NBSS Level 3 Support: The Students’ Voice

National Behaviour Support Service
National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS)
Navan Education Centre
Athlumney
Navan
Co. Meath

Telephone: +353 46 9093355
Fax: +353 46 9093354
Email: nbss@ecnavan.ie
Web: www.nbss.ie


The NBSS is funded by Teacher Education Section (TES), Department of Education and Skills.

© 2014 National Behaviour Support Service
Contents

I. Overview
   - NBSS Level 3 Support PAGE 5
   - NBSS Level 3 Interventions PAGE 6
   - The Student Voice & Educational Research PAGE 7
   - Methodology PAGE 8

II. Findings
   - Year Group and Gender PAGE 9
   - Reasons for Selection PAGE 10
   - Behavioural Change PAGE 11
   - Parent(s)/Guardian(s) PAGE 12
   - Targets PAGE 13
   - How to Do Well in School PAGE 17
   - Interesting and Helpful Work PAGE 18
   - Getting on Better in School PAGE 21
   - Keeping Up the Good Work PAGE 23
   - Liking School PAGE 24
   - Advice to Others PAGE 24

III. Discussion PAGE 27

IV. Conclusion PAGE 31

V. Acknowledgements PAGE 32

VI. References PAGE 33
The National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS), established by the Department of Education & Skills in 2006, promotes and supports positive behaviour for learning through the provision of a systematic continuum of support to partner post-primary schools. The NBSS offers three levels of behaviour support to post-primary schools:

- Level 1: School-wide Support
- Level 2: Targeted Intervention
- Level 3: Intensive Individualised Support

This report will focus on feedback from 662 students in 50 NBSS partner schools and present the students’ experience of NBSS Level 3 support received through a Behaviour Support Classroom or Behaviour for Learning Programme during the academic year September 2012 to June 2013. This report is part of the on-going research of Level 3 provision to NBSS partner schools.

**NBSS Level 3 Support**

NBSS Level 3 Support is distinctive in that it is tailored to the specific needs of the individual student. Characteristically, this level of support is offered to the small number of students who, notwithstanding whole school behaviour support (Level 1) and targeted interventions (Level 2), continue to experience difficulty.

All work undertaken at Level 3 aims to promote positive behaviour and learning by focusing on developing four skills areas:

1. Behaviour for Learning Skills
2. Social and Emotional Literacy Skills
3. Academic Literacy, Learning and Study Skills
4. Positive Health and Wellbeing Skills
The four skills areas comprise the NBSS Positive Behaviour In-School Curricular Framework for partner schools.

Students who are offered NBSS Level 3 Support may present with a variety of challenging behaviours, including social skills deficits; low self-esteem; difficult relationships with adults/peers; literacy and numeracy difficulties and poor concentration and attention difficulties in most subjects. Many of the students are also persistently at risk of suspension and/or expulsion. The severity of their behaviour in classrooms not only hinders their own educational progress but may also impede that of their peers.

Level 3 Support is provided in NBSS partner schools:

- Through Behaviour Support Classrooms (BSCs)
- Through a Behaviour for Learning Programme (BfLP).
- By various school personnel in partnership with NBSS team members

There is a structured system of referral for all NBSS Level 3 interventions.

**NBSS Level 3 Interventions**

The Behaviour Support Classroom (BSC) and Behaviour for Learning Programme (BfLP) provide intensive, individualised interventions for students who have failed to respond to interventions and supports provided in the school at Levels 1 and 2. BSCs and BfLPs are designed to meet the needs of students who may experience any number (or combination) of significant challenges to their learning and whose behaviour significantly interferes with teaching and learning in the majority of their subject classes. BSC and BfLP teachers work with identified students, individually and in small groups, on interventions and programmes that are designed to meet their academic, behavioural, social and emotional needs to enable them to succeed in school. All partner schools with a BSC or BfLP also include preventive strategies and early intervention approaches for students.

As with all NBSS Level 3 Support a Student Behaviour Plan (SBP) is drawn up for each student that identifies the personal strengths of the student, the behaviour(s) causing concern in classes and around the school and a targeted plan of action. All Student Behaviour Plans are subject to continuous assessment and review to take account of any changes in the student’s behaviour and to measure the effectiveness of the interventions. During the development of the Plan, each student actively participates in setting his or her personal targets and throughout the duration of this intervention parents and guardians are kept informed weekly of successes, targets achieved and general progress.
The first Behaviour Support Classroom was established in 2007 and currently there are 20 BSCs, staffed by two full time teachers, in NBSS partner post-primary schools throughout the country and 33 BfLPs with an allocation of one teacher.

In total, 4,413 students have received NBSS Level 3 Support in partner schools through either a Behaviour Support Classroom or a Behaviour for Learning Programme since 2007.

**The Student Voice & Educational Research**

“Student Voice” (Cook-Sather, 2006; Kane & Chimwayange, 2014; Manefield, Collins, Moore, Mahar, & Warne, 2007) is an approach that is categorised within the wider framework of pedagogical practice and young people’s research that endeavours to reconfigure students’ role and participation in education reform and research. In terms of the former, Student Voice democratises the process of school improvement by enabling children and young people to play a role in decision-making that has a direct effect on them. With regard to the latter (i.e. educational research), children and young people’s participation is essential because they are “expert witnesses” (Bahou, 2011, p.235) of their learning experiences and so are best placed to contribute meaningfully to the knowledge educational researchers seek to discover and disseminate findings about them (Bergmark, 2008).

Mitra (2004) states that while Student Voice as a concept was evident in the 1960’s through the early 1970’s, the drive for student participation diminished thereafter. The renewed interest in recent decades in Student Voice can be attributed to progressive educationalist interest in aligning school practices, ideals, systems and structures more closely with the reality of students’ lives both within and outside the school walls. Additionally, the ratification of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) is seen as setting a legal imperative for a reconsideration of Student Voice (Bahou, 2011; Bergmark, 2008; Bron & Veugelers, 2014; Busher, 2012; Lundy, 2007). Article 12 of the UNCRC states:

> Article 12: States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

Thus, the UNCRC stipulates that as well as having the rights to protection and provision, all children (defined by the Convention as including all people up to the age of 18 years) have the right to express their opinions. Additionally, it emphasises that children’s views must be attended or listened to and that they have a right to participate in any activities and decision-making that directly have an impact on them.

The research demonstrates that Student Voice can not only develop students’ engagement with school and their personalised learning but also contribute to their resiliency and self-esteem.
Mohamed and Wheeler (2001) state that Student Voice can lead to a meaningful improvement in the educational participation of disengaged or underachieving students. A number of researchers (Cefai & Cooper, 2010; Cooper, 2006; Flynn, Shevlin, & Lodge, 2013; O’Connor, Hodkinson, Burton, & Torstensson, 2011; Sellman, 2009) state that Student Voice is of particular importance for young people with Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBDs). They make the point that there is not only a need, but also a great value for educators for additional Student Voice research with this cohort. Cefai and Cooper (2010) state that while students with SEBDs are “...the least listened, empowered and liked group of students” (p. 184), providing these students with chances to voice their opinions is essential in helping them to take ownership of and responsibility for their behaviour and learning.

**Methodology**

To capture the views of as many students as possible, in receipt of NBSS Level 3 Support, an online survey (SurveyMonkey) was selected as the most efficient and user-friendly research instrument for this research. The survey was made available online to the 50 schools on 13th May 2013 with all responses returned by the 31st May 2013.

The survey was comprised of 18 questions, some multiple choice, others open-ended in order to gain more in-depth responses from the students. The questions sought to gather the students’ views about their experiences of Level 3 Support that year, whether they thought the intervention had helped them as well as the aspects of the intervention that they found the most useful or positive. Students did not include their names on the survey, only gender, year group and school name.

The Behaviour Support Classroom (BSC) and Behaviour for Learning Programme (BfLP) teachers were asked to be available during the completion of the questionnaires to assist their students if they encountered difficulty reading or understanding the meaning of particular questions.

A total of 662 students returned completed surveys representing 72.0% of all students who had received NBSS Level 3 support through a Behaviour Support Classroom or Behaviour for Learning Programme during 2012-2013. Frequency analyses of the quantitative data were conducted and inductive analysis was undertaken for each of the qualitative questions to identify and code emergent and recurring themes as well as any anomalies that arose in the data.
**Findings**

**Year Group and Gender**

The 662 students that were supported through a Behaviour Support Classroom or Behaviour for Learning Programme in 2012-2013 were from all year groups. However, the majority of students were in either first or second year and of the 662 students who responded, 92.1% (N=610) were in Junior Cycle. This finding is similar to data gathered in previous years with regard to year group.

*Figure 1: Year Groups*

In terms of gender just under one-third were female 29.3% (N=194) with male students forming the majority (69.8%, N=462). This would support previous findings with regard to gender i.e. male students across schools as a whole formed the majority of students who had received Level 3 Support by over two-thirds.

*Figure 2: Gender*
REASONS FOR SELECTION

Students were asked to state what they thought was the reason for them being selected to work with their BSC or BfLP teacher(s). A range of different answers were provided by 653 students (nine students did not respond to this question). Some students cited one single reason while many listed a number of reasons. Their responses were categorised into themes.

The most commonly cited reasons were either what could be categorised as “general disruptive behaviour” (N=174) or “disruptive behaviour specifically in the classroom” (N=139). These behaviours would include “messing”; “talking in class”; “giving cheek to teachers/answering back”; “misbehaving in class”; “being thrown out of class”; “trouble on corridors” and “behaviour during lunchtime and breaks”. A number of students were less precise and just responded that they got into trouble. Several students specifically stated that the reason (or one of the reasons) was related to anger and learning how to manage or control their anger.

Additionally, some students wrote in particular about their schoolwork and homework being the main reason. Several reported that they were working with their BSC/BfLP teachers because of the number of notes or referrals they had received. Similarly, organisational skills, punctuality, school attendance and absenteeism also were common reasons cited. The respondents also indicated that detentions and suspensions (i.e. that they had received either or both) were the reasons for their work with BSC or BfLP teacher(s).

WHY DO YOU THINK YOU WERE SELECTED TO WORK WITH YOUR TEACHER?¹

• “Basically everything. I didn’t have books for class. People were distracting me and getting me angry and stuff. Not doing homework.”
• “I kept getting into trouble and freaking out all the teachers.”
• “I think I was selected to work with my teacher because I have difficulties in class - throw things, slagging, bullying, throwing things in the yard, swearing.”
• “I think in my opinion that during the year I wasn’t doing enough to satisfy any of my teachers, such as not having any equipment and my behaviour was very bad.”
• “Messing in class, not focused, notes and referrals from teachers, not having all my books.”
• “I was getting into trouble at school and at home after Xmas. Then I was involved in a fight.”
• “Misbehaving in class and not listening to the teacher.”
• “I was getting into trouble a lot and was going mad if a teacher said something to me that I didn’t like or blamed me for something I didn’t do. I was getting a lot of bookings.”
• “Cause I was misbehaving in class, getting cheeky with teachers, didn’t do me work, talking, being late and missing days.”
• “Because I got suspended loads of times and had a lot of fights with the Principal.”
• “I was getting angry in class and roaring at teachers.”

¹ Some punctuation, spellings and grammar have been changed in the students’ comments to assist readability.
**Behavioural Change**

Students were then asked to think about which behaviours in class they felt they had changed the most since receiving support through the BSC or BfLP. The students were given a list of 16 possible classroom behaviours from which to select and could chose more than one of the behaviours from the list. Additionally, an open-ended follow-up question allowed students to describe any other behaviours that they felt had changed since working with their BSC or BfLP teacher(s). The majority of students (98.0%, N=649) responded to the multiple choice question while 607 (91.7%) described additional behavioural changes in the open-ended question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviours that have Changed since Working with your Teacher(s)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Getting along well with my teachers</td>
<td>55.9% (N=363)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Doing what teachers ask me to do in class</td>
<td>54.1% (N=351)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Getting along well with my classmates</td>
<td>53.9% (N=350)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sitting where my teachers ask me to sit</td>
<td>53.2% (N=345)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Completing classwork</td>
<td>52.2% (N=339)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Coming to class with all equipment (books, journal, pens, etc.)</td>
<td>52.1% (N=338)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Listening in class</td>
<td>51.6% (N=335)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Being on time for class</td>
<td>47.1% (N=306)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Asking for help when I don’t understand the work</td>
<td>43.5% (N=282)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Being organised in my subject classes</td>
<td>41.9% (N=272)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Not “slagging” other students</td>
<td>39.3% (N=255)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Putting my hand up in class if I want to speak</td>
<td>34.4% (N=223)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Completing homework</td>
<td>31.9% (N=207)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Not eating or chewing gum in class</td>
<td>24.7% (N=160)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Keeping my mobile phone turned off</td>
<td>22.0% (N=143)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Only talking in class when I have permission</td>
<td>19.6% (N=127)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the seven behaviours that were selected by more than 50.0% of students, all related to improvement in their Behaviour for Learning Skills. However, the most frequently selected behaviour (“Getting along well with my teachers”) and the third most common behaviour chosen (“Getting along well with my classmates”) would also suggest positive development in the students’ Social and Emotional Literacy Skills.

Most of the students (92.0%, N=609) included other behaviours not included in the previous list of 16 behaviours which they felt had improved through their work with their BSC or BfLP teacher(s). A number of students (23.6%, N=144) wrote of putting more effort into their schoolwork, doing better in their subjects and wanting to do well in their forthcoming exams. Students also wrote that they felt they had improved not only their concentration skills in class but also their ability to focus and listen to their teachers.
Some students noted changes to relationships with others, their own attitude and confidence or self-esteem (19.4%, N=118). Other students described developing or improving skills related to the management of anger and/or aggression (24.5%, N=149).

### Since working with your teacher, are there any other behaviours in class that you think you have changed?

- “I am able to work in class.”
- “Yeah I’m more organised. I try my best not to chat and mess in class as much. I’m doing more of my class work and trying harder at doing my homework.”
- “Arguing with the teacher the whole time I stopped and don’t do it as much.”
- “I don’t say stupid things like I used to. I have started to do a bit of homework. I now want to do well in exams.”
- “Not lashing out in class controlling my behaviour problems.”
- “Better attitude to school.”
- “Doing more in class. I’m working on my attitude to teachers and school and at home.”
- “I have changed my attitude towards teachers and students.”
- “Got nicer, don’t really be mean to people as much as I used to be.”
- “Yes, ignore people that get me into trouble.”
- “I don’t give much cheek anymore and don’t get angry. I know when I’m wrong and learned to trust the people who are trying to help me to do better at school. I like coming to school more.”
- “I care more. I’m more good”
- “Getting on with my parents.”
- “I feel happier in class, school is better.”
- “I don’t hit anyone in class anymore”
- “I go to class on time more and don’t hang around the corridors as much. I’m doing more in class doing my work and homework.”
- “Not get as angry.”
- “I am more respectful in class then I used to be.”
- “Not shouting or abusing teachers.”
- “I don’t get aggressive as much anymore, I don’t walk out of school as much anymore and I’m in school much more often. I don’t miss many days”
- “Teachers are saying I’ve done better.”
- “I have learned to not answer back and to just do my work and get it over with. I also learned that it is my Leaving and me being in trouble is no one else’s loss but my own.”
- “I am doing better in some of my subjects because I am able to focus better.”
- “I improved in my behaviours. I ask questions, I follow the school rules. I work well on my own now.”
- “I get my homework done now. I’m more settled and focused.”
- “I have more confidence in school than before.”
- “I keep my head down and do my work. I see that the teachers are trying to help me”.
- “Managing my anger speaking to teachers in a better way.”
- “I think that I am getting better at talking in a respectful way to people.”
- “I want to do well cause I know I can.”
- “I think my general attitude has changed since I know that I am being looked after and I have a comfortable place to go to if I am in trouble”
- “I have more confidence in school than before.”
- “I don’t mind going to class cause teachers are ok when I have my stuff.”
- “Happier.”
- “Anger issues.”
- “I’m not getting angry any more, because I’ve learned to control my temper by working with my breathing and thinking before I act.”
- “Not fighting with boys in my class.”
- “I am better on the hall. Not fighting.”
- “I think about it before I lose me head.”
- “Trying to get to class on time. Putting my hand up and one voice. What I should and shouldn’t do in class. My rights and responsibilities. Trying to do my class work as best as I can.”

### Parents/Guardians

Students were asked to describe the degree to which they shared their work with their families (“Have you talked with your parent(s)/guardian(s) about the work you have done?”). The majority (80.5%, N=533) who responded to the questionnaire reported that they did discuss...
their work with their parent(s)/guardian(s). This would support findings from previous NBSS Level 3 research that an essential component of Level 3 intervention is regular communication and participation of parent(s)/guardian(s).

**Figure 3: Have you talked with your parent(s)/guardian(s) about the work you have done?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage</strong></td>
<td>42.7%</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Count</strong></td>
<td>(n=283)</td>
<td>(n=250)</td>
<td>(n=122)</td>
<td>(n=7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets</th>
<th></th>
<th>All targets</th>
<th>Most targets</th>
<th>Some targets</th>
<th>A few targets</th>
<th>No targets</th>
<th>No response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage</strong></td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Count</strong></td>
<td>(n=66)</td>
<td>(n=295)</td>
<td>(n=204)</td>
<td>(n=75)</td>
<td>(n=15)</td>
<td>(n=7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TARGETS**

An integral element of all NBSS Level 3 interventions is the weekly setting and monitoring of targets for each student. This is a co-operative, weekly exercise in which the student and teacher agree upon targets to be worked towards, record progress and discuss ways to proceed further with stated targets or introduce new targets. In the survey students were asked to indicate whether they thought they had achieved their weekly targets. Students generally seemed positive about their ability to achieve the targets they had set with their teachers. Over half (54.5%, N=361) of the students thought that they had attained all or most of their targets during their time in receipt of Level 3 Support in a BSC or BfLP. Nearly a third (30.8%, N=204) reported that they had realised some of their targets.

**Figure 4: Targets Achieved**
Students were also provided with the opportunity to elaborate on their responses to the question on targets. They were asked first to identify those targets that they had found the easiest to achieve and then to describe those targets that had been the most difficult to attain. In terms of the targets that the students (646 or 97.6% of the students responded to this question) reported were the easiest to achieve, the majority (66.7%, N=431) identified those that would be categorised as Behaviour for Learning Skills. Organisational skills generally featured strongly in the data. A number of students also identified punctuality as being a target that was easy to achieve while others specifically identified being on time for class as their easiest target.

Other targets that students identified as the easiest to achieve included putting their hand up to contribute in class and/or to ask a question. Additionally, task completion or completing homework was also mentioned by some students. Relationships with others and managing anger and/or remaining calm also featured as targets that were easiest to achieve.

**Please list the weekly targets that were the easiest to achieve**

- “I will bring all books to class. I will keep my locker clean.”
- “Bring all my books to class, coming to school on time doing my key assignments.”
- “Getting to class on time, having all my stuff.”
- “Organisational targets.”
- “Trying all my work in class.”
- “Keep calm when corrected and avoided distractions.”
- “Being organised for class, packing night b4, trying harder in class.”
- “Have my journal and being on time for class.”
- “Gettin my stuff ready for all classes.”
- “Getting my books ready in learning center.”
- “Getting organised, having books, doin’ what teachers say.”
- “Good at having my stuff for class.”
- “Bringing my materials.”
- “Write homework in journal. Speak in a respectful way.”
- “To be in class time.”
- “Coming to school on time.”
- “Not being late to class. Being organised.”
- “Arrive on time for class, no eating in class.”
- “I will follow rules, do my homework, be on time for my classes.”
- “Getting to class on time, having all my books, raise my hand to ask question.”
- “To do my best work in Irish class, to be on time for every class, to stop disstracding others, be focused, pay attention in class, to be respectful to my peers and teachers.”
- “Being on time Staying focused in class.”
- “Improved being on time for class.”
- “Not getting suspended Not shouting out in class. Not coming in late from big lunch.”
- “To do the tasks on time.”
- “Have a pen for class. Always write homework in journal.”
- “Bringing all equipment to class.”
- “Having all the books for class because I organised my locker and the teacher made a checklist for me to use at home.”
- “I will have all my books for class. I will have my homework done for class.”
- “Checking my timetable.”
- “Using my indoor voice starting classroom tasks and completing them, getting more organised not being as cheeky.”
- “Complete all homework, be organised for class …pack books night before.”
- “Books, copies in class, try my best.”
- “Getting books and copies ready for classes.”
- “Coming to school on time. Sorting out my school stuff (organising things).”
- “Staying out of trouble Doing my homework better. Listening to teachers.”
- “Do what the teacher said. Not get into trouble.”
- “To listen in class. To do the homework.”
- “Listening to teachers and doing my work.”
- “Follow instructions at all times, be organised for class.”
- “Filling in my journal, being prepared for class.”
- “I will be organised and follow instructions and I will not answer back when corrected.”
- “Listening, phone off, not talking, or harrassing other students.”
- “Following teachers instructions without arguing back.”
- “Listening an behaving in class.”
Having identified those targets that they felt were the easiest to achieve, students were then asked to describe the targets that were the hardest to attain. Over half (59.3%, N=381) the students highlighted targets that were related to Behaviour for Learning Skills and as with the easiest targets, organisational skills and punctuality arose in the data as also being challenging or hard targets to achieve. Many of the students who identified Behaviour for Learning Skills also mentioned finding it difficult not to talk to their peers during class time, ‘messing’, being ‘cheeky’ or answering back teachers. A number of students specifically referred to finding targets related to listening skills and putting their hand up in class as challenging. Others identified targets such as homework, study, spelling and/or targets related to relationships with teachers/peers, controlling one’s anger and, on occasion, those to do with healthy lifestyle choices (i.e. diet, exercise, rest), as hardest to achieve.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please list the weekly targets that were the hardest to achieve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• “Coming in on time, it still happens.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Be on time, be organised, bring books to class.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Being on time. Go to class. Be organised. Not hanging around the corridors. Doing homework. Listening in class.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Going to class and on time. Not taking my phone out in class. Not chewing gum. Doing what the teacher asks.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Geting my books and being on time.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Not talk in class when I haven’t permission. Come to class with all equipment needed.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Come to school everyday, come to school on time, not lose the head.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “To stop turning around and talking.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Not talking in class.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Puttin up my hand, not talking.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Accepting correction without debate. Not talking to others in class.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Be on time for school, do my homework, being cheeky to my teachers, fighting with people in my class.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Be on time especially in the mornings.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Finding the classrooms.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Getting to class on time. I like to chat to others on my way or pretend I can’t find my bag.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Staying in school for the whole day - not mitching in the afternoon and coming in at 10 and going home at 12.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Being in on time at 8:45.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Having all equipment with me for class, being on time everyday.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Being on time because I was messing.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Giving back cheek.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Not to talk. Not to answer the teacher back.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “My attitude, back answering teachers.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “It was hard to be quiet and do my homework.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Not being cheeky to teachers.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Biting my tongue when getting told off.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Do my home work, stay calm.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Listening without making comments and not distracting other students.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “I found it hard to stop messing especially...”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The majority of students identified Behaviour for Learning Skills as both the easiest and hardest to attain. This seeming anomaly could be explained in a number of ways. The preponderance of Behaviour for Learning Skills in both responses may be related to a possible strong emphasis placed on these skills by both Level 3 teachers and students during the setting of weekly targets. Additionally, when considering the extent of skills inherent in the Behaviour for Learning element, one is conscious of not only the wide range of skills but also the complexity of same. In considering targets related to Behaviour for Learning skills, across the cohort there may well have been differences in terms of the degree of the Behaviour for Learning targets. For example, organisational skills encompassing activities such as bringing equipment and books to class, keeping locker clean and following one’s timetable could be more or less rigorous depending on talking to my schoolmates. I hated being told what to do by my teachers and use to argue with them a lot and I found it hard to stop doing that.”

• “Stop talking out of turn.”
• “Getting others to play games with me at break time.”
• “Putting hand up before I speak.”
• “Figging in class.”
• “Not talk in class when I haven’t permission. Come to class with all equipment needed.”
• “Listen to my teacher, complete all homework, stay quiet in class.”
• “Actually bothering to do work.”
• “Putting hand up and not shouting out.”
• “Not distracting people in class, putting my hand up then speaking.”
• “Stop messing, can’t concentrate.”
• “To make a real effort in class. Not talking to other people in my class.”
• “To stop slagging.”
• “Not smoking.”
• “Getting on with teachers.”
• “I still find it hard to keep calm in some classes.”
• “Keeping calm when in an argument.”
• “Doing what teachers ask me, getting on well and respect for teachers.”
• “Being calm in certain classes”
• “To stay out of other peoples business.”
• “Asking the teacher for help.”
• “Asking for help properly.”
• “Not reacting to people calling me names. Not walking out of class.”
• “Speaking properly to everybody in classes.”
• “Shouting and screaming and talking out of turn.”
• “Keeping hands and feet to myself, not cursing or being mean to people.”
• “Coming to school every day because I stay up too late and I’m tired coming to school.”
• “Eat breakfast. Go to bed on time. Cut down on Xbox.”
the student’s individual circumstances and needs (as well as the rules and routines of the particular schools). Additionally, the individual qualities and characteristics of each student would need to be considered. For instance, while some Behaviour for Learning skills (e.g. bringing journal to class) might be easy for some students, others (such as punctuality, sitting still and listening) could prove very difficult for other students, albeit skill areas that would need to be addressed.

**How To Do Well in School**

Students were then asked to identify what they believed was the most important thing learned about doing well in school. Of the 662 students, 645 (97.4%) responded to this question. Of that number, half (N=323) indicated that the most important thing they had learned about doing well in school was related to the work that they do in classes such as putting effort into their work, staying on task, listening and getting work done.

Some students also wrote about getting a good education. These comments included a number that spoke of the importance of education. Nearly a quarter (24.8%, N=160) of the students indicated that the most important thing that they had learned was the importance of education in terms of their future prospects. Further, some wrote of how they had learned that if they wanted to do well in exams, go on to further education or secure employment in the future, doing well in school was essential.

Finally, just over a quarter of the students (26.2%, N=169) referred to behaviour generally and also their relationships with teachers and peers.

---

**Since Working with Your Teacher, What is the Most Important Thing You Have Learned About Doing Well in School?**

- “I can do it if I try.”
- “If I do my best I get on better and do not get into trouble.”
- “It is about effort not the result.”
- “Try 2 b de best u can b.”
- “That if I make an effot I will be liked better by my teachers.”
- “Just put ur head down, do ur work, don’t answer back to the teachers.”
- “You need to respect others and just get on with your work.”
- “Getting things done.”
- “Got to not talk out, doing all of my work.”
- “Do my work as its given to me, don’t let it build up.”
- “Finish school, learn.”
- “If you don’t do well it’s your lose so keep trying. That I should stay focused to achieve my goals.”
- “You get out what you put in to it. Keep your head down.”
- “I feel better about school now. I worked hard and listened and my grades improved.”
- “Try my best in class. I am learning that losing the head doesn’t help and then I’m not happy in school.”
- “I learned that I can do better at school and that when I make the effort I don’t get into as much trouble and that teachers aren’t annoying me all the time, giving out about things.”
- “Doing my class work, not distrarcting others in class.”
- “Don’t mess in the corridors.”

---

*Some punctuation, spellings and grammar have been changed in the students’ comments to assist readability.*
• “Trying my hardest to do good work and behaviour.”
• “I learned that to stay out of trouble and just to keep working. I know I have improved because all the teachers keeping saying to me to keep up the good work. I’m glad I got a chance to work with my teacher.”
• “To try keep up with work so I don’t get lost and start misbehaving.”
• “To listen to my teacher, they are trying to help me.”
• “Do what you’re told it will go a long way.”
• “Listen to instruction/correction.”
• “The most important thing I have learned about doing well in school is listening to the teacher and not distacting othe students during class and being late for class, (CONSTANTLY) and distruping both the pupils and the teachers.”
• “To do well in school I needed to calm down and do my best in class. I had to learn to follow teachers instructions particulary in subjects I didn’t like, I now get on better with my teachers.”
• “I learned that I can understand some of the work done in class if I listen more. I will get into less trouble with teachers if I have my homework done.”
• “That it is not the techerss fault all the time and to do well in school.”
• “That school can be fun if I’m not messing.”
• “Stop messing - stop, think and go traffic light, using the stress ball.”
• “Be in everyday, do the work that you’re given, work hard and don’t mess.”
• “Having a good relationship with my teachers.”
• “Not hitting other students, realising what we say has consequences and may be hurtful to others.”
• “Show the teachers respect and you get respect back.”
• “There is no point being thick with the teachers because it doesn’t get you anywhere and you only end up getting susoended and missing out.”
• “Treating people the way you like to be treated.”
• “Not getting involved in other peoples business.”
• “If don’t do well in school I won’t get what I want in life.”
• “Finishing LCA and getting a good job.”
• “To get a good education.”
• “To learn new things.”
• “I have learned that I need an education.”
• “You will get a good education.”
• “That you need your education.”
• “That it is important and I will do good if I finish.”
• “That you need school for everything in life.”
• “To learn well in school for a future life education.”
• “Listen and work hard and I will get a good education.”
• “Getting an education is important.”
• “You need to be good in school for a good education.”
• “That I can get a good Leaving and get into college.”
• “I will be able to get a good junior.”
• “Getting a job, having money in my pocket...doing someting with my life.”
• “To get a job in the future years and to be more mature.”
• “Can get a job from doing my best in school.”
• “It gives me more opportunity and freedom.”
• “That it will give me a better chance of doing what I want to do when I leave.”
• “I know that if I don’t want to be on the labour I’ll have to finish school and try my best.”
• “It’s better than being in trouble all the time and it will help me to go to college.”
• “It will give me more opportunities and options.”
• “I learned that if I do it right and stop being disruptive I can get a good qualified job and have an education.”
• “So I can have a future and get on well in life.”
• “That could have great opportunities if I finish school.”
• “Keep up with my good comments and stop telling teachers to shut up.”
• “Good grades, Better education, Be better for college”.
• “Getting a good job and learning something new everyday!!”
• “There is no work so I have to do well”
• “That when you get good grades and work hard it will all pay off when I leave school. And that it’s better to have a good name then a bad one.”
• “You can get a good job and buy nice things. Make your mam proud.”
• “That you need it to get a good job.”

**Interesting and Helpful Work**

To gain the students’ perspective and to gather feedback on the range of work and activities undertaken during a NBSS Level 3 intervention students were asked to identify the kind of work
that they did that they found interesting or fun, as well as work that they thought was the most helpful in terms of doing well in school.

In response to what work was fun or interesting, 641(96.8%) students answered this question. The most frequently (27.8%, N=178) identified “work” that was fun or interesting was “board games or games”. Most of the students specifically referred to games that would be associated with the development of their skills. For example, students identified the TalkAbout communication game and social skills games, Maths and English games, feeling games, listening games, Conversation Cubes, literacy digital games and self-regulation games.

A frequently occurring response from students when asked about activities that were the most fun or interesting were in relation to reading or literacy work. These varied from general or subject specific reading to the use of particular programmes. Other students identified work done to develop their Social and Emotional literacy skills as the most fun or interesting. A number of students also mentioned discussion or the opportunity to talk, either one to one with their teacher or in small groups with their peers, as a positive experience and the most fun or interesting aspect of their Level 3 Support.

Many of the students referred to specific programmes or approaches that the NBSS had provided to partner schools. Teachers in NBSS partner schools receive training and support on the implementation of specific programmes and approaches in all four areas of the NBSS Positive Behaviour In-School Curricular Framwork. Programmes and approaches mentioned by students as fun or interesting included the ALERT Programme3 (along with additional work with NBSS Occupational Therapists), FRIENDS for Life4, The Why Try? Programme5, Catch Up Literacy6, Vocabulary Enrichment Programme7 and Working Things Out8.

Following on from describing the work that they did that they found the most fun or interesting, the students were asked to identify the work or activities that they thought were the most helpful to them in doing well in school. Of the 637 students (96.2%) who responded to this question over a quarter (N=165) identified work to develop their Behaviour for Learning Skills as

---

3 The ALERT programme identifies students’ sensory needs and preferences and encourages student use of sensory motor strategies to support self regulation.

4 The ‘FRIENDS for Life’ programme is an evidence-based programme effective at all levels of intervention for anxiety in children (WHO 2004). The programme helps students to develop effective strategies to deal with worry, stress and change and teaches the skills required to reduce anxiety and promote resilience.

5 The Why Try? programme is a strength-based approach to helping young people overcome their challenges and improve outcomes in the areas of truancy, behaviour and academics. It is based on Solution Focused Brief Therapy, Social and Emotional Intelligence and Multi-Sensory Learning principles.

6 Catch Up Literacy is a one to one literacy intervention for struggling readers. It is centred on a 15 minute structured teaching session delivered twice per week.

7 The Vocabulary Enrichment programme focuses on enhancing the understanding and expression of vocabulary and word meanings.

8 Working Things Out is a preventative programme to educate adolescents about positive mental health.
the most helpful to them in doing well in school. Nearly as many students (N=156) identified activities that were related to Academic Literacy, Learning and Study Skills and responses included help they had received with regard to both specific subjects as well as the development of specific skills such as reading, numeracy/math and study skills.

A number of students thought that work they had done to develop their communication skills and relationships with both teachers and peers was the most helpful. Others mentioned anger management and learning to be calm. Many students also described the work they had done in target setting, target monitoring and goal setting as the most helpful.

**What kind of work did you do with your teacher that you found helpful to do well in school?**

- “We did group work about listening.”
- “Organising locker.”
- “Talking about how to get on better with teachers and how to have all my books for class.”
- “Settling down at start of class.”
- “Organisation of school things. Setting targets and checking them.”
- “Thinking about the rules.”
- “Marking out what books I needed for each class.”
- “Talk about my hardest class and learn to stay quiet even when I’m bored.”
- “Sorting out my bag and locker everyday and night.”
- “They thought me how to concentrate better in class.”
- “Teaching me to put my hand up when I want to talk.”
- “Help me to put up my hand when I am confused...”
- “I was taught to stop cursing. Learned to control my tone of voice.”
- “I to 1 work and surveys about myself and how I learn to work.”
- “I found the maths tests interesting cause I never did some of them before.”
- “To gain confidence and respect.”
- “Encouragement and self worth.”
- “Keep my thoughts to myself and not just say what I want.”
- “Thinking about what will happen before I do or saw some thing.”
- “To understand where the teacher is coming from.”
- “Taming anger, helped me stop shouting at the teachers and I liked the art project.”
- “Breathing exercises to help me calm down.”
- “Staying calm with teachers.”
- “I like having my stress ball when I’m getting annoyed with the teachers or writing in the ‘stop, help me to put up my hand when I am confused...’”
- “I was taught to stop cursing. Learned to control my tone of voice.”
- “1 to 1 work and surveys about myself and how I learn to work.”
- “Helping with my reading.”
- “Study and helped me with my homework when I needed it.”
- “Learning to study differently.”
- “The work that helped me with my reading.”
- “Alert. Help with my maths.”
- “Lesson on expressions and facial expressions.”
- “I liked the chance to talk to my teacher about what goes on at school. I learned how to get on better with people and how to talk to them in the right manner.”
- “I can read better.”
- “Helping with maths.”
- “Learning how to study. Writing in my subjects in my journal. Learning good communication skills.”
- “Study skills.”
- “Turn taking. Comprehension skills through use of games.”
- “The spelling and reading on computer.”
- “Catch up literacy, working things out”
- “When she would encourage me that I will do well in school...”
- “...helped me with my maths.”
- “Catch Up Literacy, I learned how to read and spell properly.”
- “I liked learning new words in the language programme.”
- “Again I had a big problem with getting aggressive and flying off the handel. I found that doing that did not work out in my best interests, so by shutting up I got on better.”
- “How to get on well with others.”
- “Liked the things we did in Why Try like the roller coaster and the crabs in the pot was good aswell. The stuff we did on how people talk to each other was alright too.”
- “I found all of the work the teacher done with me helpful but the main one I found helpful is how to talk to people and controlling my anger.”
think, do’ diary – that helps me.”
• “Breathing exercises, how to calm down. I also realised that I’m in control of what I do and I can’t control how other people act.”
• “Mindfulness, exercises and crucial skills.”
• “Friends for Life, learning there is different ways or a positive thing in life, 7/11 breathing.”
• “Social skills and group work classes.”
• “Lessons on respect.”
• “My behaviour affects others, leaning how to talk about my feelings and Why Try.”
• “Friends for Life, meditation, pizza massage.”
• “Labels and don’t live up to ur label.”
• “I think the targets help and the sheet where you sum up how you did this week.”
• “Monitoring card each day.”
• “How to make friends.”
• “Set new goals.”
• “Target card at start, aware of behaviour and ways to get better.”
• “Using my mouth fidget, talking about behaviour and using my target card.”
• “Rights and responsibilities. my choices and consequences. Working on future goals and targets.”
• “Target setting and self talk.”
• “Doing my targets every week and seeing where I’m at.”
• “I like working 1:1. She listens and helps me work on my behaviour. I like working on my triggers for anger and what strategies help me cope.”

**GETTING ON BETTER IN SCHOOL**

Students were asked whether they thought that the work they had done with their BSC or BfLP teacher(s) had helped them get on better at school. Of the 662 respondents, 98.4% (N=652) of the students responded to this question. Coupled with the qualitative responses that students provided to the previous question, the majority of students (83.1%, N=550) felt that the work that they had done with their BSC/BfLP teachers had helped them to do better in school. The nature of their open-ended responses indicates that not only did they think that the work had been beneficial but they were very certain about the specific activities and programmes during the intervention that had been of particular relevance to them individually.

**Figure 5: Has the work you have done helped you to get on better in school?**

The next question, “Can you describe in what ways things are better for you in school?” was posed in order to encourage the students to go further in thinking about and articulating how their engagement in the intervention had translated into having a more positive experience of school on a regular basis.
Of the 609 students (92.0%) who responded to this question, over half (54.0%, N=329) alluded to issues related to Behaviour for Learning Skills. Many of these responses focused additionally on the curtailment of previous patterns of disruptive behaviour. A number of students, while referring to Behaviour for Learning Skills, also emphasised the development of their Academic Literacy, Learning and Study Skills as contributing meaningfully to their improved experience of school.

The data provided by many of the students throughout the survey highlights the work that was undertaken during the interventions on developing Social and Emotional Literacy Skills. Primarily, this work aimed to, and resulted in, improving students’ relationships with both teachers and peers. When asked to describe in what ways things are better for them in school because of the Level 3 intervention, many of the students referred to the changes that had taken place in terms of their relationships and their ability to get along with teachers and other students. A number of responses related to the impact of the intervention on feelings and emotional wellbeing. The students reported that the changes that they had undergone during the Level 3 intervention had resulted in them feeling more content, calmer and happier in school.

**CAN YOU DESCRIBE IN WHAT WAYS THINGS ARE BETTER FOR YOU IN SCHOOL?**

- “I have not got one memo since I started working with her!”
- “I am still here.”
- “I am staying in all of my classes.”
- “I am not getting suspended as much.”
- “Less trouble and working better and harder, no notes in 4 weeks.”
- “More alert in class, less trouble in class and get on better with teachers.”
- “I’m on time more for class and don’t get in trouble as much.”
- “Teacher’s don’t annoy me as much.”
- “Makes me cop on.”
- “Doing homework and study, more organised not getting into trouble.”
- “I am not getting in as much trouble, my teachers don’t shout at me as much and I am staying in school.”
- “Because I'm at school much more, the work is much easier for me; I’m getting into less trouble cause I’m behaving more.”
- “Not getting in so much trouble, doing my work. I have someone to help me and look out for me.”
- “Things are better for me in school because I have copped on a little bit, sometimes I think about doing things before I do it.”
- “My behaviour is better so I’m in less trouble, I’m more organised for class so I’m in less trouble.”
- “Not fighting with teachers, not messin and I’m sitting on me seat when I’m asked.”
- “I am being on time for classes and most of the...”
- “I find it easier to do my work in science.”
- “Good results in mocks and doing well in class.”
- “Having more confidence in my work.”
- “Nott getin as much trouble and do better in my test.”
- “I can learn better.”
- “I’m getting on better, know more stuff for exams, teachers think I’m improving.”
- “I think I will pass my junior cert now...Hopefully.”
- “I can read out loud in class.”
- “Found English and describing hard. I can do it in a flash now.”
- “I listen in my maths now and try to learn more.”
- “My mother is happy I’m doing better I’m learning more, I’m better at maths.”
- “I can read better.”
- “Don’t get in as much trouble. Not falling behind in subjects cause I’m in more.”
- “I copped on in science and other classes.”
- “Teachers don’t have to talk to me about stuff I done anymore and I feel happier at school. I used to think I might not last to Junior Cert but I did because my teacher always told me that I would.”
- “I am liking school now I am gettin on better with my teachers, coming into school.”
- “The teachers know me now and it is better.”
- “Not slagging people. The teachers are saying ahhh he isn’t that bad and I don’t have a bad name any more.”
- “I rarely shout out. I get along with all my teachers now. I find it easier to learn and I don’t...”
“time I am compleeting my classwork and I am listening more in classes.”
• “I am behaving better and learning more because I am listening.”
• “Things are better in school because I’m not getting in as much trouble and it makes life easier for me.”
• “I can do the work and homework.”
• “I’m going to do me junior cert and if I didn’t have the behaviour class I would’ve been thrown out, I’m sure of it.”
• “I am able to do all the work and feel good.”
• “I like school now and want to do well.”
• “By getting on well with my teachers (no hassle).”
• “I am enjoying school more with my friends and I am getting on better with teachers.”
• “I don’t mind coming to school, I’ve more friends and the teachers are nicer.”
• “Feel more confident, happier.”
• “I am more settled in class and I can concentrate better. I find the work much easier and I am getting more work done. I am more confident now.”
• “I’m doing better in my tests. I’m working more. I’m not getting into as much trouble in class especially french. My mam and dad are happier with me and I can relax more at home.”
• “I like school now.”
• “I’m not trying to show off anymore and get as angry anymore and I’m happy with myself !”

use bad language or shout and crack up when I get mad.”
• “I’m getting on better with the lads, the teachers are not shouting at me.”
• “Happier because I am getting on better with the teachers.”
• “Getting on with people better.”
• “I’m not getting angry so much, like if I’m a dog with a muzzle on I can’t hurt people because of it, so I’m happy I can’t. I dont like hurting people so it really helped me.”
• “Good relationship with teachers. New friends.”
• “I am getting on much better with my teachers and everyone in the school.”
• “School is better because you get along with others.”
• “I am coming in more, if someone slags me I can walk on, I have more respect for people. I feel like I have someone to talk to that will help me.”
• “I’m not suspended as much. I’m happier to come in to school now because I think that not everyone is out to get me.”
• “I’m able to go home and not to worry about coming to school the next day and being shouted at.”
• “I’m happier, I’m learning more, my heads not being wrecked and I want to do well cause I care.”
• “I’m not getting thrown out of class. My mom isn’t getting phone calls. I’m happier in school.”
• “With me reading and my confidence and my nerves.”

The data provided by the students, both quantitative and qualitative indicates that the majority of students think that the work that they did during the Level 3 interventions helped them to do better in school and were clear about identifying the specific ways in which the work had helped them.

**KEEPING UP THE GOOD WORK**

Subsequently the students were asked if they could maintain the progress they had made (“If you feel that things are better, do you think you will be able to keep up the good work?”). Most of the students (68% N=450) felt confident that they would be able to maintain their progress and the skills that they had developed. A little under one-third (27.9% N=185) were not as certain of their long term ability to continue doing well in school and thus would need on-going support to varying degrees to sustain and build upon their achievements so far.
Likening School

The penultimate question of the survey was to ask respondents to state whether they liked being in their school (“Do you like being in this school?”). Of the 662 respondents, nearly all (97.7%, N=647) replied to this question. While over half (53.8%) of the students reported that they liked being in their school, under half (43.9%) stated that they were either not sure or that they did not like being in their particular school.

Advice to Others

Finally, the students were asked “In terms of getting on well in school, what advice would you give to new students just starting in your school?”. The majority of students offered advice that was related to Behaviour for Learning Skills, disruptive behaviour and relationships with teachers and other students. Their advice included:
WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE NEW STUDENTS JUST STARTING IN YOUR SCHOOL?

- “Do all of your homework and come into school everyday.”
- “Just put their head down and get on with the work, you will get on much easier in school and life.”
- “Do all your work and listen to the teacher, be on time with all books.”
- “That to listen up to the teachers and you will learn more and that to do your homework every night and the teachers will be sound to you.”
- “Keep your head down and don’t get a bad name for yourself and don’t let your friends get you into trouble and if you get bullied tell your year head.”
- “Be on time for class. Have all the right books and pens with you for class. Do not talk to your friends in class.”
- “Get along with your year heads. Don’t be noticed in a negative manner. Don’t get cheeky. Have all materials prepared the night before. Positive mind, positive outcome, negative mind, negative outcome.”
- “Advice? Mm, don’t get involved with the wrong people, do the study work. DON’T get angry and make friends who WILL support u and u will know who they are by how they act in tough situations, and if I’m in the school will help someone who bullies u ‘r ur friends because no one should feel the pain I went through. =) be happy is the last one.”
- “In my opinion for new kids just keep your head down and do your work because if you act up in class just because your friend did in the last one that just leads to suspension, detentions, extra homework and you could get a very bad reputation for other teachers.”
- “Don’t mess, listen to your teachers and get on with your work. Talk to someone in the school if you have any problems.”
- “Don’t get in trouble, people will think you are bold all the time ‘cause you will get blamed on everything. Study for your Junior Cert and try your best.”
- “Concentrate, don’t let others drag you down with them, get on with what you have to achieve in school to do well, not to mess.”
- “Don’t be a little bollox ‘n try work with the teachers ‘n not fight with them cause there are other ways around it.”
- “Be on time, listen to the teacher and behave in class, respect the teacher, do the work, do classwork.”
- “Stay calm, work out the best people to make freinds with and keep your nose down.”
- “Keep your head down, get on with your work and just ignore what’s going on around you... it makes life in school easier.”
- “Don’t be mad just do ur work and cop onto life.”
- “Start in 1st year, just put your head down. Get as much help as you can.”
- “Head down and work. Yeah, have a laugh in school but if there’s one thing I learned is that it’s better to have a good name then have a bad one.”
- “Don’t be stupid and come in and don’t get suspended and no messing and do all your homework because when u get to third year you will regret how much time u wasted.”
- “Keep your head down and not to be messing all the time because you miss out on lots of work and u will have to make up the work in 2nd year !! And it’s not easy.”
- “The simplist way to get through school is to just do what you’re being told to do and not give cheek. If you have a target it helps keep you focused. Don’t let yourself be ruled by other people and trying to impress them. You can impress them outside of the school.”
- “My advice I would give is know where you stand with teachers, don’t pick up loads of notes, know how to speak to your teachers and just get on with the work.”
- “Don’t get involved with the wrong crowd.”
- “Don’t get off on a bad start ‘cause sometimes people don’t forget some stuff and the teachers are nice to you when you’re nice to them and you would get on way better in school and like coming to school better if you get along with everyone, and if you are polite and nice you will get help with your work and stuff when the teachers are ready, just be patient. If you ever have problems you can talk to most of the teachers or staff members and they will be willing to help. Be nice to everyone and everyone will be nice to you, be good in class and work will be a lot easier. It’s not the teachers school it’s the students’, the students make the school so make the most of it.”
These student responses to the question “In terms of getting on well in school, what advice would you give to new students just starting your school?” highlight some of the skills, attitudes and behaviours that students in receipt of NBSS Level 3 Support perceive as important for navigating post-primary and for achieving and succeeding at school.
Discussion

The data provided by the students offers confirmation of previous findings based on questionnaires completed by Level 3 teachers and their principals and the annual Level 3 statistics that are collected by the NBSS twice yearly. For example, based on the survey cohort, the majority of students who received Level 3 Support (through the BSC or BfL programmes) during the academic year 2012-2013 were in the Junior Cycle (92.1%, N=610) and over two-thirds were male. However, responses to other questions provide not only insights into the way the students identify their own behavioural issues but additionally their interpretations of the Level 3 intervention. Equally, the students’ replies offer indications of their perceptions of the norms that are inherent within school and therefore the skills that they will require to navigate positively through their educational experience.

For example, the students were asked why they thought they were selected to work with their Level 3 teacher. The majority of students described behaviours that would be termed “disruptive” either generally or within a classroom context. This would support the predominant nature of Behaviour for Learning Skills and Academic Literacy, Learning and Study Skills throughout subsequent answers regarding targets and helpful activities. Additionally, difficulties in terms of relationships with teachers and peers as well as anger emerged early on as recurring themes throughout the findings. Nevertheless, because the survey was completed at the end of the academic year and following the Level 3 intervention, it is not possible to infer whether the respondents were as acutely aware of these behavioural issues prior to the work commencing.

After identifying those behaviours that led to their Level 3 work, the students were asked to select from a list those areas of behaviour in which they felt they had improved over the course of the Level 3 intervention. Primarily, the listed behaviours focused on Behaviour for Learning Skills. However, of the three behaviours most selected, two also encompassed the development of Social and Emotional Literacy Skills i.e. “Getting along with my teachers” (55.9%) and “Getting along with my classmates” (53.9%). Those students who provided additional behaviours (not included on the original list) which they had improved, for the most part concentrated on Behaviour for Learning Skills, doing work and working better in classes (with reference to developing Academic Literacy, Learning and Study Skills). Despite the emphasis given by the composition of the question to Behaviour for Learning Skills, a number of students did write about improvements in their behaviours that could be categorised as Social and Emotional...
Literacy and Positive Health and Wellbeing Skills. The students’ responses here and throughout the survey serve to highlight the inter-relationship between the four elements of the Positive In-School Curricular Framework. In many cases skills acquisition is dependent on development across a range of elements.

As students have an active role in setting and monitoring their weekly targets, it was essential to gather their assessment of the extent to which they had been successful in achieving their targets during the Level 3 intervention. Of the 662 students, the vast majority (85.3%, N=565) reported that they had reached all or most of their weekly targets. In order to probe further into the students’ views of and their experiences working to realise their targets, the respondents were asked to identify both the easiest target and the hardest targets to achieve. The majority of students identified Behaviour for Learning Skills as both the easiest and hardest to attain. This seeming anomaly could be explained in a number of ways. The preponderance of Behaviour for Learning Skills in both responses may be related to a possible strong emphasis placed on these skills by both teachers and students during the setting of weekly targets. Additionally, when considering the extent of skills inherent in the Behaviour for Learning element, one is conscious of not only the wide range of skills but also the complexity of same. In considering targets related to Behaviour for Learning (BfL) skills, across the cohort there very may well have been differences in terms of the degree of the BfL targets. For example, organisational skills encompassing activities such as bringing equipment/books to class, keeping locker clean and following one’s timetable could be more or less rigorous depending on the student’s individual circumstances and needs (as well as the rules and routines of the particular schools). Additionally, the individual qualities and characteristics of each student would need to be considered. For instance, while some BfL skills (e.g. bringing journal to class) might be easy for some students, others (such as punctuality, sitting still and listening) could prove very difficult for other students albeit skill areas that would need to be addressed.

As one of the fundamental aims of NBSS Level 3 Support is to enable students to have a more positive learning experience, the students were asked to describe the most important thing they had learned about doing well in school. Over half of the respondents identified skills that were related to working well in their classrooms and in school generally. These primarily referred to giving one’s best effort to work, listening and following teachers’ instructions and staying on task (completing work, avoiding distracting others or being side-tracked). A number of students wrote that they had learned about the importance of getting a good education, particularly in terms of being equipped to achieve their future goals and prospects upon leaving school.
Similarly, when asked to identify the work or activities that were the most helpful to do well in school, while there was identification of skills within the four elements, 50.0% of the students identified work related to Behaviour for Learning and Academic Literacy, Learning and Study Skills as the most helpful for them to do well in school. It is interesting to note, considering the central role in NBSS Level 3 intervention of co-operative weekly target setting and review, that a number of students wrote that identifying targets (or goals) and scaling their progress in achieving these was the activity they found the most helpful in doing well in school.

‘The majority (83.1%) thought that the work they had engaged in the Behaviour Support Classroom or Behaviour for Learning Programme had helped them.’

Having singled out those activities that they had found the most helpful, the students were then asked to determine whether the work that they had done with their BSC/BfLP teachers had actually helped them to get on better in school and if so, in what way(s). The majority (83.1%) thought that the work they had engaged in the Behaviour Support Classroom or Behaviour for Learning Programme had helped them. While most of the students (54.0%) went on to describe how school had gotten better with regard to Behaviour for Learning Skills and behaviour in general, many of the responses were multi-faceted in terms of reference being made to skills acquisition across a range of the four elements in the NBSS Positive Behaviour In-school Curricular Framework. Additionally, a number of students wrote specifically about how things now were better for them in school because they felt more content, calmer and happier.

In reviewing the student responses with regard to their achievement of targets, the types of activities and work they had undertaken and their views about the extent and nature of the help the intervention had provided them, it is evident that the majority of students believed that the Level 3 intervention had been of real benefit to them in terms of getting on better in school. However, in drawing this conclusion, it is also necessary to consider the students’ responses to Question 16: “If you feel that things are better, do you think you will be able to keep up the good work?” and Question 17: “Do you like being in this school?”.

While well over half of the students (68.0%, N=450) stated that they thought they would be able to maintain the good work they had achieved during the intervention, 27.9% (N=185) reported that they were “Not Sure” if they could (with only 2.1% stating that they would not be able to continue the good work). The positivity of the majority of students is encouraging. However, those who recognised that they may not be able to “keep up the good work” highlight the issue of sustainability of change over the long-term. The surveys were completed by students in the
last few weeks before the Summer holidays. It would be understandable if skills and practices developed during the school terms may regress over the course of the 12 week break from school. The students who voiced doubt in their ability to maintain their achievements in the long-term draw attention to the need for on-going support to be available to young people who have worked at Level 3. The nature and extent of the issues and challenges these students encounter underline the point that in many cases, students will benefit from some form of further assistance throughout the course of their school education.

‘... 83.1% stated that the work they had done had helped them get on better in school … including getting on better in classes, relating well to teachers and peers and being happier, more content and calmer in school.’

Student responses to the final quantitative question (“Do you like being in this school?”) on the surface may seem contradictory to their responses to previous questions (Question 14:“Has the work you have done with your teacher helped you to get on better in school?” and Question 15: “If so, can you describe in what ways things are better for you in school?”). However, only 54.8% (N=363) reported that they liked being in their school.

There might be a number of explanations for this variance. Firstly, the quantitative question “Do you like being in this school?” requires a more “black or white”, less nuanced response than previous qualitative questions and therefore in some cases students’ replies may have been provided rapidly without extensive consideration. Equally, while students described how things are better for them in school, this does not necessarily translate into them feeling positive about their school as a whole. The nature of the questions can lead to making differentiations between the work the student has done and its impact on them personally versus his/her general view of the school as a whole. Questions 15 and 16 are categorically different from Question 17. In the former, the students are being asked how they have gotten better, not how has school gotten better. Many of the students who responded to the survey would be young people who have had a negative view and experience of “school”. Through their work with the BSC/BfLP teachers, generally they have been given tools to individually function more positively within the school. However, as a NBSS Level 3 intervention, this is an individual, unique development and is not associated with the whole school environment, systems, practices or change. Therefore, while recognising the significance of the progress they have made as individual learners, feelings about their school as a community and as an institution may be more complex than can be catered for in responding to a closed, multiple choice question.
Conclusion

This study has contributed not only to the NBSS’ on-going research of Level 3 provision in partner schools, but as well adds to the international body of research concerned with the needs of children and young people with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties. The findings from this student survey confirm much of the quantitative and qualitative data that have been provided to the NBSS from participating schools. However, it is distinctive in that rather than gathering adults’ impressions of how students reacted and what they thought, this research sought to find out what the young people themselves experienced and their impressions of the work they had done.

The collaborative approach adopted by NBSS Level 3 BSC/BfLP teachers when working with their students supports the tangible need for children and young people to have the right to participate in any activities and decision-making that directly have an impact on them (UNCRC, 1989). This right of participation extends to educational research that is undertaken within schools, particularly when it is related to systems, practices and programmes that have either a direct or indirect effect on students. While “Student Voice” is increasingly evident both within the arenas of educational change and research, it is often encompassed by those within schools who traditionally would have input due to their academic, social or economic status. Many students with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties would typically fall outside this group for a variety of reasons.

The students who participated in this research provided thoughtful and insightful answers to the survey questions. They offered responses that revealed that they had clear ideas about the ways in which they needed to work, the skills that they needed to develop and the changes they needed to make in order to get on better in school. Additionally, they were quite open and specific not only about the areas in which they should continue to focus their efforts, but more importantly, on how much they had achieved during the NBSS Level 3 intervention. An emphasis on the latter should support them in their on-going work.

This research highlights the importance of capturing the “Student Voice”. The rich data provided from the survey alone makes the case for more in-depth explorations of these students’ voices in the future.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The National Behaviour Support Service would like to thank all of the students who contributed to this research.
References


National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS)
Navan Education Centre
Athlumney
Navan
Co. Meath

Telephone: +353 46 909 3355
Fax: +353 46 909 3354
Email: nbss@ecnavan.ie
Website: www.nbss.ie