing that “parents almost relieved that their son/daughter is in receipt of support”. Less than a quarter of the BSC staff (17.1% \(N=6\)) characterised their experience of parental response as mixed. This appeared to stem frequently from initial parental concerns about a possible ‘stigma’ and/or disruption to curricular work by attendance at the BSC. Typically, in these instances, BSC staff worked to allay these worries with parents from the beginning and over the course of the intervention:

Parents in some cases were anxious initially about their son/daughter receiving this support… however, now parents have said at parent/teachers meetings that they are “delighted”.

While not specifically asked to assess the degree to which the students themselves understand the ethos and objectives of the BSC, it is clear from the procedures that are implemented in the classrooms that communicating these to the students and encouraging them to develop ownership of the work they are doing are implicit in the methodology. For example, as advised in the NBSS Best Practice Guidelines (p. 11), initially students are actively involved in the development of their individualised SBPs and subsequently work with BSC staff to reflect upon and evaluate the work they are doing throughout the intervention. The level of continuous communication, reiteration of objectives and/or targets and self-evaluation are evident in the descriptions of the procedures undertaken in the BSCs:

The students are aware of the fact that an integration process is in place for them after they have spent time in the BSC and it is made clear that it is part of the success criteria. They are made fully aware of the procedures. Regular meetings take place with the student.

All targets are recorded and communicated…There are regular reviews with the students and parents are encouraged to attend. After reintegration, progress is monitored with input from students and class teachers. Monitoring sheets are used if appropriate. Each week the students are encouraged to evaluate their own progress. This is sometimes helped by scaling (solution focused approach). Also My Work at School is completed and used as a method of mapping progress. The Learning Behaviour Checklist is used in the same manner.

Each student has a folder for use while they are in the BSC. This folder contains all the work that they do on Behaviour and Social and Emotional Skills. Students complete a self-evaluation on a daily basis on a form contained in the folder. During reintegration students have daily targets – these are recorded on a monitoring form that they give to class teachers who evaluate how they have done in each class. While attending BSC the students spend the first session of each day going through their targets and being reminded of behavioural expectations for the day… Students are very aware of their targets and of behavioural expectations.

In identifying any rewarding aspects of the work she has done in creating and developing a Behaviour Support Classroom over two years, one teacher commented:

When the student really understands why they are in the BSC and makes a conscious decision to change their behaviour. Supporting them in this and seeing the results both in school and at home (via parent contact). Also rewarding to witness small changes in students that were considered “no-hopers”. In comparison to last year I would describe the work carried out in the BSC and its effectiveness as being significantly improved. The BSC is now an integral part of the school and supported by staff. The students are far more accepting of the BSC and no longer consider it something different or separate.
As defined previously (1.3), the NBSS support to schools is comprised of three levels depending on the particular needs of the partner schools. The three levels of support that form the NBSS model are customised to the characteristics, needs and requirements of each partner school on an ongoing basis as change occurs. By adopting this model, with the perspective that learning, teaching and behaviour are intrinsically related, school communities accept the need to develop and implement on-going programmes within the curriculum that address and teach not only the agreed expectations for behaviour, but also attend to the social, emotional, behavioural as well as academic needs of all students.

As substantiated in the literature (1.3), this whole school approach (Level 1) sufficiently supports the needs of the majority of students, while small groups of students may require collective, short-term behavioural interventions and/or academic literacy and learning skills support, (Level 2) to more effectively engage in learning.

While the professional role of the staff in the BSC is responsibility for the planning, implementation and evaluation of Level 3 (intensive, individualised) support for students referred to their classrooms, it has emerged in many of the 36 schools that during the past two years, BSC teachers additionally have initiated, developed and conducted behavioural support work that would be characterised as Level 1 and Level 2. This has included the creation and management of Check and Connect systems in many schools. Varied in approach, these systems frequently are implemented on a daily basis and have extended to supporting students including and beyond those who have, or are, attending the BSCs.

In response to the literacy and learning needs of some BSC students, a number of BSC staff have created and run literacy and learning skills interventions with class and year groups (Levels 1 and 2). Circle Time, conducted by BSC teachers, is a method that has been timetabled for various year groups in some schools. The introduction and development of First Year induction programmes at the beginning of the school year has, in many schools, evolved from the methodologies and strategies used in the BSC and are team-taught with BSC staff. The following provide a flavour of the types of Level 1 and Level 2 initiatives that BSC staff are creating and implementing in addition to the Level 3 support they are providing to their BSC students:

- All 1st years get a four week induction programme to Second Level. With this we focus on rules and routines, organisation, homework and study, choices and consequences…Our room is located beside the 1st year locker area so we go out between classes and move 1st years on. At the start of every day we help students who have difficulty packing their school bags. The Strategy Team (including the BSC teachers) have worked on a Punctuality Initiative for the whole school. We help oversee the maintenance of this initiative…Through working with 1st years you can see that habits formed will work through a whole school approach. Less trouble with 1st years because they haven’t formed “bad habits”. They know what is expected.

- NBSS RDO [Regional Development Officer] devised a programme of work for a difficult 3rd year group. She talked us through it and then we presented it and worked with the students over 6 sessions. I found it very beneficial for the students and was amazed at how positively it was received by them. I also did Anger Management sessions with a 2nd year boy and I feel it went particularly well.

- We offer an introduction with all our 1st year classes going over rules and routines. We also did a bullying workshop for our 1st year students. We have done work with students that have very introvert behaviour. They lack confidence and self-esteem. Along with the NBSS we have done a Level 2 intervention with a 2nd year group.

- We were involved with a full first year group on behaviour and listening. One class of approximately 24 1st years were
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designated for work... two students who have problems when things are not structured for them. Break time. Students join us for break.

We did 1st year workshops on Rules and Routines and worked with specific problem classes. We did work with a 3rd year Science group when approached by the teacher... we also discussed various strategies with the teacher.

1st years – Induction Day, games. Thirteen students (eight not BSC students) – mix of 2nd and 1st years on a Fast Forward – a computer brain training game which improves literacy, concentration, observation and behaviour.

Organisational skills programme – identified eight 1st and eight 2nd year students for an eight-week programme. Daily check in with all students who have completed the BSC course – approximately 20 students daily. We track their progress daily via tracking booklet. Also when in trouble they generally present to the door. Organisational skills for eight weeks with a further eight to ten students.

For all previous students of the BSC. Some curriculum if student is feeling they are falling behind. Mostly in social and behaviour skills, also as an advocate for the student. Helping with any problems before they escalate with the aim of the student eventually dealing with it themselves.

We have been working on a Level 2 support basis with two full class groups and have involved transition years in a paired reading and peer mentoring initiative.

We work with students who have left BSC room when in trouble; work with students who are on long term suspension; anger management with students referred from principal.

I team teach in Woodwork and Home Economics to a 1st year class of which I deal with some individually. We also have a literacy programme.

BSC staff has been involved in Level 2 work in the school – RESPECT programme with 1st year group. This proved very successful and helped disseminate the strategies, skills and philosophy underpinning the BSC.

...Through working with 1st years you can see that habits formed will work through a whole school approach...

4.8 Identifying Strengths and Challenges

In order to gain an overall perspective of the development of the BSC programme in Ireland during the past two years, and, potentially as a means to gain insights into aspects of the programme that should be built upon and areas that will require added effort, both school principals and NBSS personnel were asked to provide their views as to what they would describe as the BSCs’ ‘strengths’ and ‘challenges’. In focusing on the strengths of the work that has developed in the BSCs, NBSS respondents generally referred not only to the exemplary degree of effort and time individual BSC teachers devote to their work with both students and mainstream colleagues, but more specifically about the quality and nature of the relationships that have evolved from this dedication. The following examples provide a sense of this aspect of the BSCs:
Teachers have worked with some very challenging students. There is a sense of striving for progress/achievement evident in the BSC room. Relationships with students are warm but firm.

Teachers are confident in their role and have strengthened their communication with mainstream teachers. They have developed a good monitoring system which is scored weekly to assess student progress. This is discussed fully with students and encouragement provided.

The BSC is very organised and works in a very collaborative approach with the rest of the school. There is a very strong genuine concern for the students.

Both teachers are experienced, highly regarded members of staff; they’ve gained a very high level of cooperation from teachers and the Principal. Very successful with getting parental engagement and support. They have been creative in their support of students, e.g. games at breaktime, BSC staff observing/participating upon reintegration, unannounced celebration with students in April, encouraging teachers to work one-to-one in BSC to rebuild relationship with student, induction module with 1st Year students and teachers. BSC students reading for pleasure has been another very positive development occurring this year.

The very organised and methodical way the programme is run. The extent of the communication between the BSC and the relevant year heads. The three staff work very well together and are computer literate.

To a great extent, the data provided by the principals with respect to the perceived strengths of the BSCs, supported the above comments. Additionally they wrote very specifically about how the building of relationships with the students had impacted beneficially on areas of students’ behaviour (including punctuality, staying on task, in-school truancy) as well as on their individualised experience of life within the school community.

Six of the seven Junior Certificate students who accessed this support passed (with flying colours) and would not have done so if they had not had this support. The NBSS intervention allowed for a positive educational experience for the first time in these students’ lives. Five of the seven have remained in school so retention has improved.

It has definitely kept students in school\(^{35}\) (and not permanently suspended). It helps to teach difficult students the skills they need to cope with mainstream teaching… The BSC teachers acted as mentors during and after their time in BSC classroom which gives these students an adult they can identify with. In very difficult situations these BSC teachers are often the best to help diffuse difficult situations for these students. The keeping of students on task who would otherwise be lost to us.

Meets the needs of individuals who are experiencing a wide range of significant challenges in their learning. Provides social, emotional and behavioural support to our students.

\(^{35}\) Data provided by the principals indicate that of all the students who attended the BSC in 2008/2009, only 5.6% (N=36, \(\bar{x}=1.00\) students per school) went on to leave the schools that year, in many instances because of relocation to different geographical areas.
The BSC gave some students the opportunity to enjoy school and improve behaviour and learning.

The BSC has provided a most needed opportunity for students who find the mainstream classroom challenging, to have a space to reflect on their behaviours and it has allowed other students the opportunity to reflect and also maximise their learning.

Constant level of contact with students – this contact has been proven to raise the self-esteem of our students. The experienced and established teachers have been invaluable to staff and students alike.

It helped to improve the self esteem of students who were experiencing serious difficulties in the classroom. It created space for students which reduced the pressure...

Students get the opportunity to participate more in school life in a positive manner. Marginalised students are given the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

In general the BSC has greatly improved the behaviour and routines of the students who attend.

Two students would not now be in school but for the support of the BSC.

Students experiencing success. Students’ experience of positive aspects of school – some for the first time. Students get chance to develop/show their strengths.

It’s a refuge for students who otherwise find mainstream classes difficult. A strength is the support for teaching and learning for the BSC student and for the wider school community. The smaller groups in the BSC allow for issues/behaviours, etc, to be addressed allowing for the student to better handle “normal” class when s/he rejoins.

In addition to the impact that the work of BSC teachers has had on the educational experiences and outcomes of their students, the principals also highlighted the contribution it has made in terms of providing support to mainstream teachers in the schools. The following provide a sense of this particular strength of the BSCs:

Teachers feel more supported as a result of the presence of the BSC within the school – individual student issues; resources and advice on how to approach a problem class.

The BSC has given the staff huge support in dealing with these students and as a result the rest of the school population has greatly benefited.

The BSC has mainly supported teachers by helping them to deal with very challenging behaviours. When teachers learn how to deal with it, then there are less suspensions, conflicts are resolved and students learn.

Makes the school more calm thereby improving the learning environment. Reassures staff that students’ behaviours can be modified.

All students are aware of the support and work of the BSC. This has had a positive impact on the reintegration of students to class – students are supportive of each other. Classes have been able to continue without the excessive disruption that might normally happen. Thus maximises teaching and learning.

It has made teachers more aware of and sensitive to the needs of students... increases the awareness of the complexity of the social/personal issues affecting student behaviour. Teaching staff changing emphasis of interactions with students, i.e. praise more often than correction. Deepening an understanding of the causes of challenging behaviour. More holistic approach to each particular student’s situation. The ability of teaching staff to re-think their interactions with students and teaching methodologies.

Calmer classrooms, better learning environment for other students, less stress for teaching staff. Teachers recognising the need for help and asking for it. More options available for teachers dealing with disruptive students.
The particular value that the presence of a BSC within a school has contributed to improving the teaching and learning environments within mainstream classrooms, according to many of the principals, reverberates across the school as a whole. In considering the strengths of the BSC within their school, principals were asked to consider whether the work done in the classroom has had an effect across the school community collectively:

- The BSC has promoted positive behaviour on a whole school basis.
- Child-centred, multi-disciplinary approach to teaching and learning.
- A broadening of the burden. A realisation of the complexity, difficulty and need for multi-faceted approach. A unifier of our behaviour management systems and code of discipline.
- The BSC has had a very positive effect on classroom learning. The flow of knowledge on behaviour (positive) of students to other teachers has made an enormous difference to the school community.
- Skills learned by the BSC staff were adopted by many other staff members...
- The honesty the students showed me. Building relationships with them. Watching them grow and try their best. Having a student say thank you to me after teaching her to tell time.
- Seeing children who otherwise would not attend school make a real effort and succeed in some ways in participating in school life. Giving children who do not have family support help in achieving their goals.
- One student I take first class every morning mostly to gauge his mood. He would have come in previously and caused havoc in a lot of the first classes of the day. My taking him every morning gives him a chance to prepare for the day both mentally and physically. While he is still causing havoc it is less and teachers have noticed and commented on the change within him.

In order to gain a more personalised perspective of what could be defined as strengths of the BSC programme operating in schools during the course of the two years, BSC teachers were asked to share any aspects or examples of their work that they had found personally and/or professionally rewarding. All respondents provided specific and/or general examples of elements of their work that had been particularly rewarding including the following:
Making school enjoyable for some of the students who have worked with us. Seeing how pleased they are with themselves when they experience success. Going home happy from school.

We have on occasion been successful in repairing relationships between students and their teachers. Helping children find pride in their work.

By helping students complete tasks in small groups, experience success and learn that it’s okay to have pride. To see this transfer to mainstream classrooms has been a high point for me.

We made considerable progress with one pupil who had maintained a wall of silence before entering the BSC. We managed to get him to talk. Another pupil told us that since he had begun attending the BSC he now wanted to get his work and homework done.

The student, when he first came to the BSC had huge difficulties communicating with teachers and peers. Now he is socially interacting with both and is now able to joke and laugh with people – all from the relationships built with BSC staff.

Students were still in school to sit exams. Students would have left or been suspended and would not have Junior or Leaving Certs.

Seeing most of the students we worked with last year coping on their own this year.

On Junior Cert results day we had a student who said he’d never have got the results he got if he hadn’t been in the BSC with us. He is now doing well in 5th year. He was a student who we thought wouldn’t return after Junior Cert.

The relationship that I build up with the students and the trust they instill in me is the most rewarding. One of the students got 80% in a science test (I’d done some revision work with him) and was so thankful to me for helping him. That’s rewarding!

In recognising the strengths and tangible, and in some cases more ephemeral, achievements of the BSCs in the 36 schools, it is also instructive to identify areas that require additional attention and emphasis in order to develop the programme into the future. BSC staff themselves listed a number of aspects of their work that they felt would benefit from on-going effort both within the school and in some cases, from external sources. Areas highlighted included
respect to some of their colleagues “many expect miracles and all behaviour problems to be solved in the 6 weeks the students are in the BSC”.

The minimal likelihood that a relatively short-term behavioural intervention can produce a ‘cure-all’ for challenging behaviour (often deeply established) is evidenced not only by the qualitative data demonstrating the on-going, informal support BSC teachers provide to students who have fully reintegrated, but also to the statistical data submitted by the principals with regard to the number of students who returned to the BSC on a part-time basis, after their first BSC intervention.

Of the 648 students who had attended the BSCs in 2008/2009, the principals reported that 35.0% (N=227) had returned subsequently to the BSC on a part-time basis. The number was substantially less for those students who had returned to the BSC on a full-time basis, after their first BSC intervention (only 10.2% of the total or 66 students across the schools). The principals made the following observations about the difficulties that would appear to be inherent in the reintegration process at this point in time:

- The transfer of skills acquired in the BSC to mainstream classes can pose difficulties for some students.
- At times a very difficult student who cannot be in BSC for all his/her classes can be difficult in normal class as they are not getting the individual attention they get in the BSC – for some they would love to be there all the time as it is safe. Also backup of parents can be difficult – they don’t always keep their side of the contract.
- Balance between behaviour support and reintegration. Ongoing behaviour problems with a small minority of students. Bringing some teachers on board.
- The time allocated to students must be flexible – 6/8 weeks may be too short for some students.
- No “quick-fix” to many of the behavioural problems. Despite access to the NBSS intervention many students’ behaviour often kept falling short of the accepted norm.
- Challenges – aspects of reintegration, adjusting to models, patience vis-a-vis change.
- Short-term intervention not always enough. Some students need long term support.
- Challenges – reintegration; follow-on support once students return to main class; convincing staff (teachers) that addressing the needs of a small number of students with extra resources is “worth it”.
- Progress often not seen with some difficult students.
- Some people expect miracles to happen. Attitudes change slowly.
Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter aims to analyse, discuss, and draw conclusions from the findings presented in the study of the introduction and implementation of an intervention of Behaviour Support Classrooms in 36 post-primary schools in Ireland. However, prior to any such undertaking, it is critical for safeguarding the interpretations and conclusions that readers may draw, to assure the intended integrity of the research process by acknowledging the perceived restrictions of the work and the methods that were employed to address these possible limitations.

5.1 Perceived Restrictions of Study

The research undertaken for this study was made possible by the National Behaviour Support Service. The author of this report is employed as the Research and Development Officer for the organisation as a whole and is guided by the service’s mission statement – Promoting and Supporting Behaviour for Learning. As described previously (Chapter 1), the NBSS philosophically advocates a whole school approach to positive behaviour for teaching and learning with provisions (Level 2 and Level 3, including Behaviour Support Classrooms) for those students who require additional support in order to enhance their experience of education. The latter consists of a needs-based, child-centred approach to offering students tangible and specific opportunities to learn the behavioural skills all young people require to interact effectively within their school communities.

This ethos is reflected in the preliminary and on-going training and support that the NBSS has provided to schools and to BSC staff particularly during the two years of the programme. The guiding principle that behaviour is intrinsically linked to teaching and learning informs and compels the work that is undertaken by the NBSS, including the research, and so contributes to the manner in which the findings of this study were accumulated, interpreted and presented.

Specifically with respect to Behaviour Support Classrooms, the NBSS as part of its criteria and aspirations for the programme, espouse research findings in the United Kingdom that state that these classrooms can and should be seen as ‘centres of excellence’ in the promotion of successful learning and behaviour strategies (Hayward, 2002; McSherry 2004, 2005; Sproson, 2004). This concern for the quality and value of the programme within each of the current 36 schools is coupled both with the need to account for the investment in the resource through the measurement of pre-determined objectives and outcomes, as well as the role the NBSS inhabits as a support service.

By its very definition, and through its on-going association and work with the schools and individuals involved, the NBSS primarily aims to support, and in so doing, help members of school communities to identify and build upon what is working well and address areas that may require development. Working in this capacity with the 36 schools, the NBSS would not only philosophically argue that this type of intervention can make a meaningful contribution to the promotion of positive behaviour for learning, but would also be eager that the programme as a whole could be shown to do so.

Therefore, the challenge in terms of the objectivity and value of the research, is to try to balance philosophical proclivities with the transparent measurement and presentation of specific outcomes (evidence), but also to ensure that these findings are not merely a short-term means to providing superficial solutions to complex issues or
justify central expenditure, but rather contribute to developing knowledge both practically and theoretically.

Increasingly it is argued that methodological triangulation, the use of different methods to generate data, not only extends the scope and depth of the findings, but also contributes to the scientific rigours of the study. This study adopted a triangulated approach in its research design with instruments designed to capture the views not only of the teachers working within the BSCs, but also those of school management and NBSS personnel who have worked with the teachers piloting the BSC programme. A central element of the data analysis process was the coding of themes that suggested and/or provided evidence of areas of the programme that will require attention in the future if the effectiveness of the work is to be sustainable over time. This aspect of the analysis was presented amongst the reported findings and will feature in the discussion below (5.2).

The additional limitations that are perceived as evident in the research design and implementation are related to a degree to the then nature of the programme – in that classrooms, staffing, procedures and practices were in a state of initiation and development over the course of the research study. Data collected over a relatively short period can only accurately present a flavour of the work being done, the accomplishments, the challenges and the potential for this behaviour intervention programme.

A limitation of the study is the absence of first-hand narratives from subject teachers and parents/guardians. Additionally, the role of the students in the research was limited apart from their completion of student questionnaires. Researchers are increasingly aware of the need to develop and employ collaborative and respectful methodologies when working with children and young people. It is critical, in terms not only of the research but as well for the overall support that the NBSS offers to partner schools, that we recognise, understand, heed and respond to the voices of the young people attending the BSCs. The challenge, in terms of the research, is how best to provide, with the greatest of care, avenues and opportunities for the students to contribute their experiences and observations in order not only to highlight and celebrate the achievements that individuals have made within this intervention, but as well to document and disseminate good practice. The next phase of NBSS research (2010/2011) will be a qualitative project capturing the voice of the student.

...Through their continued attendance at NBSS in-service, their on-going shared dialogue as a group of educators and their willingness to independently explore, adapt and evaluate different programmes, strategies and methodologies, the BSC staff collectively have shown professionalism and unquestionable dedication in their work with students...
5.2 Discussion of Findings

As delineated in both Chapters 2 and 3, the intention of the research was to study, describe and analyse the establishment, implementation and effects of the Behaviour Support Classrooms during a period of two years (2007/2008 – 2008/2009) in 36 post-primary schools in Ireland. From the outset, it was envisaged that the findings would not only provide a descriptive account and provisional assessment of the programme, but also augment areas of research internationally with regard to on-site tertiary behavioural support and the association between learning and behaviour. In analysing the qualitative data provided, particularly from principals and BSC teachers, it became evident that elements of these narratives suggest unanticipated possibilities for the potential significance of the intervention both within the individual schools themselves and perhaps for post-primary education in Ireland generally.

International studies have shown that children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties have fewer positive interactions with teachers (Jack et al., 1996), receive less praise from teachers (Sutherland & Wehby, 2001a) and have weaker social networks with peers within the mainstream (Panacek & Dunlop, 2003). Over time, as they progress from primary to secondary education, many of these students increasingly recognise that teachers perceive them in a negative light (Montague & Rinaldi, 2001). This realisation often has an adverse effect on their self-esteem (Montague & Rinaldi, 2001) and frequently may exacerbate their fragile social skills, as well as their ability to develop friendships with peers (Martin, 2006). In defining how schools can encourage positive behaviour, The Scottish Executive (2001) stated that:

Children and young people should learn in an environment which offers well-judged praise and recognition of achievement, and which looks for and focuses on their strengths, takes them seriously and shows a genuine interest in them (p. 9).

Based on the evidence provided by the research participants, it is clear from the findings that in the first two years of the programme BSC staff have endeavoured to create such an environment within their individual classrooms. Through their continued attendance at NBSS in-service, their ongoing shared dialogue as a group of educators and their willingness to independently explore, adapt and evaluate different programmes, strategies and methodologies, the BSC staff collectively have shown professionalism and unquestionable dedication in their work with students.

As outlined above, because of the limited duration of the data collection period, as well as the relatively recent implementation of the programme, one would have to proceed cautiously in drawing any conclusions about the impact of the BSC staff’s methods, efforts, commitment and the programme as a whole with respect to both short and long-term effects. Nevertheless, in terms of providing a provisional sense of whether the programme has led to change for students, the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data would suggest that the BSCs have had a positive effect. For example, in terms of changes in the students’ attitudes to school and themselves as learners, the analysis of the My Work at School data demonstrated that in each of the 14 categories, students identified positive change at the conclusion of the intervention. Areas where development appears to be most striking include working well in class both independently and in a group, following their teachers’ instructions and school rules.

Research from the United Kingdom (Hayward, 2002; McSherry, 2004, 2005; Sproson, 2004) highlights the importance of the presence of suitably qualified and experienced full-time teaching staff in the behavioural support classroom, as well as the provision of adequate resources for the intervention. In respect of the latter, it was reported during the first year of the programme that adequate resources were not in place in a number (16.1%) of the BSCs. Over the course of the second year, it is clear that to a great extent this situation has been rectified with staff in the 36 BSCs reporting that generally resources are, at the very least, adequate for the work that they do. Additional important resources, identified primarily through the development or emergence of needs as their work evolves over time, have been highlighted in Chapter 4 and will require consideration both by the NBSS and the managements of the schools in question.
Staffing models over the period of the two years have undergone minor alterations with the majority of schools employing two or three teachers within the classroom. Qualitative data from the preliminary research demonstrated that there was no consensus amongst BSC teachers as to the merits of having a full timetable in the classroom. This would be borne out with the findings of this study that show that half of the BSCs employ a full timetable model, whilst others have a range of different allocations. The benefits (and/or detriments) of the full timetable model, from the perspective of teachers’ views of their ability to conduct work in the BSC, their own professional development and job satisfaction – as well as whether this has any tangible effect on the progress students make over the course of the intervention – would be an aspect of the programme that could be investigated in more depth in the future.

Following from a consideration of teachers’ full-time or part-time presence in the classroom, the model of student attendance in the BSC was additionally a variable that was measured both in the preliminary research and in this study. McSherry (2004), in identifying the key aspects of an effective Learning Support Unit, includes students’ “continued attendance at successful lessons” (p. 5) whilst receiving individualised behaviour support. Data from the preliminary research revealed that almost a third (32.3%) of BSCs initially had operated a full-time attendance model with their students although little information was provided about how this was applied and its efficacy. A shift has emerged since, with only a small percentage (5.7%) employing this particular approach. Most BSCs are now implementing a part-time attendance model. The qualitative data suggest that decision-making about attendance has become more flexible. Based on the evidence they collect, BSC staff assess and address the particular needs of each individual young person when developing a programme of work in the BSC.

The Behaviour Support Classroom Best Practice Guidelines reiterate international findings (Hayward, 2002; McSherry, 2004, 2005; Ofsted, 2006; Sproson, 2004; Thompson, 2000) that there should be clear criteria and procedures for evidence-based referrals to the Behaviour Support Classroom. Over the course of the two-year period it would be accurate to state that increasingly schools have become more methodical in referral procedures and assessments, with over a quarter of the 36 reported to be employing the practice advocated by the NBSS in the Best Practice Guidelines. The majority of schools appear, based on the data provided, to have established effective, systematic procedures for this preliminary stage of the intervention, yet in places there continues to be evidence periodically of inadvertent inconsistencies or gaps, and in some isolated cases instances whereby systems are by-passed to accommodate needs which have been perceived as particularly unique or critical.

Evidence of the positive evolution of the programme can be found in the data related to Student Behaviour Plans and target setting. Over the course of the two years, the number of BSCs reported to implement as part of regular practice individualised target-setting has remained consistently high, while the development of Student Behaviour Plans for each student has risen from 83.9% to 94.4%. Increasingly, the process of developing the latter is informed by the data collected as part of the referral procedure as well as through discussion with the particular student.

While initially, parental involvement in this aspect of the intervention was limited, it would appear that schools are increasingly encouraging parents/guardians to play an active role both in the creation and evaluation of the Plans. Additionally, in part through the encouragement of the NBSS, an increasing number of BSC staff (from a reported 25 in 2007/2008 to 32 in 2008/2009) are, as part of their individualised intervention planning, reviewing or requesting educational assessments to better address their students’ learning behaviour needs.

In this respect, a particularly critical (albeit not unanticipated) finding of this study was the extent of the difficulties students attending the BSCs experience with reading. Of the 539 reading assessments submitted, the findings that almost half of the students (46.6%) scored a reading age of six to nine years, that over three-quarters (76.0%) were reading three or more years below their chronological ages, and only 5.2% of the cohort were reading at or above their chronological age, presents a somewhat worrying view of these young people’s past and current experiences in the educational system and how their day-to-day encounters with curricular tasks might impact on their self-esteem and views of self-efficacy. In his
submission to the National Inquiry into Teaching (Australia, 2005) Rose states that:

Students who are not able to independently learn from reading by the end of primary school will not be prepared for the pedagogic mode of secondary schooling and will immediately begin to experience failure (p. 5).

Bandura et al., (1996) in a study of the association between young people’s reading and numeracy scores with their educational aspirations and self-efficacy, found that students’ belief in their self-efficacy with regard to these basic skills “… contributed to pro-social behaviour and reducing vulnerability to feelings of futility and depression”, (p.126). The authors additionally make a link between efficacy and aspirations impacting the development of positive peer networks that help protect young people from engaging in negative behaviours in school.

There is a lengthy history of research studies providing evidence that academic problems promote, or at least exacerbate behavioural problems (Byrne & Smyth, 2010; Miles & Stipek, 2006; Nelson, Martela, Marchand-Martella, 2002; Verdugo & Schneider, 1999). Trzeniewski et al. (2006) in demonstrating that there is an association between reading achievement and behaviour state that this relationship is “primarily environmentally mediated and probably explained by a reciprocal process that unfolds over time” (p. 85). It is clear, over the course of the two years, both from the experience and expertise of the BSC staff alongside the emphasis placed on this area by the NBSS through literacy and learning in-service training, the creation of an extensive range of literacy and learning resources, school-based literacy and learning action research projects and the allocation of literacy and learning grant funds to each of the 36 BSCs, that supporting students’ literacy and learning needs increasingly has become a focus of the work being done in the intervention across the country. This is apparent in the increase, over the two-year period, in time allocated in the weekly timetable for literacy and study skills work reported by BSC teachers in addition to their teaching of social and learning behavioural skills and mainstream curriculum subjects.

Over the course of the two years, there has been on-going experimentation with regard to the balance of academic and behavioural /social skills instruction that has taken place in the BSCs. It would seem, from the qualitative data, that the most effective strategies employed in this regard were those that endeavoured to teach social, learning behaviour and literacy and learning skills through the mainstream curriculum with some subject areas more conducive to this methodology than others.

The research literature from North America (2.3) suggests that the over-emphasis there in EBD classrooms on social skills and behaviour management has, over the past 40 years, resulted in increasing the rate of EBD students’ deficits in educational skills, educational attainment and long-term quality of life. Research in the United Kingdom (McSherry, 2004; Ofsted, 2006) recommends that work in this type of on-site provision needs to address students’ learning as well as emotional and behavioural needs.

Directly related to the issue of curricular balance in the BSC, is the difficulty some BSC staff have experienced, since the inception of the programme, in obtaining adequate resources and information from their colleagues for the delivery of mainstream curricular subjects. This would be an area where some schools have experienced change, frequently as a result of regular overtures made by BSC staff to subject teachers requesting texts, materials and assessment guidance. Team teaching with mainstream colleagues, both in the BSC and in general classrooms has proven one effective means not only to ensure that BSC students have consistent and adequate access to the mainstream curriculum during the intervention, but also to extend understanding of the programme throughout the school community.

However, despite the importance of ensuring that students have appropriate access to the curriculum, if for no other reason to assist in their eventual reintegration at the end of the intervention, half of the respondents reported after two years that few or none of their colleagues automatically provide them with the materials they need to ensure that students are not at an academic disadvantage when they reintegrate. Bearing in mind the scope of the work that BSC teachers are undertaking with their students in a relatively short period of time as well as the importance of ensuring that students are not placed at an educational disadvantage, it would be advantageous for steps to be taken to bridge this gap in those schools where there are difficulties gaining mainstream support and resources.
In their discussion of the implementation and operation of BSCs, the Task Force (1.1) states “the aim of placement in a Behaviour Support Classroom is to prepare the student in all cases to return to his/her regular classroom” (p. 102). McSherry (2004) states that clear criteria for exit are essential to successful reintegration, should be “agreed prior to the intervention” (p. 34) and that reintegration must be carefully planned with the student’s view taken into account. The findings from the preliminary research (Henefer, 2008) indicated that in many of the BSC schools reintegration could be accurately described as a ‘work in progress’ with the implication that the degree of criteria identification and planning that McSherry recommends was absent or at best inconsistent in the majority of schools. This is an area that, based on the data collected during the second year of the programme, seems to have improved with the majority of respondents (71.4% BSC staff, 86.1% NBSS personnel) reporting that not only are clear criteria and procedures for reintegration in place but are also consistently used. It would appear from the data that during the second year of the programme, schools have done much to address some of the difficulties with reintegration that arose in the first year.

Nevertheless, persistent issues emerge as challenges for schools in terms of students’ reintegration. Most particularly these would include unrealistic expectations of change held by members of the school community which can (and do) descend into negativity; recidivism and/or re-referrals for Level 3 support; students’ difficulties in consistently translating the skills they have acquired in the Behaviour Support Classroom across all learning environments within the school and, because of their concern for the latter, the risk that BSC teachers will become over-stretched in their efforts to provide long-term Level 2 support to their students whilst providing intensive support to newly referred young people.

The positive developments that have taken place for students attending BSCs over this two-year period have been, to a great extent, reliant on the effort, interest and extensive commitment of the individuals who have taught in the classrooms. In terms of the sustainability of the programme as a whole, should these particularly dedicated individuals (for either professional or personal reasons) leave their work in the BSC there is a question of risk as to whether the intervention will continue to positively evolve. To a great extent, however, the introduction and implementation, with the support of the NBSS, of evidence-based procedures and practices related to all of the stages of the intervention, will ensure that a consistent, transparent system for Level 3 work is established in BSC schools that will sustain variations in both staff and students.

However, the issue of reintegration provides a collective challenge not only in terms of developing and implementing effective systems within schools but also with regard to arriving at a practical vision for inculcating positive learning behaviour across whole school communities. Generally speaking, the model of reintegration that has developed across the 36 BSC schools could be described as gradual, phased, flexible and supportive. Perhaps one could assert that alongside the development that has taken place in the schools during the two years of more transparent and systematic procedures related to the intervention, is an evolution in the manner in which ‘reintegration’ is conceptualised. From his own investigations in the United Kingdom, Sproson (2004) states “the evidence that LSUs have managed to ‘cure’ students and move them back away from the need for support within two terms is not clear” (p. 173).

As with the shift over the two years of the BSC programme from a more widespread use of a full-time attendance model to one that is more fluid and responsive to the particular needs of each student – a development that one could argue is entirely appropriate and logical because the BSC is a child-centred, individualised intervention – so too it may be fitting and timely to define “reinte-
A Research Study of 36 Behaviour Support Classrooms

In evaluating any educational initiative, one sets out to measure the impact of the programme over a designated period of time and hopefully then, if the results suggest the achievement of predetermined objectives, a renewed study of the evidence gathered may lead to thoughts concerning ways in which the initiative could be not only maintained, but developed, extended and deepened over time.

Throughout this report the Behaviour Support Classroom has been described as an intensive, individualised behavioural intervention. Tilly and Flugum (1995) define an educational intervention as “a planned modification of the environment made for the purpose of altering the environment in a prespecified way” (p. 485). Thus, a school-based behavioural intervention is comprised of specific planning that addresses a range of variables that may be affecting behaviour with explicit goals and strategies for changing those behaviours causing concern.

Responding to evidence that challenging behaviours exhibited by some post-primary students persistently disrupts effective teaching and learning in mainstream classrooms, the Task Force recommended the introduction of Behaviour Support Classrooms for those schools that consistently have on roll significant numbers of challenging students with the express purpose being “to help the student to develop the requisite dispositions and self-control to behave in a co-operative way in his/her regular class” (p. 144). Both the qualitative and quantitative data from this study would suggest that, while encouraging, outcomes vary across the cohort of students if taken collectively, attempts to quantify the intervention’s results for individuals, particularly in the long-term, are practically speaking, unattainable at this juncture.

Nevertheless, the evidence presented in Chapter 4 does indicate that not only is the intervention having a positive effect on students’ experiences of education, but also that it is impacting on areas
outside the walls of the BSC whether in the sense of temporarily relieving stress in the mainstream classroom or more importantly, in providing a model for innovation across a school community. Drawing upon decades of research related to change in social systems, Rogers, in his seminal work *Diffusion of Innovations* (2003) states that an innovation is:

an idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by an individual… It matters little, so far as human behavior is concerned, whether or not the idea is “objectively” new as measured by the lapse of time since its first use or discovery. The perceived newness of the idea for the individual determines his or her reaction to it. If an idea seems new to the individual, it is an innovation (p. 12).

As described in Chapter 1, the NBSS draws upon research and established practice internationally in proposing that in order for schools in Ireland to most effectively develop and maintain positive teaching and learning environments that will address the needs of all members of the school community, a whole school approach with shared responsibility is critical. ‘Whole school’, as reiterated by the NBSS, is conceptualised as three levels of behaviour support comprised of consistent and explicit teaching and reinforcement of expectations, rules, routines and reciprocal respect. The term ‘whole school’ in this instance is defined as all members of the school community. While the philosophical rationale underpinning the Behaviour Support Classroom is neither unique to Ireland, nor novel in that the practice in schools throughout the country would reflect a commitment to child-centred pedagogy and concern for the well-being of all students, the programme is innovatory in that it provides a practicable model that can be developed and extended to ameliorate or initiate a whole school approach to positive behaviour.

It is essential, particularly because of the quality of the work that is being undertaken in the BSCs, that the intervention is not regarded or measured as a ‘quick fix’ or ‘add-on’ for a complex and recurring condition that exists in many schools in Ireland. The diffusion of the innovative methods and approaches to developing positive learning behaviours through the schools that have BSCs already (i.e. Level 1 and 2 behaviour work) may, in the long-term provide an effective model that could be replicated throughout Irish schools.

In reviewing research from the 1980s conducted in over 1,000 post-primary schools that had significantly reduced the occurrence of challenging behaviours (Wayson, et al., 1982), Watkins and Wagner (2000) conclude that rather than there being one particular intervention(s) per se that improved the teaching and learning environments, common characteristics existed across the schools that could be attributed to improvement. Amongst these was a whole school approach that concentrated on causes as opposed to symptoms with programmes that “emphasised positive behaviours and used preventative measures rather than punitive actions to improve discipline” (p. 27). In considering and applying these characteristics to schools of the 21st century, Watkins and Wagner conclude that:

*a crucial issue in our understanding of improving school behaviour is highlighted: it seems that well-behaved schools are effective social systems, and to become more like them we need to consider how to improve various social processes. But very many of the interventions which are suggested for improving school behaviour treat the school as a machine, and ask what add-on we think of which will fix this? The distinction between social system and machine is important when viewing the school as an organisation (p. 26).*
Chapter 6: Conclusion

The situations/circumstances that these kids come from … school is sometimes the most solid and consistent thing in their lives. Our intervention really can make a difference in their lives.

Working intensively with students is like watching grass grow; it’s slow and you don’t notice change but when someone points it out to you, you get a nice surprise.

Small steps and you can’t change everything.

This account of the first phase of the NBSS Behaviour Support Classrooms reflects not only the logistical realities of establishing an innovatory behavioural programme in post-primary schools in Ireland, but also depicts the challenges, achievements and insights accrued by the many individuals who contributed to its development and continue to work on its evolution.

In his analysis of LSUs in the United Kingdom, Sproson (2004, p. 168) states that because every school and every student therein are unique, it is inevitable that each classroom will vary depending on these characteristics and the particular needs of those individuals participating in the interventions. However, drawing upon a set of standard criteria established by the UK Department of Education and Employment’s Annex C to Standards Fund Circular (Supplement) 24(b) Secondary School Learning Support Units (Thompson, 2000), Sproson does assert that there are a number of common features that should be manifest in the establishment, procedures and day-to-day practices of the classrooms in order to ensure positive, successful outcomes. Included amongst these is the criteria that:

pupils all view the LSU as a place for ‘rigorous learning’ which ‘supports pupils in mastering the challenge of school and raises their self-esteem and motivation in a caring and positive atmosphere’ (p. 169).

The qualitative data collected for this study of Behaviour Support Classrooms in Ireland indicate that the 36 schools have been successful in creating environments in which the majority of students feel cared about and supported. Additionally, the data suggest that in many cases students’ motivation to improve their academic work raised. Elevated self-esteem as a result of attendance in the BSC, while qualitatively a subjective assessment made by some of the adults who participated in the study, may be supported in the case of some students through the effect size changes in their own attitudes to school and perceptions of themselves as learners (as discussed in the analysis of the My Work at School and Student Responses (4.5)).

The quantitative and qualitative data reveal that the work that has been done with students over the two-year period has, in the short-term, helped them to better meet the behavioural requirements and challenges of school that had, prior to the intervention, proved impossible for these young people to address for a range of reasons. The
attention and time that BSC teachers have given to
the explicit teaching of learning behaviour skills,
social and emotional skills, curricular materials and
literacy and learning skills would suggest that the
Behaviour Support Classrooms are very much
centres of ‘rigorous learning’.

As highlighted in Chapter 5, this study, while drawing
upon a range of data sources in an effort to accurately
portray the inception and development of the
programme and evaluate its impact, is limited in its
scope in a number of ways. It will be important as the
programme continues for the NBSS to encourage and
support more in-depth, longitudinal studies of the
work taking place in the classrooms.

Future research should explore additional methods
for measuring both the short-term and long-term
effects of the intervention on students’ educational
experiences, attitudes and achievements. In so doing,
it will be critical to capture more extensively the
impressions and insights both of the young people
and their families, as well as longitudinal quantitative
data regarding attendance, school retention rates,
academic results as well as progression to further
education and/or employment.

It is clear from the qualitative data gathered for this
study that teachers within the BSCs are testing and
adapting an extensive range of programmes
and strategies to best address the needs of their
students, whether they be behavioural, social/
emotional, literacy and learning, and/or general
academic needs. As demonstrated in the developing
literacy and learning research work being undertaken
in some classrooms, schools and the NBSS should
support and encourage BSC teachers to build
research frameworks around their efforts in order not
only to facilitate their own continued professional
development, but as well to provide evidence-based
information to their mainstream colleagues about
effective methods to address this range of needs
and to contribute to the broader educational
knowledge base.

An exploration of the work that is being undertaken
successfully in many schools by BSC teachers to
disseminate the philosophy and practices of the
classroom across the whole school community
would also be of real value, not only to the work of
the NBSS, but as well to the literature on positive
behaviour and school improvement.

When asked what they felt had been their most
significant ‘learning’ from working in a Behaviour
Support Classroom, one teacher responded, “There
is no quick fix solution”.

In some schools, particularly during the early stages of the programme,
it was reported that there existed a perception that
staff in a Behaviour Support Classroom should,
and would, provide a ‘quick fix’ not only to the
behaviours of individual students, but also to the
behavioural climate of the school. What is clear
from the data gathered in this study is that over the
course of the two years many of the BSC teachers,
by building and developing communication
channels, modeling positive support methodologies
and actively encouraging activities such as team
teaching with their mainstream colleagues to
support their BSC students, have been successful to
varying degrees in bringing about an alteration in
how change is defined within school communities
with respect to behaviour.

The potential for this development to be embedded
and extended in terms of helping schools to create
positive teaching and learning environments across
the whole school community has been highlighted
in this study and is worth further support and
encouragement. While meaningful long-term
change is gradual – whether for individual students,
teachers or school communities as a whole – it is
worth concluding with the observation of one BSC
teacher “There is no limit to the benefits of a BSC
or to the positive changes that we can make”.

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My Work at School

Name: ____________________________  Today's Date: ______________

Age: _____  Year Group: ____________

School: ______________________________________

Please answer the following questions about your work in school. For each question circle one answer from the list (“always”, “most of the time”, “sometimes”, “hardly ever”, or “never”). If you do not understand what a word means, please ask your teacher.

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I arrive on time for class</td>
<td>always</td>
<td>most of the time</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>hardly ever</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I complete my homework</td>
<td>always</td>
<td>most of the time</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>hardly ever</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I work well on my own in class</td>
<td>always</td>
<td>most of the time</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>hardly ever</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I work well in a group in class</td>
<td>always</td>
<td>most of the time</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>hardly ever</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I follow instructions in class</td>
<td>always</td>
<td>most of the time</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>hardly ever</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I try to do my best at school</td>
<td>always</td>
<td>most of the time</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>hardly ever</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I like to learn new things</td>
<td>always</td>
<td>most of the time</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>hardly ever</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I ask questions if I don’t understand something</td>
<td>always</td>
<td>most of the time</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>hardly ever</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I talk to my teachers</td>
<td>always</td>
<td>most of the time</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>hardly ever</td>
<td>never</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. I follow the school rules</td>
<td>always</td>
<td>most of the time</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>hardly ever</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I feel happy at school</td>
<td>always</td>
<td>most of the time</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>hardly ever</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I like school</td>
<td>always</td>
<td>most of the time</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>hardly ever</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I like to get on with my work at school</td>
<td>always</td>
<td>most of the time</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>hardly ever</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I am proud of my work at school</td>
<td>always</td>
<td>most of the time</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>hardly ever</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Principals’ Review 2009

Reviewing the work done this year in the Behaviour Support Classroom (BSC), for questions 1 to 4, please circle one answer from the lists provided.

1. How effective is the BSC in teaching and supporting students’ positive learning behaviours?

   | Extremely Effective | Very Effective | Effective | Sometimes Effective | Not Effective |
---|------------------|---------------|-----------|---------------------|--------------|

2. How effective is the BSC in supporting the learning needs of students?

   | Extremely Effective | Very Effective | Effective | Sometimes Effective | Not Effective |
---|------------------|---------------|-----------|---------------------|--------------|

3. In terms of support for the BSC across the school community, would you say that:

   a. All members of staff support the work done in the BSC
   b. Most members of staff support the work done in the BSC
   c. Some members of staff support the work done in the BSC
   d. Few members of staff support the work done in the BSC
   e. No members of staff support the work done in the BSC

4. Reintegration from the BSC to mainstream classes has been successful for:

   | All Students | Many Students | Some Students | A Few Students | No Students |
---|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|------------|

5. In the space provided, please describe what (if any) effect the BSC has had across the school community.
6 How many students who accessed BSC support last year were also assigned SNA hours by the NCSE?

7 Please list any aspects of the BSC that you would define as “strengths”.

8 Please list any aspects of the BSC that you would define as “challenges”.

9 Please describe, in your view, ways in which the support of the NBSS has enhanced the effectiveness of the work carried out in the BSC.

Principal’s Signature: ___________________________  Date: _______________
End of Year Overview

1 Please provide, for this year, the following figures:

a. Number of profiles reviewed by Referral Group: ____________

b. Number of female students referred to the BSC: ____________

c. Number of female students who attended the BSC: ____________

d. Number of male students referred to the BSC: ____________

e. Number of male students who attended the BSC: ____________

f. Number of students referred to the BSC from each year group: ____________

g. Number of students from each year group who attended the BSC: ____________

h. Average duration of attendance in the BSC: ____________

2 Regarding those students who attended the BSC this year, please provide the following information:

a. The number of students who are now fully reintegrated into subject classrooms: ____________

b. The number of students who continued to receive some level of BSC support after the intervention: ____________

Outline Support:
c. The number of students attending the BSC who were also in receipt of other school interventions and/or supports e.g. resource/learning support/SCP, etc.: 

Outline Support:


d. The number of students who returned to the BSC on a part-time basis after their first BSC intervention:

e. The number of students who returned to the BSC on a full-time basis after their first BSC intervention:

f. The number of BSC students who no longer attend school this year:

Principal’s Signature: ___________________________ Date: ____________
School: ____________________________

1 Does your school have clear entry criteria for the BSC? If so, describe what these are and whether you feel that these are adequately applied during the referral process.

2 From the list below please identify the reason(s) for students’ referrals to the BSC

- a. Persistent disruptive behaviour
- b. Disaffection
- c. Demotivation
- d. Academic underachievement
- e. Concentration/listening skills
- f. Poor personal organisation
- g. Attention seeking
- h. Withdrawn
- i. ADHD
- j. Poor Attendance
- k. Special Educational Needs
- l. Difficult Home Circumstances
- m. Other
3 Are assessments (including reading tests) done with students prior to, or on entry to the BSC? If so please indicate what assessments are done.

4 Is there a pattern in educational backgrounds of students attending the BSC (e.g. literacy issues)?

5 Please identify any additional supports that students in the BSC receive within your school.
6. Do students in the BSC receive additional supports from external agencies?
   Yes/No

   If Yes – identify the external supports from the list below:
   a. NEPS
   b. VEC Psychological Service
   c. School Completion Programme
   d. Drugs Task Force
   e. Foroige/Youth Service
   f. HSE Adolescent Services
   g. Other (please name)

7. Do students attend the BSC on a full-time or part-time basis?

8. This year what has been the
   a. maximum length of attendance in the BSC
   b. minimum length of attendance in the BSC

9. Do mainstream subject teachers automatically provide work for students
   attending the BSC?

10. On entry to the BSC individualised behaviour plans are made for

11. On entry to the BSC targets are set for
12 If targets are set for each student, how are these evaluated?

13 Does your school have clear criteria and procedures for students’ reintegration to mainstream? If so, please describe these.

14 While students are attending the BSC is parallel work carried out with students’ peers and subject teachers to assist with future reintegration? If so, briefly describe the nature of this work.

15 The reintegration process is supported by

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Teachers</th>
<th>Most Teachers</th>
<th>Some Teachers</th>
<th>A Few Teachers</th>
<th>No Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
16 This year reintegration has been successful for

| All Students | Most Students | Some Students | A Few Students | No Students |

17 Are parents involved in the work of the BSC? If so, please describe the nature of parental involvement.

18 Parents are provided with feedback

| Daily | Weekly | Monthly | Infrequently | Never |

19 Have there been any positive or negative parental reactions to the BSC?
20 In thinking about the work you have done as a team this year, can you describe

a. What has worked particularly well in the BSC

b. What areas/skills/resources you would like to develop next year
BSC Teacher Questionnaire 2009

Name: ____________________________________________

School: ____________________________________________

1 In your opinion, are there adequate resources in place to facilitate your work with students? If not, please list additional resources that you would find of benefit to your work.

2 Approximately how many students are present in the BSC at any one time?

3 On the list below, identify approximately what percentage of time you spend each week working with students on:

   a. Mainstream curriculum
   b. Literacy
   c. Numeracy
   d. Social skills
   e. Learning behaviour skills

   ____________________  ____________________  ____________________

   ____________________  ____________________  ____________________

   ____________________  ____________________  ____________________
4 Do you provide support to students not attending the BSC? If so, indicate the number of students receiving this support and briefly describe the nature of this support.

5 In the space provided, please list any programmes, teaching strategies and/or methods that you found to be successful in the BSC this year.

6 In reviewing this year, can you describe any aspects of your work, or specific examples of work you have done, that you have found especially rewarding?
7 Generally speaking, do you think that your colleagues teaching in subject areas, have a good understanding of the work you are doing in the BSC?

8 Can you describe an occasion when collaboration with subject teachers has proved particularly effective this year?

9 Please identify those aspects of NBSS support that have proven of value to you in your work this year.
10 Are there additional ways in which the NBSS can support your work in the BSC?

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this questionnaire.
1 FACILITIES

a. Does the size, décor and location of the classroom facilitate or inhibit the objectives of the BSC?

b. Are there adequate resources in place to achieve the aims of the BSC? If not, please list additional resources that would improve outcomes.
2. STAFFING

a. How many staff work in the BSC?

b. How many contact hours does each staff member have per week?

c. Briefly describe the qualifications and teaching experience of staff in the BSC.

d. Would any member of the BSC staff benefit from additional training? If so, please indicate the type of training you think would be helpful.
3 STUDENTS

a. To date, how many students have attended the BSC?

b. What year group(s) are students from?

c. Are there mixes of year groups in the BSC at any one time? If so, describe.

d. How many girls have attended the BSC?

e. How many boys have attended the BSC?

f. How many students are present in the BSC at any one time?

g. Is there a pattern in educational backgrounds of students attending the BSC (e.g. literacy issues)?

h. From the list below please identify the reasons for students’ referrals to the BSC
   – Persistent disruptive behaviour
   – Disaffection
   – Demotivation
   – Academic underachievement
   – Concentration/listening skills
- Poor personal organisation
- Attention seeking
- Withdrawn
- ADHD
- Poor Attendance
- Special Educational Needs
- Difficult Home Circumstances
- Other

i. Do students in the BSC receive additional supports within the school? Yes/No

If Yes – identify the internal supports in the space below:

j. Do students in the BSC receive additional supports from external agencies? Yes/No

If Yes – identify the external supports from the list below and indicate the number of students receiving support from each of these external agencies:

- NEPS
- VEC Psychological Service
- School Completion Programme
- Drugs Task Force
- Foroige/Youth Service
- HSE Adolescent Services
- Other (please name)
k. Do students attend the BSC on a full-time or part-time basis? If part-time, please define what is meant by part-time.

l. What is the maximum length of attendance in the BSC?

m. What is the minimum length of attendance in the BSC?

n. Do BSC staff provide support to students not attending the BSC? If so, indicate the number of students receiving this support and briefly describe the nature of this support.
4 STUDENT-RELATED PROCESSES

a. Are there clear entry criteria and procedures in place at the school? If so, briefly outline the established referral procedure.

b. Are assessments (including reading tests) done with students prior to, or on entry to the BSC? If so please indicate what assessments are done. *(This question relates to practice prior to 28th January 2008.)*

c. Are individualised behaviour plans made for each student on entry to the BSC?
d. Are targets set for each student on entry to the BSC?

e. If targets are set for each student, how are these evaluated?

f. Is each student’s progress mapped? If so, how?

g. While students are attending the BSC is parallel work carried out with students’ peers and subject teachers to assist with future reintegration? If so, briefly describe the nature of this work.
h. Does the school have clear criteria and procedures for students’ reintegration to mainstream? If so, please describe.

i. What methods are used in the school for reintegration?

j. What supports are in place to assist students’ reintegration?

k. During reintegration does BSC staff monitor students’ progress?
1. Are mainstream staff supportive of the reintegration process?

m. Has reintegration been successful with students this year?

5 CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY

a. On the list below, identify approximately what percentage of time is allocated each week in the BSC for
   - Mainstream curriculum
   - Literacy
   - Numeracy
   - Social skills
   - Learning behaviour skills

b. Do mainstream subject teachers automatically provide work for students attending the BSC?

c. If not, does staff in the BSC request work from mainstream staff?
d. Please list any programmes that have been used this year in the BSC that have been effective.


e. Describe any teaching approaches, strategies and/or methods that the BSC staff have developed this year that they feel have been particularly effective.


6 ETHOS AND RELATIONSHIPS

a. Is there agreement amongst BSC staff about the aims and objectives of the BSC?
b. Does the mainstream staff understand the aims and objectives of the BSC?
c. Do students understand the aims and objectives of the BSC?
d. Please select one of the following to characterise the level of support provided by Management to the BSC staff and the work they do:
   – Management extremely supportive
   – Management very supportive
   – Management supportive
   – Management sometimes supportive
   – Management not supportive

e. Please select one of the following to describe the degree of communication/liaison between BSC and mainstream staff:
   – communicates/liaises with the mainstream staff
   – communicates/liaises with most of the mainstream staff
   – communicates/liaises with some of the mainstream staff
   – communicates/liaises with a few of the mainstream staff
   – does not communicate/liaise with the mainstream staff
f. Are parents involved in the work of the BSC? If so, please describe the nature and extent of parental involvement.

g. Parents are provided with feedback from BSC staff
   - 1 daily
   - 2 weekly
   - 3 once a month
   - 4 infrequently
   - 5 never

h. Has there been any positive or negative parental reaction to the BSC?

7 NBBSS

a. Please describe the nature of the support that has been provided by the ANC and RDO to the BSC staff in this school.
8 THE FUTURE

a. Are there any elements of their practice that BSC staff would change based on their experience this year?

b. Are there any aspects of their role, such as responsibilities, work load, etc., that BSC staff would hope to change next year?

c. Please identify, either from your own perspective or from the views of the BSC staff, the types of support from NBSS that would prove most useful to them in the short-term and long-term future.
## End of Year Report 2009

**School:**

**Report compiled by:**

**Date:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>How many staff work in the BSC?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>How many contact hours does each staff member have per week?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Would any member of the BSC staff benefit from additional training? If so, please indicate the type of training you think would be helpful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Are there clear entry criteria for the BSC? If so, describe what these are.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 Are assessments (including reading tests) done with students prior to, or on entry to the BSC? If so please indicate what assessments are done.

6 Describe the methods that are used by BSC staff to monitor and evaluate students' targets.

7 On the list below, identify approximately what percentage of time is allocated each week in the BSC for

a. Mainstream curriculum
b. Literacy
c. Numeracy
d. Social skills
e. Learning behaviour skills

8 Please select one of the following to characterise the level of support provided by Management to the BSC staff and the work they do:

a. Management is extremely supportive
b. Management is very supportive
c. Management is supportive
d. Management is sometimes supportive
e. Management is not supportive
9 In this school mutual communication and cooperation between BSC teachers and their mainstream colleagues is

a. Excellent
b. Very Good
c. Good
d. Fair
e. Poor

10 Please select one of the following to describe the degree of communication/liaison between BSC and mainstream staff:

a. communicates/liaises with the mainstream staff
b. communicates/liaises with most of the mainstream staff
c. communicates/liaises with some of the mainstream staff
d. communicates/liaises with a few of the mainstream staff
e. does not communicate/liaise with the mainstream staff

11 Does the school have clear criteria and procedures for students’ reintegration to mainstream? If so, please describe.

12 What supports are in place to assist students’ reintegration?
13 During reintegration does BSC staff monitor students’ progress?

14 The reintegration process is supported by

- all mainstream staff
- most mainstream staff
- some mainstream staff
- few mainstream staff
- very few mainstream staff

15 This year reintegration has been successful for

- all students
- most students
- some students
- few students
- no students

16 Please outline what you consider to be the strengths of the BSC this year:

17 Are there any aspects of the BSC that you believe would benefit from additional support, attention, resources or training?
FreshStart

Name: ______________________________________________

Date: ____________________________________________________________________

1 Were you surprised when you were included in FreshStart

__________________________________________________________________________

2 How did you feel about being included in FreshStart?

__________________________________________________________________________

3 How did you parents/guardians react when they found out you were going to be included in FreshStart?

__________________________________________________________________________

4 Before you arrived in the classroom what did you expect?

__________________________________________________________________________
5 Were the 2 weeks anything like you had expected?

6 Rate your time in FreshStart

| Poor | Okay | Good | Very Good |

7 What did you like most while you were in FreshStart?

8 Do you think you learned anything about your behaviour in class?

9 Did you make an effort to improve your behaviour on return to class?

10 If you answered ‘yes’ to the question above, can you think of anything that helped you with this?
11 What do you think about recording all your lessons in the booklet?

12 What decision have you made about September? (Circle one below)

   a. Continue on the daily report
   b. Go on to a weekly report
   c. Do my best without the report. I know that if my behaviour isn’t what it should be I will be back on report

Signed: ________________________________  Date: ________________
We would like you to have the last word in this survey. Please write down any advice which you would give to a new FreshStart student coming in next year, what is important to understand about FreshStart, etc…

And finally, what did YOU think of FreshStart overall?

Signed: _______________________________  Date: __________


A Research Study of 36 Behaviour Support Classrooms


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U.S. Department of Education. (2002). *Twenty-second annual report to Congress on the implementation of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. Washington, DC.


