NBSS Level 3 Support: The Behaviour Support Teachers’ Views

National Behaviour Support Service

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

© 2014 National Behaviour Support Service
Contents

I. Overview
   - Behaviour Support Classrooms & Behaviour for Learning Programme
   - Research Methods
   - Procedures for Identifying & Monitoring NBSS Level 3 Support

II. Findings
   • Quantitative Findings
   • Qualitative Findings
      - Behaviour for Learning Skills
      - Social and Emotional Literacy Skills
      - Academic Literacy, Learning and Study Skills
      - Positive Health and Wellbeing Skills
   • Interventions, Programmes and Strategies
      - Targets Set and Monitored
      - Effective Programmes and Approaches
   • The Teachers’ Voice
      - School-wide Impact

III. Conclusion

IV. Acknowledgements

V. References

VI. Appendix
NB

SS Level 3 Support: The Behaviour Support Teachers' Views
The National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) was established by the Department of Education & Skills in 2006 in response to the recommendation in *School Matters: The Report of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools* (Martin, 2006). The service promotes and supports positive behaviour for learning through the provision of a systematic continuum of support to school communities grounded in international evidence-based practice (Bonhanon et al., 2006; Carr et al., 2002; Hawken & Horner, 2002; Lane, Kalberg, & Menzies, 2009; Lewis & Sugai, 1999). NBSS assists partner schools in addressing behaviour related issues on three levels.

- Level 1 – School-wide Support
- Level 2 – Targeted Interventions
- Level 3 – Intensive, individualised interventions

Within this model of support, the NBSS identifies four elements that comprise a curricular framework for positive learning behaviour. These are thematically categorised as skill areas that students need to develop in order to benefit maximally from their post primary education. The NBSS encourages partner schools to adopt a Positive Behaviour In-School Curricular Framework that includes Behaviour for Learning Skills, Social and Emotional Literacy Skills, Academic Literacy, Learning and Study Skills and Positive Health and Wellbeing Skills.

While the four elements within this framework are defined as fundamental skills for all young people, this report will focus solely on work undertaken with 920 students who received Level 3 support in 48 NBSS partner schools during the academic year September 2011 to June 2012. Level 3 support from NBSS is identified as “Intensive, Individualised Intervention”. The work that is undertaken is tailored specifically to the unique needs of the individual student. This support is offered to students who continue to experience behavioural difficulty in school despite support received with their peers at School-wide Level 1 and monitored, targeted interventions at Level 2.
At the core of the planning and implementation of Level 3 interventions is an acute recognition of the complexity and range of difficulties each of these young people experience as well as an awareness of their strengths. Students in receipt of NBSS Level 3 Support often struggle with a number of aspects identified across the four positive curricular elements including relationships with adults and peers; social skills; concentration and attention difficulties; absenteeism and punctuality; academic difficulties (often related to literacy issues); persistent challenging behaviour within the classroom and emotional well-being concerns (whether through externalising or internalising behaviours). Some students receiving this support have been assessed with identified conditions (for example, Attention Deficit Disorder or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Conduct Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder), others have not undergone a formal assessment but persistent behaviour in school impedes their educational progress and in many cases that of their peers.

While NBSS Level 3 support is available to all partner schools, the findings from this research are based on data from schools that conduct this work either through the provision of a NBSS Behaviour Support Classroom (BSC) or the Behaviour for Learning Programme (BfL) teacher. The report will present a quantitative and qualitative account of the complexity of issues experienced by these students as well as the nature of the individualised planning and implementation of support provided by the teachers concerned.

**BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT CLASSROOMS & BEHAVIOUR FOR LEARNING PROGRAMME**

The essential aim of the work undertaken in a Behaviour for Learning Programme (BfLP) is to enable students to realise their potential and succeed at school. The Behaviour Support Classrooms are staffed by two full-time, qualified post-primary teachers and the Behaviour for Learning Programme is
staffed by one qualified post-primary teacher. These teachers have responsibility for developing and implementing an individualised programme to help each student develop positive behaviours for learning, addressing the social and emotional aspects of learning alongside academic skills development. The Behaviour for Learning Programme is not based on “a wait to fail” intervention model, but is founded on prevention and early intervention approaches for all students. An example of this kind of work is supporting 1st year transition as well as liaising with other relevant staff to implement a Behaviour for Learning Programme with those students who were considered “at risk” in primary school. Additionally, BSC/BfL teachers plan and implement with their teaching colleagues prevention and early intervention strategies across year groups within the school.

Once a student has been referred for Level 3 support, a process of data collection is undertaken by the teachers in order to gain relevant information with regard to both the student’s needs and strengths. This typically would consist of Learning Behaviour Checklists completed by the student’s subject teachers as well as a student questionnaire. Additionally, BSC/BfL teachers, as part of the planning phase, will consult records and professional reports, undertake observation, establish communication with the student and his/her parent(s)/guardian(s), as well as liaise with relevant members of staff. Once the data are collected and analysed, the teacher will then begin the process of developing a Student Behaviour Plan (SBP) (see www.nbss.ie for SBP document) which will be monitored and reviewed over the course of the intervention.

RESEARCH METHODS

The information presented in this report draws upon quantitative data collected during the academic year 2011/2012 from BSC and BfL teachers. These data include information about the gender, year groups, chronological ages, reading ages, supports and professional reports for 920 students who had received Level 3 support throughout that time period. Qualitative data were obtained from BSC/BfL teachers in the 48 partner schools who submitted Student Behaviour Plans and target sheets for their students as well as questionnaires that were completed by the BSC/BfL teachers in May 2012.

PROCEDURES FOR IDENTIFYING AND MONITORING NBSS LEVEL 3 SUPPORT

Following a preliminary, internal research study of the NBSS Behaviour Support Classrooms (Henefer, 2008), the NBSS published Behaviour Support Classroom: Best Practice Guidelines (NBSS, 2008). Based on the data provided by the schools, it was clear to the NBSS that there was a need to produce for schools a set of guidelines for best practice within an Irish context. One of the key elements of the guidelines was the recommendation that each student who receives Level 3 support should have a behaviour plan drawn up and regularly monitored, based on evidence collected about their strengths and needs.
“The primary purpose of a plan or program for students with SEBD is to increase their self-control skills, enable their social integration at school, and increase their ability to benefit from teaching and learning experiences. Because these students often seem resistant to normal discipline and do not always seem to learn positive behaviours from their peers, or their teachers, they benefit from behaviour plans that specifically teach them the ‘academic survival skills’ and ‘social survival skills’ they need to successfully cope at school” (Rogers, 2010, p. 193).

Rogers identifies a student behaviour plan as a “contractual agreement” that should be “...simple, clear and achievable” (p. 201).

The importance of carefully developing and implementing individualised behaviour plans drawn from a range of data collection techniques has been the subject of research internationally (Codd, Feinberg, Dunn, & Pace, 2005; Cook et al., 2007; Ingram, Lewis- Palman, & Sugai, 2005; Necomer & Lewis, 2004; Smith & Sugai, 2000). In the United States the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) has established as law that schools undertake systematic Functional Behaviour Assessments of students who would be identified as needing Level 3 support and based on the data collected develop, implement and monitor individual Behaviour Improvement Plans.

Questions have arisen about the real effects of this model (i.e. data collection to inform the development and implementation of an individualised behaviour plan) because the literature tends to focus on trials that have been conducted in schools where a researcher(s) was attached to the project. A recent study (Cook et al., 2012) investigated whether evidence generated student behaviour improvement plans (BIPs) within a real world education context (i.e. without an external researcher involved in the data collection and plan development) were effective both in terms of the teachers’ use of the plans and the effects for the students concerned. Their findings indicated:

“...that there was a significant positive relationship between the evidence based quality of BIPs and student outcomes when carried out under real-world conditions: (a) reductions in identified problem behaviors, (b) increases in general positive behaviors, (c) increases in appropriate replacement behaviors, and (d) improved academic performance. Although many of the BIPs were lacking evidence-based components, those plans that did were associated with better reported improvements in student outcomes” (pp. 10-11).

Since the publication of The Best Practice Guidelines, the NBSS has engaged in a consultative process with BSC/BfL teachers in order to further refine and develop a standardised procedure for data collection and planning. The Student Behaviour Plan (SBP) resource supplies teachers with the key documents they should use throughout all phases of the intervention. For example, the first sections of the document include the Learning Behaviour Checklist (to be completed by the student’s subject teachers), the My Work at School student questionnaire and the Student Profile. The latter is compiled from the data that have been collected and provides documentation of the student’s strengths; the areas in which he/she is experiencing some success; the behaviour(s) causing particular concern; the student’s record of attendance and punctuality; previous interventions provided to the
student as well as the identification of any professional reports/assessments that have been completed.

The second part of the document supplies the teachers with the instruments they should use for planning and monitoring the intervention. Initially, based on their analysis of the data that they have collected, the teacher(s) complete the first section of the Student Behaviour Plan. This consists of the identification of any specific areas of need within the four elements of the Positive Behaviour In-School Curricular Framework (i.e. Behaviour for Learning Skills; Social and Emotional Literacy Skills; Academic Literacy, Learning and Study Skills and Positive Health and Wellbeing Skills) that the student may need to address. Once the needs have been recorded, the teacher maps out the actions to be taken, the individuals who will be involved as well as the resources, supports and programmes that will be required to implement the interventions.

The second section of the Student Behaviour Plan is completed by the student, his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the teacher. Typically this is undertaken at a meeting with all parties and essentially consists of target planning for the student. Research has shown that shared target setting and self-monitoring can be very effective, both behaviourally and academically with students who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (Jull, 2009; Mooney, Ryan, Uhing, Reid, & Epstein, 2005). In School-Based Behavioral Assessment (2007), Chafouleas, Riley-Tillman and Sugai (2007) state that:

“Self-monitoring has been found to be an effective intervention for a number of outcome variables, including work completion (Piersel, 1985) and disruptive behaviour (Smith, Young, West, Morgan, & Rhode, 1988). Researchers have suggested that the simple act of raising an individual’s awareness of his or her own behavior may serve to significantly alter behaviour” (p. 91).

During this target planning meeting, all parties (student, parent(s)/guardian(s) and teacher) record, in their view, the student’s strengths as well as the behaviours causing concern. Space is then provided on the document for the specific identification of the work that needs to be done, the targets agreed upon to achieve improvement and how these targets can be best achieved (“the how, the who and the what”). Once the work begins, the student and teacher complete at the end of each week the final part of the Student Behaviour Plan document which provides the student with an opportunity to scale (from 1 to 10) how he/she thinks they have done in meeting their target(s). Additionally, because it is a planning document, teachers record what the “next steps” will be for the forthcoming week. Parent(s)/guardian(s) are kept regularly informed throughout the intervention.
Findings

The following section will present the findings from the data collected from the Behaviour Support Classroom and Behaviour for Learning teachers from September 2011 to June 2012. The first section will highlight the quantitative findings while the subsequent sections will provide the qualitative findings including the most frequently identified behavioural needs; the strategies used to address these needs; the nature of the targets set for students as well as insights from teachers about their work at Level 3.

**Quantitative Findings**

Data regarding students who had received Level 3 support throughout the year (and so were represented in both reports) were removed from the analysis of the First Term data to avoid an overlap. During the academic year 2011/2012, 920 students received Level 3 support from BSC or BfL teachers. From the data submitted, 540 of the students (58.7%) worked with BSC teachers and 380 (41.3%) with BfL teachers. The majority of students in both programmes were male (70.3%, N=647). All year groups were represented as shown in the following figure.

**Figure 1: Year Groups**

The teachers were asked to report on their students’ attendance in terms of the number of days missed from school. The data were collected both at the end of the First Term (days missed from
September to December) and then at the end of the academic year (days missed from September to June). Figure 2 presents the attendance findings for the First Term (N=169, statistics for 22 students not available). Figure 3 shows the days missed from September to June (N=727, statistics for two students not available).

**Figure 2: Days Missed from School, First Term**

The BSC/BfL teachers reported that nearly half (45.2%, N=416) of their students had been in receipt of special educational needs support. This would have included Learning Support, National Council for Special Education (NCSE) resource hours and Special Needs Assistants. Additionally, teachers indicated that 42.4% (N=390) of their students had had a psychological assessment.
The relationship between behaviour and academic difficulties is well documented (Bulotsky-Shearer & Fantuzzo, 2011; Byrne & Smyth, 2010; Frick et al., 1991; Gellert & Elbro, 1999; Masten et al., 2005; Miles & Stipek, 2006; Trzeniewski et al., 2006; Valiente, 2010). The NBSS asks BSC/BfL teachers to record both their students’ chronological and reading ages at the time of the intervention. In terms of data submitted for students’ chronological ages, teachers did not provide this information for five students. With regard to their students’ reading ages, teachers did not submit these figures for 87 (9.5%) of the 920 students. Figures 4 and 5 present the findings from the data collected for students in the academic year 2011/2012.

**Figure 4: Students’ Chronological Ages**

![Bar chart showing distribution of chronological ages](image-url)

**Figure 5: Students’ Reading Ages**

![Bar chart showing distribution of reading ages](image-url)

In reviewing the reading age data collected by the Level 3 teachers, nearly half of their students (42.2%, N= 351) were reading at less than 10 years (60.9% were reading at less than 11 years). An additional analysis was undertaken to determine the number of students who were reading three or
more years beneath their chronological age. Both chronological and reading ages were provided for 833 students. The analysis demonstrates that 63.9% (N=533) at the time of the Level 3 intervention were reading three or more years beneath their chronological age.

**Qualitative Findings**

The following qualitative findings are drawn from a number of sources. The sections on Needs Assessment, Interventions, Programmes and Strategies and Targets Set and Monitored are all based on data collected and analysed from elements of the Student Behaviour Planning. The final section Teachers’ Voice is drawn from questionnaires that were completed by the teachers in May 2012.

As part of the process of developing the Student Behaviour Plan, teachers are asked to identify specifically the areas of the students’ behavioural needs within the Positive Behaviour In-School Curricular Framework. While the plans indicated that students frequently required support in all four areas (i.e. Behaviour for Learning Skills; Social and Emotional Literacy Skills; Academic Literacy, Learning and Study Skills and Physical Health and Wellbeing Skills), there was often an overlap in terms of needs. For example, “listening skills” might be recorded for one student as both a necessary Behaviour for Learning Skill as well as a Social and Emotional Literacy Skill.

**Behaviour for Learning Skills**

Needs in this area of positive behaviour were predominant across all of the submitted Student Behaviour Plans. Teachers most commonly cited “Organisational Skills”, in many cases specifically referring to students not attending class with the appropriate materials such as copies, pens and journals. A majority of references indicated that intervention strategies focused on journal work, locker and school bag organisation as well as using and interpreting the weekly timetable effectively. Punctuality, concentration and communication (both in terms of speaking and listening) also featured throughout. In many cases there was an emphasis on the need for the student to be explicitly taught the rules and routines of the school and classroom. The need to be able to stay on task and complete classwork and/or homework was frequently cited.

The following are a selection of quotations from the teachers’ plans which provide not only the nature of the cohort’s needs in Behaviour for Learning Skills but as well, in some cases, the extent of their difficulties in this area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviour for Learning Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
redirection.”

• “Listening skills. How to speak in turn and communicate better with staff and peers. Colour coding the timetable and books. Managing time in class better to complete work. Correct seating posture – using cushions.”
• “Punctuality. Follow instructions and do not ignore the teacher. Staying on task – not shouting out irrelevant information to distract the class.”
• “Computer – using Word to colour code a timetable, print and stick to back of journal for easy reference. Subsequently cut out relevant colour paper and stick to corner of books and copies matching timetable.”

• “Have equipment. Teach explicitly the use of the journal and a system for organising equipment.”
• “Colour code books and timetable. Allow him to use a locker in BSC to relieve his anxiety and keep in constant contact with staff.”
• “He needs to request help appropriately and politely. He needs to be assertive in his communication as different from aggressive. He needs to acknowledge and follow instructions in class. He needs to complete homework. Bring equipment to class. He needs to develop the skill of concentration. He needs to attend to his own work and avoid distraction.”
• “Computer notes on coloured paper. Construct print and stick timetable to journal. Place coloured paper corresponding to timetable on each book.”
• “Talking out of turn. Back answering – refuses to take correction. Not to adopt the role of the entertainer in the classroom.”

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LITERACY SKILLS

As with Behaviour for Learning Skills, the need for the development of various social and emotional literacy skills was identified by the teachers for nearly all of the students in their plans. In some cases, the teachers indicated that there was an association between some of the needs in this area with those in Behaviour for Learning Skills. Occasionally, in completing plans, some teachers did not actually indicate the area(s) of need, but only listed the programme(s) they planned to use with the students to develop their social and emotional literacy skills.

Skills related to anger management (including recognising triggers, thinking before reacting, relaxation techniques, etc.) were commonly cited in the plans. Additionally, the need to develop communication skills (both verbal and non-verbal) with regard to interacting with both adults and peers arose throughout the plans as a core area for work. Confidence building and self-esteem similarly appear to be important priorities for many of the students who were to receive Level 3 support.

The following quotes offer an indication of the type of issues arising most often as well as a sense of the particular behaviours related to this area of need.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LITERACY SKILLS

• “Respect for other pupils and property. He needs to learn not to damage property. Suspected problem with bullying others. Learn what bullying is and possible consequences.”
• “Ownership of behaviour – reflection, avoid disruption and shouting out, less reliant on SNA. Communication – speak appropriately to teachers and students, no insults. Engage with teachers – build relationships and trust.”
• “Respect for adults. How to resolve conflict situations. Self-esteem. Ability to ask for help. Ability to say I don’t understand. Wants to go back to Poland after LC. Sees no point in LC. English very weak, tries to hide this by attacking teachers e.g.
• “Anger Management (conflict resolution) – aggressive (verbally and physically), walking out of class. Cooperation and respect – following teacher directions and showing respect.”
• “Speak appropriately to adults. Don’t use bad language in class. Interact appropriately with peers. Show respect towards peers – not getting into a fight. Can communicate appropriately.”
• “Improved communication skills and stress management are keys to his success. He knows what is required of him as he was a very good student up to Junior Cert. The change in group dynamic has had a detrimental effect on his behaviour. So he needs to develop the skills to cope with this change.”
The following quotations offer insights into the range and extent of needs in this area.

| ‘Not good teachers, not good school, stupid.’ |
| “Being assertive - Not getting involved or being influenced by other students.” |
| “Telling the truth. Facebook and bullying other students.” |
| “Self-confidence (insecure) and real friends? Appropriate communication with teachers. Shouts, argues, refuses. Bad language.” |
| “Communication with others without slagging or losing temper and hitting others. Cooperation with others in his class and teachers.” |
| “Negative peer influences within class group results in his becoming easily distracted. Needs to develop greater independence. Developing his confidence in own ability would go some way towards addressing this.” |
| “He can be extremely stubborn and argumentative so he would benefit from a programme of anger management and conflict resolution while at the same time looking at how body language and facial expression affect relationships.” |
| “Communication – inappropriate language. Refuses to follow simple directions e.g., feet off desk.” |
| “Self-esteem. Confidence to ask question when not understanding something.” |
| “To ask for help and try to wait patiently until the teacher comes. To take correction and not shout back at the teacher.” |
| “He shows many symptoms of social phobia. He freely admits not wanting to mix with fellow pupils...he refuses to eat in public. He often wears a hoodie and keeps it up.” |
| “Appropriate social interaction with adults and peers. Appropriate communication – comments, taunts people. To know what is appropriate – difference between funny and hurtful.” |
| “Anti-social behaviour on the corridor – needs to work on correct way to behave in group situations.” |
| “Confidence to participate in group work. To sit at front of class from time to time.” |

**Academic Literacy, Learning and Study Skills**

Literacy appears frequently in many of the students’ plans and included specific identification of programmes and resources such as the Catch Up Literacy intervention (110 students) and comprehension strategy teaching (70 students). Equally, there are a range of “Study Skills” recorded. This may be partly because almost a quarter (24.1%, N=222) of the cohort were Third Year students sitting their Junior Certificate in the Summer Term. Homework and the various aspects of completing homework were frequently identified by the teachers as skills their students needed to develop. Numeracy was identified in a number of the plans.

The following quotations offer insights into the range and extent of needs in this area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Academic Literacy, Learning and Study Skills</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“NBSS Teacher as Research Project, SRA, Flip for Comprehension when using reading material, Catch Up Literacy.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Behind due to absenteeism – but very bright.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Comprehension skills. Awaiting speech and language assessment.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Excellent reader but has fallen behind so needs to join Homework Club. Help in French and Business.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“How to keep a copy tidy – use of margins, neat handwriting. Skills in class – asking a question, hands up.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Literacy – very low reading age. Numeracy poor.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Study timetable. How to take notes and exam papers. Homework club.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Note book with new words he has found in books – look, cover, write, check. Key words for subjects. Literacy for Life – ‘Spelling and Phonics Book 3’.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“By using Catch Up Literacy programme a plan will be devised to improve reading age.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“How to learn strategies: visual note taking. Skimming and scanning techniques. Homework club.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Complete homework for classes. Stay on task in the classroom.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Irish – he finds this difficult. Homework – doesn’t understand the need for it. Listening – following teachers’ instructions in class.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Homework skills. Numeracy skills – telling time.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Neat handwriting. How to use margins, etc. Study Skills.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Give effort to and have pride in her work. Activate study skills learned in 2nd year and learn some new ones. Improve comprehension and reading composite as per WRAT.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| “She will be able to improve comprehension and reading composite as per WRAT scores. Complete
vocabulary on the computer, using Irish CD ROM.”
• “Literacy skills – spelling, phonics, decoding, reading and recalling.”
• “Using Internet Maths resources we will try and help him improve his Maths skills.”
• “Literacy – has dyslexia. Numeracy skills. Stay on task and begin a task with the rest of his peers.”
• “Written work – handwriting – time. Concentration skills.”
• “One to one reading, SRA kit, Catch Up Numeracy.”
• “Spot checks on homework. Explore ‘hot spot’ subjects – further support needed in any subject area. Also explore Homework Club as an option.”
• “Learning and study skills seriously affected by her attendance and attitude.”
• “Very good but needs building up self-esteem re reading.”
• “He needs organisation skills – help organise his work. He needs to develop and improve his note taking in class so as to help him in his homework later.”
• “Numeracy – trouble in Maths is leading to disruptive behaviour.”
• “Levels are generally good however she must not be allowed to accept ok and be encouraged to seek higher standards.”
• “Mind mapping – introduce, explain and get student using mind mapping for subjects. Typing skills – use typing tutor to get skills needed for completing IT tasks. Literacy – using text to speak software. Encourage on-line reading.”
• “Basic literacy.”
• allocated homework. Attend after school study at least twice a week, has attended History. Use specific study skills.”
• “Academic development through reading comprehension to teach the SQ3R, short written answers to practise handwriting.”
• “Link with LSU. Reading age. Concentration and memory skills. Literacy and numeracy difficulties.”
• “Participate in guided after school study Monday – History.”
• “Motivation – goal setting. Study skills.”
• “Resources provided by Speech Therapist – Learning Support resources. Now attending Learning Support with BfL.”
• “Needs to attend properly foremost skill then others can be addressed.”
• “Maths – improve basic Maths skills to help him work successfully in class.”
• “Literacy skills are good so let’s put them to work! Attempt work set in class. Stop the ‘I can’t’ and ‘I don’t do…’ talk.”
• “Guidelines on doing homework and the importance of homework.”
• “Literacy – to improve reading ability to a functional level. Homework – to begin to introduce him to homework, preparing an area, organising a time, etc.”
• “Resilience and persistence – to keep trying even if I find a task challenging.”
• “He does not have any learning difficulties and is quite bright. However, persistent absence from school means he is badly lacking in the basics of all of his Junior Cert subjects.”
• “He is a very capable student but lacks motivation and fails to see the relevance in applying himself to study.”

**POSITIVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING SKILLS**

Of late, there has been an increasing focus on the need to directly address the development of children and young people’s positive health and wellbeing skills. Rather than assuming that these skills are innate in the majority of the population, it is clear that relevant organisations, services and educators should work cooperatively with families to teach and promote these skills both in terms of prevention and intervention (Hackett, Theodosiou, Bond, Blackburn, & Lever, 2010; Rose, Howley, Ferguson, & Jament, 2009; Skad, Diekstra, DeRitter, Ben, & Gravesteijn, 2012).

In analysing the data provided by the BSC/BfL teachers certain patterns emerged in this skills area. As with skills in Social and Emotional Literacy, learning to relax, breathe and stay calm were highlighted. Similarly, the need for the students to develop “coping skills” when faced with difficult or challenging situations featured. In a few cases, those students who had been assessed with ADHD and were prescribed medication needed to have strategies put in place so that they and their families would ensure that medication was administered appropriately and on a timely and regular basis. The need
for consistent exercise and attention to diet figured strongly in the plans. Sleep and establishing more regularised and healthy sleep patterns were highlighted by teachers. BSC/BfL teachers thought that for many students the areas of physical health (proper diet, sleep, hygiene and exercise) had an impact on their behavioural issues within the classroom and in school. Additionally, teachers noted that learning about the implications of substance abuse was an area in need of skills development. Dealing with past trauma and more recent bereavement were also identified by teachers as Positive Behaviour and Wellbeing Skills for their students.

The quotations that follow present what teachers identified as skills with regard to Positive Health and Wellbeing that their students needed to develop when they were drawing up the individual Student Behaviour Plans. In reviewing this section of the report, it should also be recognised that these skills are on a continuum in that some students in receipt of NBSS Level 3 support require intensive, individualised support in these skills areas (perhaps the support of other stakeholders and services outside of the school) whilst other students can address their needs from individual or group work with the NBSS BSC/BfL teacher or relevant staff.

### Positive Health and Wellbeing Skills

| • “Stay safe – making positive choices.” | • “Able to have a goal – hope for future.” |
| • “Relaxation exercises: Time out, ask properly, counting to 10, breathing exercises.” | • “Needs to take his medication for ADHD every morning with water or fruit juice. Speed Strength and Agility training (general wellbeing and health).” |
| • “Promote a healthier eating/exercise plan and encourage him to be a participant in his PE classes. He will hopefully bring his PE gear and participate in class.” | • “Encourage healthier eating – replace fizzy drinks with juice or water. Promote eating a healthy breakfast, etc. Positive health programme – Friends for Life.” |
| • “No problem with mental health. Physical health needs some work. Needs to develop inner peace. Focus on diet and lifestyle.” | • “Learning to control temper as he has been hurt in many fights. Arrange Psychological Assessment with NEPS.” |
| • “Mum to get hearing test done.” | • “Breakfast club – attendance every morning.” |
| • “Attendance/lateness. Facts of life (boyfriend) - Mum.” | • “Friendships – especially at home, alternative to computer.” |
| • “Decision making re substance use.” | • “Smoking and alcohol awareness.” |
| • “Bedtime routine, sleep pattern. Counselling to deal with past trauma.” | • “His diet is very poor. He refuses to eat the school dinners and drinks a lot of fizzy drinks especially Coke.” |
| • “Self-esteem – tends to give up even before he tries. Fear of failure. His academic confidence needs to be worked on. Sleep patterns.” | • “He arrives late for school due to his fondness for a cigarette before he comes to school. Dangers of smoking.” |
| • “Exercise – no regular activity. Smoking. Diet – no breakfast, often misses lunch. Sleep – up late, computer games and TV.” | • “Coping skills – dealing with setbacks in conduct review or outside of school without letting it ruin the day, without getting really upset.” |
| • “Family relationships need to be improved – priority. Home School Community Liaison teacher has met mother and attempt at reconciliation has been made. Further work required.” | • “She will be able to channel energy through participation in a movement programme and glean the neuromuscular benefits therein. Take all prescribed medication before coming to school. Develop coping skills through SPHE programme.” |
| • “Referred to Pieta House after difficult situation at home.” | |

### Interventions, Programmes and Strategies

In “What Works in Developing Children’s Emotional and Social Competence and Wellbeing” (2003), Weare and Gray cite studies that have reviewed the use and impact of structured programmes
designed to address young peoples’ social/emotional literacy and wellbeing (Catalano et al., 2002; Wells et al., 2003). Analysing the evidence provided in these reviews, Weare and Gray state that: “There is a growing evidence base that explicit programmes of teaching and learning within the right environment are effective...[the studies] found that the most effective programmes used structured programme guidelines or manuals which helped those who were attempting to deliver the programmes to do so consistently. So there is a strong case for saying that if we want to help people learn emotional and social competencies we need to include a clear, well planned, central curriculum” (pp. 64-65).

The authors highlight the importance of explicitly teaching and modelling the skills rather than relying on the instruction of values and attitudes alone. Archer and Hughes (2011) consider explicit teaching to be an effective method for developing students’ skills. The term “scaffolding” is applied in describing this approach in which teachers outline the reasons for acquiring the skill, explain and model the skill being taught and finally support the student in practising and mastering the targeted skill.

With regard to developing students’ reading skills, there has been an extensive body of research documenting the value of explicit instruction (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Blachowicz & Ogle, 2001; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; Kosanovich, Reed, & Miller, 2010; Marzano et al., 2001; National Reading Panel 2000; Pearson et al., 1992; Pressley et al., 1989; RAND Reading Study Group 2002). Focusing on studies of explicit reading instruction with children with EBDs, Falk and Wehby (2005) report: “...it appears that, at the very least, students with EBD respond to reading instruction that is explicit and systematic. In addition, the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) has established that effective reading programs for all learners should include instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension. Studies that have incorporated explicit methods of teaching skills in these areas have demonstrated increases in reading achievement for students with EBD” (p.30).

As an element of the Student Behaviour Plan, BSC/BfL teachers are asked by the NBSS to map out a flexible overview of the various ways in which they will address the needs of each student as identified by their data collection. The idea that this is flexible is to ensure that if certain approaches are not helping the student to develop their positive behaviours for learning, then the Behaviour Support teacher can introduce different strategies and programmes to assist the student. BSC/BfL teachers are supported by the NBSS team to integrate effective programmes and strategies that can enable students to develop the skills inherent in the NBSS Positive Behaviour In-School Curricular Framework i.e. Behaviour for Learning Skills, Social and Emotional Literacy Skills, Academic Literacy, Learning and Study Skills and Positive Health and Wellbeing Skills. Professional development and training opportunities as well as ongoing support from the NBSS Assistant National Co-ordinators and Regional Development Officers are provided to all BSC/BfL teachers. As NBSS is a multidisciplinary team, BSC/BfL teachers also have access to the NBSS Literacy Development Officer, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists and the Research and Development Officer to support their work with students.
Professional development is a crucial component of NBSS support to BSC/BfL teachers. Slavin, Lake, Davis, and Madden (2011) in their research review of what works in closing the gap in educational achievement for young people living in poverty point out that ‘professional development in specific proven approaches, using well-specified materials, is more likely to produce positive outcomes’. While Cynthia Shanahan (2005) in her review of adolescent literacy intervention programmes argues that ‘if teachers do not have the appropriate pedagogical content knowledge, they will be less likely to be able to use materials sensitively, to make adjustments when necessary, or support student learning’ (p.8).

To enable the successful implementation of effective programmes and approaches NBSS provides training workshops to BSC/BfL teachers each year on the key elements, theory, methodologies and pedagogies of specific programmes, interventions and strategies. For example, to support the successful implementation of the Catch Up Literacy intervention, teachers attended three half days of training with a gap between training days that allowed the BSC/BfL teachers to implement elements of the intervention and have any queries or clarifications addressed on the following training day. In addition to these days, a further training session for all teachers was held approximately six months later to review and address any issues or concerns. The Why Try! programme was introduced to BSC/BfL teachers over two days of training that included a strong focus on the successful implementation of Why Try's experiential learning activities and multisensory approaches as well as how to effectively use multimedia as a teaching tool. During the two days BSC/BfL teachers had opportunities to practise teaching the programme through role-play and discussion. Solution focused training involved BSC/BfL teachers attending a two day training course where they were introduced to the theory and practice of solution focused approaches and given opportunities to observe and practise solution focused core skills through role-plays and scenarios provided by the trainer. When BSC/BfL teachers return to their schools after training they are supported by the NBSS team to effectively implement and integrate these programmes and approaches into their work if appropriate to the needs of their students.

**TARGETS SET AND MONITORED**

Research has shown that shared target setting and self-monitoring can be very effective, both behaviourally and academically with students who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (Jull, 2009; Mooney, Ryan, Uhing, Reid, & Epstein, 2005). As part of the Student Behaviour Plan BSC/BfL teachers employ target setting strategies to facilitate students’ self-regulative behaviour. Target setting involves the creation of a target or plan for what the student wants to accomplish or achieve each day and each week. The targets are agreed between the student and BSC/BfL teacher and recorded in the SBP. At the end of each week the student uses solution focused scaling (from 1 to 10) to reflect on and discuss with their BSC/BfL teacher how he/she thinks they have done in meeting their target(s). Following this discussion the teacher records what the “next steps” will be for
the forthcoming week. Parent(s)/guardian(s) are kept regularly informed of the targets set and achieved throughout the intervention.

Teachers made the following comments about target setting and monitoring:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TARGET SETTING</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• “Monitoring behaviour in every class. Tracking booklet is also a form of communication between the BSC and his dad. To be signed every evening. Complementing the BSC and student’s weekly behaviour improvement targets, the parent is very supportive by reinforcing positive behaviour with rewards at home.”</td>
<td>• “He will work with BSC to decide what targets he will work on each week. He will carry the card to every class where teachers will rate how he has managed in their class. Every Friday he will review progress and decide further actions.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Teachers will help you keep on task and remind you of your targets. Diary will help in identifying triggers and patterns.”</td>
<td>• “I found the weekly target sheets great for conversation but they took up a lot of time.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Effective Programmes and Approaches**

Many BSC/BfL teachers made references to specific programmes or approaches (N=920) they used and found effective. For example many BSC/BfL teachers made reference to the use of Check and Connect (identified in 190 Student Behaviour Plans). Check & Connect is a structured mentoring approach that involves an adult mentor working with a student to regularly review information on attendance, punctuality, behaviour or academic problems and to intervene and support when problems or issues are identified. BSC/BfL teachers made the following comments about their use of Check and Connect with students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHECK AND CONNECT</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• “To improve attendance and punctuality: daily check and connect for attitude and mood, weekly connect with Mum. Attitude check.”</td>
<td>• “Check and Connect every morning, break and lunch. Subject teachers to inform BSC teachers of her progress.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Check with xx every morning and make sure that he has all his books and equipment. Also ensure that xx has a positive attitude for the day and is aware of his targets.”</td>
<td>• “Removing sources of confrontation. Calming him down before school starts. Setting goals for the day, providing focus. Praise.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Check and Connect – to monitor attendance and punctuality and support organisation for the day. Individual classes also to be given to organisation initially. Visual diagram timetable.”</td>
<td>• “He is on a progress card and will report to the BSC three times every day. His mother will also check this card.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Via dropping in place to talk about issues that have emerged in school.”</td>
<td>• “Via dropping in place to talk about issues that have emerged in school.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A number of programmes, resources and strategies were identified and highlighted by BSC/BfL teachers as particularly effective in working with students. These programmes, resources and strategies are implemented to develop the skills inherent in the NBSS Positive Behaviour In-School Curricular Framework i.e. Behaviour for Learning Skills, Social and Emotional Literacy Skills, Academic Literacy, Learning and Study Skills and Positive Health and Wellbeing Skills.

The following quotations offer insights into the range of programmes and resources used and some of the benefits of these that the BSC/BfL teachers saw in their work with students.
**Effective Programmes, Resources and Strategies**

- “This year began with excellent training, the review of practice, Rob Long better behaviour, solution focused training, Why Try?...Catch Up Literacy was also very beneficial. It was very rewarding to see the positive effects of using this knowledge and materials with students.”
- “Friends for Life – another excellent and proven programme that worked really well in the school. The joy of having an easy to follow, strengths based programme with a variety of activities and workbook, rather than my normal practice of taking bits from here and there. Seeing how well that students absorbed what we covered and how willing they were to use the skills they learned in Friends for Life.”
- “Talkabout series; Why Try – very motivational; Belonging Plus induction programme with First Years; Catch Up Literacy; Catch Up Numeracy; Breathing exercises – simple 3 minute breath.”
- “I enjoyed delivering the Friends for Life Programme. The students thoroughly enjoyed the programme and again the results were evident in the students’ physical appearance and persona.”
- “I loved the VEP programme (Vocabulary Enrichment Programme). It was very active and fun. I don’t think I have ever seen students respond so positively to a programme.”
- “Group work – Why Try very useful. Talkabout – can draw on it quite well. Catch Up Literacy – fantastic. We also worked on handwriting skills, made a booklet and most 1st and 2nd years spent first ten minutes improving their handwriting. It’s a great ‘in’ with kids, create pride in their name and develop their handwriting. Most writing was very bad starting off but huge improvements made.”
- “Behaviour Watch ICT software has helped greatly in collating data and helping implement rewards/sanctions.”
- “Talkabout for Teenagers; Catch Up; Solution focused and assertive material from My Own Two Feet; Escape from Exclusion; Crucial Skills; Social skills activities for Student with Special Needs.”
- “‘Stop Think Do’, Crucial Skills, Taming Anger, Talkabout for Teens.”
- “Our 1st and 2nd Transition and Induction programmes have provided invaluable direction and structure.”
- “Catch Up Literacy – a fast and results driven approach that gave us a tool to deal with what is a huge issue in the school. Friends for Life – again a huge issue in the school. Friends for Life – again a huge issue in the school. Friends for Life – again a huge issue in the school. Friends for Life.”
- “Catch Up Literacy – a huge success in school with tangible and unequivocal results. The satisfaction of using a programme that immediately tackles a problem and where the positive results are apparent in a short space of time.”
- “Overall I feel the best programme we did this year was Friends for Life. But for working with Level 3 students, I found Retracking, Cool Anger Management, Taming Anger and Cool Connections very helpful. I also really enjoyed implementing Catch Up Literacy and found it to be hugely successful with several BSC students.”
- “NBSS Belonging Plus+ [induction programme] is increasing the positive behaviour within the school.”
- “Catch Up Literacy and other literacy initiatives helped students improve their reading and comprehension which helped them better access the curriculum.”
- “Seeing the positive results brought about by the introduction of programmes such as Catch Up Literacy and Why Try?”
- “Monitoring cards; Check and Connect; Why Try resources; Catch Up Literacy; Tools for Teaching Social Skills; Talkabout; Escape from Exclusion Session 8: Self Esteem; Anti-bullying workshops; CBT: workbook for children and adolescents; NBSS Literacy resources and strategies.”
- “Catch Up Literacy – excellent. NBSS literacy resources. Why Try! Solution Focused training.”
- “Scaling; Behaviour Monitoring Check and Connect; Jenny Mosely; Restorative Practice; In-class support; the Why Try Programme; Tools for Teaching Social Skills in School; Social Skills for Effective Learning.”
- “Speech and Language involvement and being part of the Vocabulary Enrichment Programme.”
- “One student who has anger issues and I found did not engage well in any Anger Management programmes really took to Football Mad and he completed the programme and enjoyed it. TRUGS literacy cards.”
- “One of our students who would have severe emotional, social and behaviour issues really benefitted from doing Level 3 work around self management etc. and even when she is in the most aggressive mood, on the verge of walking out of school, she will still ask for a ‘Stop Think Do’ Diary as a way of calming herself and reflection.”
- “Cars R Us; ‘Let’s Talk’ Assertiveness Cards; Why Try;...”

---

1 See www.nbss.ie for information on the NBSS Transition and Transfer Induction Programme
thoroughly researched and evaluated programme which the students responded to positively. Solution-focused training – students either loved it or hated it. It was difficult to sustain their attention enough to future-pace a whole day. Why Try – again another valuable arrow in your quiver. Once you get past the effusive Americanisms I think that Why Try has proved to be an illuminating and effective tool with some students. The training with Rob Long was also excellent and revealing – I would love if all teachers were able to have this training. Blobs – can’t praise them enough for kids with literacy issues, they’re an essential piece of kit. The Why Try training taught me to use “youtube” as a resource and this is something that I’ve taken to with gusto.”

Feelings Thermometer; Talkabout Communication DVD.”

• "We were lucky to run the ‘Working Things Out’ Programme in our school this year…I think it is such a good programme that if possible all BSC teachers should receive training to deliver the programme.”

• “A number of programmes always work very well. ‘Let’s Talk’ always gets conversation flowing. It works very well with small groups or just one to one. 101 Social Games, 101 Self Esteem Games, Let’s Try. I also tried solution focused brief therapy with one or two students and it worked well and ‘Taming Anger’ programme.”

THE TEACHERS’ VOICE

In May 2012 the BSC/BfL teachers were asked to complete a short qualitative questionnaire. Sixty-eight completed questionnaires were returned to the NBSS (43 BSC teachers and 25 BfL teachers). The aim of the questionnaire was to capture the experiences, viewpoints and recommendations of the teachers with regard to the Level 3 work they had done over the past year.

To start, the teachers were asked to describe the most rewarding aspect(s) of the work that they had carried out. Themes that were common included organising assessments done (e.g. Psychological, Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy assessments); having access to and running literacy interventions (e.g. Catch Up Literacy, comprehension strategy teaching); working with their students with regard to their positive health and well-being (e.g. Friends for Life, Why Try?); the ability to work one to one or with small groups; seeing their students make progress and reintegrating successfully into all their mainstream classes and the positive feedback they received from other teachers about their students’ classroom behaviour and academic improvement. Generally, the over-riding theme that emerged from their responses was the significance of being able to build a relationship of support and trust with students.

The following quotations from BSC/BfL teachers highlight some of the aspects of their work that they found rewarding.

REWARDING ASPECTS OF THE WORK

• “The most rewarding aspect was seeing students improve and become happier in school. Seeing students make progress and develop academically, socially and improve their behaviour. I also really...”

• “I get great job satisfaction in working with my BSC students. It is rewarding to see them grow in confidence whether it’s with their reading or with certain teachers who now treat them differently...”

2 Further information on the programme, resources and interventions used in NBSS partner schools can be found in the appendix and on the NBSS website.
• “Students knowing that they have an advocate to turn to when in crisis. Having this secure base has anchored students, promoted positive behaviour and raised self-esteem. As BLF teacher, the opportunity of working on a one to one with students or small groups has seriously benefited students and (the) whole school. At the end of the year having students ‘happy’ to return in September and expressing that they look forward to working with me again is most rewarding indeed.”

• “The most rewarding aspect was seeing first-hand the progress students had made in all areas whether being academic, social, emotional or behaviour. It was amazing to see how students could improve so much within one year and it is certainly the most rewarding aspect for any teacher in any classroom whether it may be mainstream or BSC.”

• “Building relationships with the students I worked with and supporting my colleagues with ‘difficult’ students. The Literacy sessions with students and the Friends for Life programme which was difficult but ultimately gave great support to the students involved.”

• “Building a positive rapport with the students. Giving students opportunities for success. Seeing some students really make an effort and working on their behaviour. Students know that I am here to help them and as a support system.”

• “Building up strong relationships with students supported at Level 3 and Level 2. Becoming a person that a student trusted in a school where they felt that they had run out of ‘allies’ through their behaviour. Group sessions – students looking forward to my classes – a creation of excitement about something new and fun.”

• “We work with the most challenging students and I really value the opportunities to have a positive relationship and influence on these boys. I think the students need an advocate and targets set by us with the students and communicated to mainstream teachers help in supporting the student to achieve success.”

• “Seeing students reintegrate back into mainstream classes with the skills developed in the BSC and being able to cope. Seeing minor improvements in students and knowing they were a direct result of work done in the BSC. Hearing teachers praise a student who might previously have been complained about.”

• “…Seeing 1st years that I worked with in 2007 because they have improved in their attitude towards school.”

• “I found the most rewarding aspect of working in the BSC was the end of year award ceremony we held for our students. As the majority of our BSC students rarely if ever receive awards, to see the pride in their faces was very rewarding for me personally. We even received a card signed by all the students in the BSC and a lot of kind words from parents. This made me feel that all the hard work and struggles we’ve been through with students were all worthwhile.”

• “The most rewarding aspect of the work this year was seeing the pupils we worked with (most of them!) begin to enjoy school, to say they were starting to like coming to school. Also hearing positive reports from staff about the pupils as they were reintegrating into their classes.”

• “The rapport I built up with students. It led to them working for me because we had mutual respect. The improvements around the school – Level 1. Classroom signs, card systems being introduced, redesigning and improving our school induction programme.”

• “The most rewarding aspects were the amazing insights I got from the students themselves. Looking at school life and in particular classroom life from their point of view. I also found the positive changes that some students began to display as extremely rewarding.”

• “Overall I find being a behaviour support classroom teacher very rewarding. Children who were struggling/at risk enjoying school more – more able to cope with school environment. Positive feedback from colleagues re BSC students. Students that without the support of the BSC would not have made it through the year.”

• “Seeing students change their disruptive behaviour. Those using skills and techniques learned in BSC. Reading positive remarks from other teachers in students’ trackers. Personal connections made with students who were reluctant to communicate.”

• “Working in partnership with resource department, home school liaison, school counsellors, etc. Identifying students needing assessments – speech and language, OT, Psychological, etc. and working to improve their skills following the recommendations outlined in assessment reports. Helping students who are socially unskilled and awkward becoming more confident.”

• “The most rewarding aspect for me was working with individual students with social, emotional and
“To help students reach the Junior Cert exam. Some of these students would not have made it without the extra help. To help students stay in school in spite of severe personal difficulties. To see students lose the same anger they come in with and find a safe place where they can be their real selves and feel valued. To see their self-esteem and confidence grow and with that discipline issues decline.”

“Getting to know students at their best. Seeing real personal growth in those students in terms of academic achievement, self-esteem and confidence. Being instrumental in a change in philosophy in the school in terms of discipline. Still work to be done but getting there! Having the luxury of time to work with these students which is something you don’t have as a subject teacher. Often these students have not been given a significant amount of time by teachers until their inclusion in Behaviour Support, other than when ‘in trouble’. Working with staff as well as with students. Building links between the school and other agencies particularly SCP, our main feeder primary school and the local Gardai through participation in a course on Restorative Justice.”

“Being an advocate for marginalised pupils. When pupils come to BSC as a refuge, to calm down, as a safe place.”

“New programmes and resources. New behavioural plans – very beneficial. Enjoyed new focus on literacy (Catch Up, VEP). More positive interaction with students. Enjoyed Level 2 work – good to work with mainstream classes.”

“I found building up good relationships with students that would struggle with behaviour very rewarding. The trust they put in me and their seeing me (my room) as a safe, positive environment was rewarding. Also certain students that lasted the year whom may not have, was rewarding.”

“Feeling that I have made some small difference either to the teachers in the school and/or a student that I have worked with.”

“To see students completing the year and sitting their exams knowing that for some, things may have been different without the support from the BSC.”

“Some of our most difficult students began to see us as a support as opposed to another authority figure. They recognised that what we are doing is in their best interest. I think this helped them to develop their own sense of self respect and try to set some short term goals because they realised that we ‘have behavioural difficulties. These students showed marked improvements in the behaviour, attitude towards school of overall academic performance. A real relationship developed between me and these students and I feel that having a significant adult whom they could relate to helped them a great deal.”

“Catch Up Literacy – seeing an increased self confidence in students’ willingness to read. Witnessing an interest in ‘what happens next’, discovering an interest, however small, in their reading age.”

“At a JCSP profile meeting a student with whom I was working was mentioned for his great improvement in his behaviour. He has been with me for a long time and I felt I was getting nowhere with him. One of my Catch Up students got ‘Student of the Year’ award for his class.”

“Students improving their learning behaviour as a result of input. Students engaging positively with the process and using you as a help and a resource rather than something that they’re forced into co-operating with. Building positive and encouraging relationships with the students. Noticing some students managing their emotions better and being able to problem solve in the moment. Teachers reporting a positive change in a student’s behaviour. Students experiencing some success in school whether that is an improvement in their behaviour or in their academic work. Students feeling that they could be open and honest with me and feeling that they could come to me with any problems. Noticing my own skills improving – having a better understanding of where the kids are coming from and the work that needs to be done. Becoming better at using the language of change….Attending the training events this year which I felt were really pertinent to our work and always leaving with something I felt I could use. Some teachers beginning to use some of the approaches suggested during NBSS training. Also a shift in the language towards a more helpful and non-judgemental tone. Teachers and students starting to better understand the role of BFL teacher. Learning not to go for the big wins and just settle for my draws because the odds are better and any success is better than none.”

“Watching students achieve their targets and growing in confidence. You get an opportunity to know students better on a one to one and develop a better relationship with them and their parents.”

“Providing students with a positive link with our school. Putting in place practical solutions that
Alternatively, the BSC/BfL teachers were then asked to describe what was/were the challenging element(s) of the work they had undertaken during the year. Various challenges were described some in relation to the actual work required in the role and others with regard to individuals (students, colleagues, parents, etc.). Teachers wrote about finding the time to complete paperwork; being able to implement new interventions/programmes; timetabling with respect to withdrawing students from certain mainstream classes (particularly 3rd year students preparing for the Junior Certificate examination) and ensuring that information is disseminated regularly to colleagues. They also identified challenges such as their students’ absenteeism from school; the degree of the behavioural difficulties encountered; students’ recidivism; getting paperwork (Learning Behaviour Checklists) returned from subject teachers; students being suspended or excluded during the intervention; staff not recognising their students’ improvement as well as colleagues’ unrealistic expectations; gaining parental involvement and support and in some cases, encountering some students’ negative attitudes to the Level 3 intervention. The following comments describe some of the challenges the BSC/BfL teachers experienced in their work.

### The Challenges

- “For me the most challenging aspect was not only the difficulties we faced from the students, but the lack of support we received from certain members of the staff. I think that for some teachers they believe that when a student enters the BSC they should be ‘cured’ within a few weeks. Sometimes I feel that people think we have failed them if they have not shown obvious improvements. It is also hard to get staff to recognise progress in the students, no matter how small the progress is.”
- “This year I had a couple of students enter the BSC that showed no change in their behaviour. I tried various approaches and programmes with them but had little effect. This is always the most challenging element. Also trying to keep the perception of the BSC as a behaviour unit rather than a Learning Support unit with the staff was challenging.”
- “Students taking one step forward and two steps back at times. Just when we think they have made progress they take a U-turn and this can be disappointing. The good thing is that U-turns go in both directions.”
- “Poor attendance – this could sometimes reverse the good progress they had made. I was new to BSC...”
- “Losing students – despite time, effort and commitment, students still getting excluded. Dealing with small groups of challenging students on your own. Teachers expecting you to miraculously ‘cure’ students. Dealing day to day with the apathy of students – growing frustrated as your hopes for them and their interest and effort go in opposite directions. Maintaining your patience and composure in the face of daily setbacks and abuse from students. Feeling that you’re being spread too thin as you have only a limited amount of time to give to each student and their level of need demands more. Needs of student are so complex and varied that you have to know something about everything.”
- “Gaining full cooperation with all teachers in relation to filling in paperwork and ‘buying into’ the work of NBSS. If students were repeatedly suspended despite my efforts to guide and support. I found it hard not to be disappointed or feel like I wasn’t making a difference. Building up a cohesive unit of work with students who have poor attendance – long periods without seeing them.”
- “The most challenging element I found was attempting to work with the pupils who had...”
teaching and there were a lot of resources I wasn’t familiar with. It was therefore very challenging trying to familiarise myself with all of them and decide which was best. This was very time consuming."

• “Building relationships/maintaining communications with some parents of students attending the BSC. We found it difficult to timetable the sessions for Friends for Life as it started during the academic year. There seemed to be less time for some of the Level 1 and 2 interventions we would have done in previous years.”

• “The changing of the structure of our BSC was challenging however a positive change. Communicating the new structure to our colleagues, however the benefits of the new structure means meeting more students which they were pleased about. Students from particularly difficult circumstances can be quite challenging on a daily basis. Some have quite complex cases due to external factors outside our control.”

• “Addressing the attendance of some Level 3 students. Working with students from local residential care centre brought new and complex challenges. Communicating with staff, HSE, social workers etc.”

• “Unrealistic expectations from staff that I would ‘cure’ every student immediately. Absenteeism meant that my days didn’t always go to plan. I always had work to do but the constant shifting of timetable due to meetings/inservice did make me uncomfortable. I like to tick boxes that I had planned and when it doesn’t work out I can feel like a failure – even if it is out of my control.”

disengaged with their education. Finding an area of interest for them to attempt to help them to re-engage with the school.”

• “The school had a particularly difficult group within our 1st years. These students presented with the most challenging behaviour that required substantial support from mid-September. The challenges in getting more parental involvement in the BSC. The balance between setting time aside for paperwork and work with students.”

• “Dealing with other staff members. Trying to change staff attitudes and behaviour to be more calm and conciliatory. Remaining positive (on very rare but bad days). Not getting completely involved, investing 100% in individual pupils.”

• “The timetabling of students – avoiding having students absent from key classes, limited/limiting as staff have difficulty releasing students, particularly new staff who arrived mid-year. Going into classes with students did break down this barrier but on the whole timetabling is challenging. Not enough hours in the day to do/see students and complete paperwork. Not having another BFL teachers in the school to bounce ideas off.”

• “Students unable to transfer the skills learned in the BSC to their other classes. Teachers unwilling to believe that a child is trying. External conflicts/difficulties mean a student finds it difficult to focus on school.”

• “Removing exam students from their classes. Had to try and take them out of Religion and PE. All the in-services at start of year. I felt it was October before I started my role. However, I understand the need for them – there were a lot of days absent from school.”

Despite the challenges, it was important to gather the BSC/BfL teachers’ views of their own professional and personal impressions of the impact that their work had with their students during the year. A recurring theme from the data was the view that their students had remained in the educational system because of the work that had been done through both the BSC and BfL programmes (this would include a reduction in suspensions and increased attendance at school). Teachers highlighted the effect of the intervention on improved literacy skills. Additionally teachers reported that they felt that their work had an impact of their students’ behaviour in classrooms (including their awareness of the effect of their behaviour on the rest of the class); the students’ ability to manage their emotions; an increase in the students’ self-esteem and confidence, social and emotional literacy and coping skills and an improvement in their students’ attitude towards school.
The following quotations illustrate the impact the BSC/BfL teachers believed their work had on the students they had worked from September 2011 to June 2012.

**THE IMPACT**

- “The impact was massive. The students needed the help to express their frustrations and to confront the issues which were causing the behaviour problems. The programmes I ran with them gave them the chance to change. They all wanted to be good but needed support to face the changes in behaviour. The students responded very well to being listened to and listened back in return. All good.”
- “In every case it brought about some positive change but the difference was in the degrees of improvement. This depended on the age of the student and the amount of your input.”
- “If one had unlimited time, then I believe all students could be brought back from the brink of exclusion. In the best cases, which admittedly were few, students’ behaviour improved to an extent that it ceased to be such a huge problem for them. Students have an excuse to behave better as a result of their involvement with you. Noticed some students being visibly happier at school and this was reflected in their conversations with me. In several cases, previously aggressive students, prone to serious ‘blow ups’ started to manage their emotions better and the incidents of aggressive outbursts decreased. The interface between certain students and teachers became less of a confrontation and more of a problem-solving discussion. Students began to feel more positive about themselves and education.”
- “For a few students it was the difference between making it to Junior Cert rather than dropping out or reaching the end of the road in relation to the Code of Behaviour. It gives students who experience high levels of frustration at school an opportunity to express their frustration, its consequences and how best to resolve it. They also got an opportunity to build confidence in their academic ability in a safe environment free from the pressure ‘to get it right’ and free of concern that they will be judged by others. Often these students have ability but lack confidence in their ability.”
- “Built confidence and self-esteem. Some of my students really hated school and had no positive experiences. This programme gave them some success and something positive. The students know that my room is a safe place where they can come even if they are in trouble. They know that I will help them to solve whatever their issue is. I think most of them improved to an extent that it ceased to be such a huge problem for them. Students have an excuse to behave better as a result of their involvement with you. Noticed some students being visibly happier at school and this was reflected in their conversations with me. In several cases, previously aggressive students, prone to serious ‘blow ups’ started to manage their emotions better and the incidents of aggressive outbursts decreased. The interface between certain students and teachers became less of a confrontation and more of a problem-solving discussion. Students began to feel more positive about themselves and education.”
- “For a few students it was the difference between making it to Junior Cert rather than dropping out or reaching the end of the road in relation to the Code of Behaviour. It gives students who experience high levels of frustration at school an opportunity to express their frustration, its consequences and how best to resolve it. They also got an opportunity to build confidence in their academic ability in a safe environment free from the pressure ‘to get it right’ and free of concern that they will be judged by others. Often these students have ability but lack confidence in their ability.”
- “Built confidence and self-esteem. Some of my students really hated school and had no positive experiences. This programme gave them some success and something positive. The students know that my room is a safe place where they can come even if they are in trouble. They know that I will help them to solve whatever their issue is. I think most of them improved to an extent that it ceased to be such a huge problem for them. Students have an excuse to behave better as a result of their involvement with you. Noticed some students being visibly happier at school and this was reflected in their conversations with me. In several cases, previously aggressive students, prone to serious ‘blow ups’ started to manage their emotions better and the incidents of aggressive outbursts decreased. The interface between certain students and teachers became less of a confrontation and more of a problem-solving discussion. Students began to feel more positive about themselves and education.”
- “For a few students it was the difference between making it to Junior Cert rather than dropping out or reaching the end of the road in relation to the Code of Behaviour. It gives students who experience high levels of frustration at school an opportunity to express their frustration, its consequences and how best to resolve it. They also got an opportunity to build confidence in their academic ability in a safe environment free from the pressure ‘to get it right’ and free of concern that they will be judged by others. Often these students have ability but lack confidence in their ability.”
- “Built confidence and self-esteem. Some of my students really hated school and had no positive experiences. This programme gave them some success and something positive. The students know that my room is a safe place where they can come even if they are in trouble. They know that I will help them to solve whatever their issue is. I think most of them improved to an extent that it ceased to be such a huge problem for them. Students have an excuse to behave better as a result of their involvement with you. Noticed some students being visibly happier at school and this was reflected in their conversations with me. In several cases, previously aggressive students, prone to serious ‘blow ups’ started to manage their emotions better and the incidents of aggressive outbursts decreased. The interface between certain students and teachers became less of a confrontation and more of a problem-solving discussion. Students began to feel more positive about themselves and education.”
- “Most of them now realise that we are trying to help and support them. Some of them have realised that their time in school and their education is valuable. Our work has resulted in keeping some students who were at risk of expulsion in school until now. We have provided them and their parents with a support system that has helped them cope with the pressure they have been faced with regarding abiding by the school’s Code of Behaviour.”
- “The students are happier in school. They feel that they are rewarded for positive behaviour instead of being constantly demerited for poor behaviour. The system also promotes team work and an opportunity to teach these students what it means to be ‘organised’, ‘responsible’, ‘cooperative’ and ‘helpful’. One particular student benefitted hugely - because she wanted to get the most merits off the teachers. This allowed teachers to turn this particular student’s poor behaviour into a situation where she had her books, was on time and didn’t abuse the teachers. The teachers said it allowed them to turn a situation around.”
- “I can honestly say that all but one student improved in their behaviour/organisational skill, etc. The big difference is that these students now feel that they ‘belong’ to the school and that there is someone (teacher) that really wants them to succeed.”
- “Retention – students are still in school! And will continue to be. Developing skills in self-monitoring, managing strong emotions, forgiveness and making apologies, classroom management. Celebrated their success. Gave them a sense of pride. Having young people assessed when they needed it. Providing links to personal counselling when desperately needed (Pieta House). Developed better relationships between the school and parents. Provided outlets for creativity and energy release. Developed self-esteem and confidence of every young person.”
- “The majority of our students completed the full year of school. I believe this was in part because of the Level 3 work we carried out. Through this work, we enabled the pupils to repair their relationships with teachers and helped them to acquire the necessary skills to be successful in a classroom.”
- “Very positive for the majority. Kept them in school. Gave them new skills. Improved their outlook on life.”
- “The students that I worked with showed an...
the students now know that they are in control of their behaviour.”

• “No exclusions – retaining students this year. Most of these are experiencing academic success as a result of the intervention.”

• “I feel that for some students it did keep them in school so that they were not faced with suspensions. It also meant they had a voice to speak up for them. With some students there was a notable improvement in their behaviour and work because they were being monitored by the BFLT.”

• “It developed a sense of belonging to the school for some students. It connected students with an adult in the school thus developing crucial relationships. Improving the literacy and numeracy skills of students. Developed self-confidence and greater self-esteem for students. Positively impacted on the students’ life out of school. Parents spoke of ‘getting their son back’ on two occasions. Taught the social skills to interact with adults and survive school.”

• “It had certainly impacted – on some more than others however. For example, one of our students who would have severe emotional, social and behaviour issues really benefitted from doing Level 3 work around self-management, etc. and even when she is in the most aggressive mood, on the verge of walking out of school, she will still ask for a ‘Stop Think Do’ Diary as a way of calming herself and reflection.”

• “I feel that working with students at Level 3 avoids early school leaving or excessive suspensions. Allowing these students to have a daily support system can often avoid serious incidents.”

improvement when they went back to class. The number of comments in the Behaviour Books dropped considerably. Teachers reported a general improvement in behaviour.”

• “It varied from student to student. Some made advances, others achieved no change. All enjoyed the experience and at a minimum it was a place they could come for some time-out from their daily stresses. School life is very busy and often impersonal. It is easy to get lost even you are screaming out for help. I feel my work met some of those needs.”

• “Some of the students I worked with developed their social skills, became more revitalised, identified life goals they would like to achieve, improve their relationships with their peers and their teachers, became more content in school amongst other improvements. Catch Up Literacy and other literacy initiatives also helped students improve their reading and comprehension which helped them better access the curriculum.”

• “…from talking/meeting the parents of the Level 3 students, they cannot believe that the NBSS want to help their sons/daughters who have challenging behaviour. They feel that the BFL position has helped their children and has made the school environment more positive for them. One parent said ‘They no longer ignore the school number on the mobile’. They know that the challenging behaviour is not going away overnight but they feel more supported and are very willing to work with the school.”

In reviewing the comments of the BSC/BfL teachers with respect to the impact of the work with their students it seems clear that what has been essential is the opportunity for these teachers to provide their students with a supportive base. Building relationships of support, trust and communication emerges from the BSC/BfL teachers’ reviews as an integral aspect not only in terms of their professional satisfaction in their pedagogical endeavours but also in helping their students to develop positive behaviour for learning skills which will help them to gain the best outcomes from their educational experience.
Implicit in the NBSS Model of Support is the principle that ultimately Level 3 support can only be effective if systems, structures and practices are in place to progress and sustain a whole school positive teaching and learning environment. From its inception, NBSS Level 3 support was intended to form an integral and vital element of school-wide positive behaviour for learning as opposed to being perceived as an isolated or sequestered resource affecting only a small proportion of the school community. In its provision of Behaviour Support Classrooms, the NBSS was, and continues to be, resolute that these must not be allocated the role of “sin bins” but rather should evolve into centres of excellence which make a significant contribution to the quality of teaching and learning within a school. Bearing this objective in mind, the teachers who took part in this study were asked if, to the best of their knowledge, the work they have done has had a positive effect on their school as a whole.

The majority of teachers indicated that in various ways their work had contributed positively to their schools as a whole. Reiterating their earlier responses, a few stated that their students experienced better educational outcomes because of their improved attendance and reductions in disciplinary measures. A reduction in classroom discipline issues and more time spent on teaching and learning were also noted. In some cases, this was seen as extending across the school population generally.

The following teacher comments highlight some of these areas.

**School-wide Impact**

- “Overall a very good year. Suspensions and reported incidents of poor behaviour reduced as well as an improvement in school attendance.”
- “Many teachers are complimenting our work. They find the school a safer, happier and quieter environment.”
- “…levels of aggression are decreasing and many new positive programmes have developed.”
- “…it gave the teacher a break from students causing problems in class. Students on report or attending the behaviour improved their behaviour in other classes during this period.”
- “Improving student behaviour who accessed the BSC impacted on the quality of learning of their subject teachers and classmates.”
- “Through addressing students’ needs in the BSC, I helped them to gain an understanding of their attitude towards learning and also the teacher’s attitude toward teaching. In turn, this greater awareness aided better choices, both on the student and teachers’ part. This contributed to building a positive school environment.”
- “…year heads, subject teachers and class teachers have commented on the improvements in behaviour and have been grateful for the opportunity to focus on the other students in class. The Care Team acknowledged the benefits of the BSC.”
- “There is a calmness about our school that would honestly not be there if the service was not on offer in the school.”
- “I think it had a positive effect on the school as a whole. The students in receipt of Level 3 support received less suspensions and in general were in a lot less trouble which reduces the general classroom disruptions for each of their classes. A number of their teachers commented on the positive turn-around.”
- “…with the 2nd year group - class is not distracted – learning is now taking place in the classroom. 1st year students – more focused in class – less likely to engage in bad behaviour in corridor, etc.”
- “…by dealing with the top 3-5% of offenders in the school the remainder functioned far more effectively.”
- “Dealing with students at Level 3 benefitted them as individuals but was also really beneficial to the rest of the class. A break from these students helped break this cycle in the classroom.”
- “…the BSC had and will continue to have a positive effect on the school. It offers support to teachers and students and allows for a greater teaching and learning environment. Feedback from teachers which was positive and seeing students complete the year..."
• “My work has had a very positive effect on the school as a whole. I can see the changes that my students have made and overall the school holds a positive attitude towards the BSC. There are a couple of students I work with who have openly admitted they would have dropped out of school if it weren’t for the BSC, so that alone makes me feel we have a huge positive effect.”
• “The stress level of the teachers is well down. The teaching and learning within the school has improved. The atmosphere in general in the school is very good. The teachers are very glad to have the support of the NBSS.”
• “Those who showed change got on better in class and with their learning. The BSC works very well with other whole school behaviour approaches.”
• “Students who otherwise may have been excluded made it through the year.”

This extension of positive behaviours for learning throughout the school population may in part be attributed to the active, and in some instances, central role that the behaviour teachers have played in implementing Level 1 and Level 2 programmes and interventions. Numerous respondents wrote about the work they do each year with regard to Induction or Transition and Transfer programmes for incoming First Year students. As members of their school’s NBSS Positive Behaviour Strategy Team, many of the BSC/BfL teachers also identified their involvement in establishing and promoting a range of Level 1 and Level 2 initiatives and systems (for example, rewards or merits, journals, homework, pastoral care, wellbeing, etc.) that have contributed significantly to the whole school teaching and learning environment. The following comments illustrate some of these areas:

**NBSS Level 1 and Level 2 Programmes and Interventions**

• “I think our involvement at Level 2 had a very positive effect on students and also on the profile of the BSC in the school. Many of our suggestions at Level 2 are being incorporated into journals and the Discipline System next year. Our involvement in the Care Team and Discipline System had a very positive effect and gave us an opportunity to keep everyone informed about our work, new programmes and new timetables, etc. All of this has made the BSC an integrated and very accepted part of the school.”
• “I was part of the Behaviour Improvement Strategy Team. I was involved in some Level 1 interventions. We kept targets small initially looking at school bags and journals and rewarding good behaviour and implementing a detention system for the students who did not comply.”
• “...reward system has had a very positive effect on school environment.”
• “We worked ‘with’ teachers and management and I believe we were part of a framework that certainly had positive outcomes. I believe we are integral to students’ positive experiences in school.”
• “We have pushed through an improved transition and for me is evidence that the BSC work had a positive effect.”
• “…both management and staff have all provided feedback on this saying that overall discipline has improved in the school. Personally I feel that this is true as students try to avoid being referred to the Behaviour Classroom and also strive to go back to mainstream once referred.”
• “I feel some of the students have changed their behaviour in small and large ways which has an overall positive effect in the classroom and school as a whole.”
• “It was very rewarding to see students in receipt of Level 3 support work well in mainstream but it also gave the mainstream teacher a chance to regain control of his/her class while we were working with the students.”
This involvement in all three levels of behaviour support enabled many of the teachers to build upon the strong networks of communication they had developed both with colleagues and with the parents/guardians of their students. Sharing information about the learning needs of students in receipt of Level 3 support, effective strategies for managing challenging behaviour and monitoring and acknowledging students’ progress were all identified as components of effective communication practices. Additionally, because of their role and expertise in behaviour for learning, a number of the teachers reported the proactive and extensive nature of the networks they have in place. In relation to highlighting the proactive element of the work that they do, several respondents referred to what they perceive as a shift in the attitudes of their colleagues along with a change in the overall atmosphere within their schools.

**Effective Communication Practices**

- “I think that the constant emphasis on students’ capacity for change is encouraging. (Getting) teachers to try new things and perhaps to look at their methodologies and how they can best encourage this. There is also a bigger emphasis on preventative and solution focused strategies rather than just blaming the student. I also think that staff are more disposed towards noticing the positive and this is paying dividends. There is an emphasis on getting ahead of potential problems now rather than reacting which I feel is down to NBSS' involvement in the school.”

- “There has been a decrease in the tension that was evident in the school when I first arrived. I’d submit that there is a better understanding that the days of whipping the students into line is over and that improving the school doesn’t just mean getting rid of the troublemakers but has to be more of a cooperative venture between staff and students. I couldn’t claim any credit for this but I really think that NBSS' involvement in the school has precipitated this.”

- “Induction process is a definite plus. Our close links with tutors and yearheads gave us an early insight into possible problems early on and the tutors and yearheads welcomed this. The fact that 1st, 2nd and 3rd yearheads call into us frequently reinforces how they value our work. Many regular mainstream staff often sought our help and advice too. Regular consultation with SCP, HSCL and the NEPS psychologist reinforces the positive effects of our work.”

- “We have great support from our management team. We work as a team and have dealt with some difficult and explosive situations together and more importantly have prevented some from taking place.”

- “Staff are more supported in dealing with challenging behaviours. Staff are more informed through use of monitoring cards and reintegration strategies, of the individual needs of students. Greater integration of students with challenging behaviours.”

- “Visual professional improvements around the school. Team NBSS is growing in my school, more and more staff are working with me and supporting the service.”

Respondents described the ways in which the ethos and practices of Level 3 Behaviour Support had permeated into mainstream classes in their schools. This entailed not only a change in the way their
colleagues perceived challenging behaviour but also a willingness to discuss behaviour issues as well as try out different strategies and methodologies in their own classrooms. In this regard, respondents described the positive impact of their work across the whole school in these ways:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WIDER IMPACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• “I believe it has in terms of a change in philosophy around discipline. I hear phrases more and more such as ‘And I didn’t even shout at them. I just told them...’ Shouting was a key element in enforcing discipline when I first started in the school five years ago.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “It allowed for more positive conversations surrounding behaviour. Teachers and SNAs who observed my group lessons gained an understanding of new resources and teaching strategies which are designed for increasing student self-esteem and motivation.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “The teachers could talk to us about the difficulties they were experiencing. They also participated in restorative circles with students in BSC. This helped to improve relationships and gave teacher and student a chance to start again.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Teachers felt they were supported as well as the students. The position was totally solution focused which encouraged positive attitudes towards challenging behaviours.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “The students getting Level 3 support were less difficult for Year Heads to deal with, they were sent out of class less and we became another avenue for discussion about these students.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Teachers also felt supported by the BSC teachers. They were able to discuss with us and the student the issues going on in class.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Through their feedback and commentary the BSC/BfL teachers indicated the many ways their work had contributed to building and sustaining positive teaching and learning environments and the impact of their work across the whole school community that encompassed elements of systems, practices and attitudes of both students and staff.
In their discussion of the promotion of learning behaviours, Ellis and Tod (2009) indicate that there is often a distinction between skills acquirement and dispositions. They state that while the student’s capability to acquire positive learning behaviour skills is fundamentally related to the quality of teaching, disposition is more intrinsically linked to the individual student’s personal characteristics, developmental stage, life history and sense-making skills.

“The challenge for teachers is to promote positive or ‘good’ learning behaviours. To do this they need to know more about them. One construct thought to be influential in the development of learning dispositions is relationship with self. Terms associated with this relationship include self-concept, self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-confidence” (p. 81).

The BSC/BfL teachers have from the outset adopted an evidence-informed approach, both in terms of planning their programmes for individual students based on data they collected, as well as employing research supported programmes and initiatives. Through their data collection and planning, they have identified and categorised the specific, and often complex needs of each of their students. From this analysis, they have worked to develop and implement individualised plans to help their students. It is also clear from the information provided by these teachers that the work with their students in many instances continues beyond the initial intervention, an example being the use of Check and Connect to maintain support.

It is important to refer back to Ellis and Tod’s distinction between teaching learning skills and individual dispositions. In this review of the Student Behaviour Plans that were submitted to the NBSS, the majority of references to supports were categorised in the analysis as related to what Ellis and Tod cited as “...self-concept, self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-confidence” (p. 81). A great deal of work has been allocated to students’ Social and Emotional Literacy Skills. This would suggest that NBSS BSC/BfL teachers, whilst addressing the academic, positive health and well-being and behaviour for learning needs of their students, are focusing on developing the social and emotional, individually-specific needs of their students in order to ensure that they are not only being taught learning skills but that their “disposition to learning” is in an optimal place to ensure that they are able to gain the most from their education.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The National Behaviour Support Service would like to thank all of the Behavior Support Classroom (BSC) and Behaviour for Learning (BfL) Programme teachers who contributed to this research.
References


NBSS Level 3 Support: The Behaviour Support Teachers’ Views


RAND Reading Study Group (2002). *Reading for understanding toward and R & D program in reading comprehension.* Arlington, VA: RAND.


Appendix

Description of some of the programmes and resources used as part of NBSS Level 3 Support

**Accelerated Accelewrite** is a multi-sensory programme that aims to improve reading, spelling and listening skills. It was originally designed for dyslexic students but is also used more widely and is suitable for students aged 6-16 years old. It is designed for 20-30 minute 1:1 sessions per day, for 4 weeks.

**Alert** aims to help students monitor, maintain and change their level of alertness so that it is appropriate to the situation or task. The programme identifies students’ sensory needs and preferences and encourages student use of sensory motor strategies to support self regulation so that their engines are running ‘just right’. The strategies and activities taught can be incorporated into home and school routines.

**Anger Workout Book for Teens** contains lessons with over 40 reproducible student worksheets and learning activities designed to help 11-17 yrs work out their anger and learn skills for anger management. It provides step-by-step instructions and activities to help guide students through effective, meaningful expressions of anger. Through the activities and worksheets students explore techniques for working with, and working out, their anger through self-expression, relaxation, self-control, negotiation, compromise and letting go and moving on.

**Behaviour Management Toolkit** provides an approach to dealing with challenging behaviour problems and is made up of units based on five key areas of concern within schools: Anger Management, Mood Management, Conflict Resolution, Peer Relationships and Changing Classroom Behaviour.

**Belonging Plus+** is an NBSS induction programme for 1st year students that focuses on areas such as friendship formation, becoming part of a new school community and the general challenges of coping with the new timetable, new subjects, new teachers and the layout of a new school. Belonging Plus+ forms part of a wider NBSS transition and transfer programme to promote positive behaviour and learning.

**Cars ‘R’ Us** is a conversation building tool that can be used to explore feelings, responses and articulating goals to enhance communication and motivation. The kit is based on the idea that cars can reflect our nature and the roads we travel whether bumpy or smooth.

**Catch Up Literacy** is a structured one-to-one reading intervention, which is carried out in two 15-minute individual teaching sessions each week. It includes elements of word, sentence and text level work and, where appropriate, oral language skills – the balance depending on the assessed individual needs of the student. The intervention begins with diagnostic/formative assessments enabling the teacher to set literacy targets, establish individual strengths and identify a focus for effective teaching centered on a book of an appropriate level of difficulty.

**Cognitive Behavioural Training: A How-to Guide for Successful Behaviour** shows how to use cognitive behavioural training (CBT) to ensure success for all students; improve relationships with struggling students; teach students how to develop a vision, set personal goals and self-monitor progress to meet individual goals; create positive action plans with students and demonstrate how to change negative behaviours; help students develop social skills, maintain or improve the quality of friendship and increase positive network systems; show students how to use visual imagery, relaxation techniques and increase their concentration; coach students to become aware and self-monitor their behaviours and progress; develop appropriate organisational systems for both students and the classroom environment; increase student motivation, self-esteem, and develop positive attitudes.

**Comprehension Strategy Instruction** explicitly teaches before, during and after comprehension strategies that help students construct meaning during the reading-thinking process and provides teachers with the tools to model the effective use of comprehension strategies to increase understanding of subject-area texts.

**Crucial Skills** (Johnson & Rae) is aimed at students (aged 11 to 16) with challenging and angry behaviours leading to disaffection and disciplinary problems. The handbook includes teacher notes, lesson plans and photocopyable resources. The 10 lessons cover reflecting on behaviour and consequences, recognising and
understanding feelings, developing strategies to control angry outbursts, responding to conflict without anger and resolving relationships.

**Escape from Exclusion** is a 15 session emotional literacy programme designed to support and assist students who are disaffected and at risk of exclusion. It covers the following key skills of Emotional Literacy: awareness of feelings; self assurance; authenticity; flexibility; personal insights; self-regulation; accountability; self-motivation. Each session provides teacher notes, activities and worksheets and concludes with a co-operative group game. Use is made of solution focused interviews and a suggested weekly individual tutorial session where progress can be monitored and targets set for the next meeting. Includes CD-Rom.

**Flip for Comprehension and Flip for Non-Fiction Comprehension** contain a collection of ready-to-use comprehension activities that can be done before, during, or after class reading. All activities are tailored to fit textbook, non-fiction or narrative texts. These resources facilitate the development of comprehension strategies. Strategies such as making predictions, establishing purpose, finding the main idea and using text features structures to aid comprehension can be taught using these resources. The resource was winner of the US Learning Magazine 2008 Teachers’ Choice award.

**FRIENDS for Life** is an evidence-based anxiety prevention programme and resiliency building tool specifically designed for use in schools. Developed by Dr. Paula Barrett in Australia, it is the only childhood anxiety prevention programme acknowledged by the World Health Organization for its 12 years of comprehensive validation in schools and health clinics across several countries and languages. The programme is in use in Australia, Ireland, UK, USA, Canada, New Zealand, Norway, Germany, Portugal and the Netherlands. The programme can be run by teachers as a whole school anxiety prevention programme (NBSS Level 1), as a whole class or small group intervention (NBSS Level 2) or with an individual student (NBSS Level 3). It has proven to be effective for up to 6 years after initial exposure.

**Movement Matters** is an intensive, individualised, multi-sensory movement programme for post-primary students developed by the NBSS in collaboration with the School of Occupational Therapy, Trinity College, Dublin. It was designed to particularly support and develop the behaviour for learning skills of those students who presented as inattentive, fidgety, hyperactive and/or restless in class. The programme is composed of 20 sessions, run each day for 20 minutes with one or two student as part of an individualised plan. It consists of a range of activities to build students’ skills and confidence in four beneficial movement categories: Prone Extension; Bi-lateral Integration; Supine Flexion and Equilibrium.

**Parents Plus Adolescents Programme** is designed to support and empower parents to manage and solve behaviour problems, to create satisfying and enjoyable family relationships and assist young people to grow up to reach their full potential. The programme can be delivered as a general parenting programme targeted at parents who are dealing with the normal ups and downs of bringing up teenagers and also as an intervention targeted at parents whose children are exhibiting specific behavioural, emotional and developmental problems.

**Rapid Plus** is a reading scheme centered around a series of levelled books i.e. texts of progressing difficulty, for struggling readers with reading ages of 6.6 to 9.6. It can be used with small groups of students or 1:1. Before reading students are introduced to the characters, plots and tricky words, this is followed by an independent reading session and finally each text ends with a ‘Quiz’ page that provides opportunities for discussion and to check comprehension as well as a linked writing activity.

**Retracking** guides students through a process of self-assessment in order to promote their effectiveness at school. Aimed at Secondary and Top Primary level students, the process involves Awareness Raising of factors that may have contributed to the current situation, understanding of emotions and behaviour in a variety of settings, and Skills Training to help overcome the areas of difficulty which have been identified. This resource covers – Rights and Responsibilities, Problem Solving, Positive Thoughts, Challenges, Excuses, Temptations, What I am Good at.

**Speed Agility and Quickness (SAQ/SEM)** is a training programme that involves the teaching of selected motor skills (speed, agility, and quickness), employing the same techniques and protocols used by professional athletes. The programme is suitable for all students and is particularly beneficial to students with ADHD, Dyspraxia and Dyslexia.

**Social Skills Activities for Secondary Students with Special Needs** contains 200 ready-to-use worksheets to help adolescents build the social skills they need to interact effectively with others and learn how to apply these skills to various real-life situations, situations, and problems. The book provides 20 complete teaching units focusing on 20 basic social skills, such as being a good listener, “reading” other people, and using common sense and reproducible worksheets that help students practice applying the social skills to real-life situations in five different settings: home, school, work, among peers, and in the community.
**SRA Corrective Reading** is designed to address deficiencies in decoding and comprehension and is suitable for readers of all ages and skills levels. It is made up of two major strands – decoding and comprehension. The Decoding strand is written for students who have difficulty reading accurately and fluently. The Decoding programmes provide a blend of teacher-directed instruction and high-frequency practice to accelerate decoding. This programme progresses from teaching letter sounds and blending to reading passages typical of textbook material. The Comprehension strand is designed for students who read without understanding and aims to develop vocabulary, information and comprehension strategies needed for academic success. This programme gives students the opportunity to develop higher order thinking and reasoning tactics used by successful readers – applying prior knowledge, making inferences, analyzing evidence.

**SRA Specific Skill Series** teaches and reinforces key reading comprehension skills. The programme builds reading proficiency by targeting specific skills using short reading passages and formatted exercise questions. Combined with the assessment tools, the programme can reinforce those areas where a student requires additional practice. The series is suitable for students aged 5-14 yrs.

**Story Maker's Chest** is a selection of multi-sensory resources to stimulate creative writing, extend vocabulary and improve grammar.

**Snip Vocabulary Programme** aims to increase the reading ages of students with moderate reading difficulties using curriculum words and words that often contribute to reading hesitation and are irregular i.e. not phonic. It contains lists of word to be learnt as sight vocabulary, and the emphasis is on increasing fluency with daily practice.

**Stop, Think, Do** is a personal and social skills training programme for pre and young adolescents. It contains strategies for teachers who wish to teach specific topics or key competencies that relate to personal and social skills. The programme includes 12 lessons covering a wide range of social skills. Lessons are divided into the following 6 units: Self awareness and identity; Good and bad communication; Thinking and problem solving; Morals and values; Decision making and friendship skills and Pressures and responsibilities.

**Taming Anger** concentrates on unpacking the skills necessary to allow students to manage their anger and then explicitly teaching these skills to small groups of identified students to empower them to make responsible behavioural choices. It contains student worksheets that assist students to explore their anger and teacher information concerning strategies and practices that are effective with angry students.

**Talkabout Series** contains four books:
- **Talkabout: A Social Communications Skills Package** is a photocopiable manual providing a framework for the development of social skills.
- **Talkabout: Developing Social Communications Skills** contains over 225 activities for social skills training.
- **Talkabout for Teenagers** provides ready-made material for running social and relationship skills groups with older children and young adults. It is divided into five, hierarchical modules self awareness and self esteem; body language; conversational skills; friendship skills; assertiveness skills each module includes a teaching plan with worksheets and photocopiable resources.
- **Talkabout Relationships** contains illustrated, group activities and worksheets to address self-image, identity and self-confidence as well as the different types of relationship, the qualities of friends and some of the skills involved in improving and developing relationships. The resource aims, through group work, to improve self esteem and relationship skills in people who are having difficulties in making or maintaining friends.

**Toe by Toe** is a structured reading programme that teaches basic literacy skills to students of all ages, using a phonics-based method. The programme is a series of step-by-step activities in one book with instructions for the teacher or coach provided for each activity.

**Tools for Teaching Social Skills in School** (Hensley, et al.) targets 28 social skills including following instructions, staying on task, working with others, accepting criticism, listening, ignoring distractions, making a good choice, sharing, and showing respect. It provides teachers with lesson plans and activities that can be adapted. There are reproducible skill pages that can be displayed in the classroom as reminders to students. Also included are ways for "blending" the teaching of social skills into academic lessons in English, Math, History etc. as well as strategies for increasing parent support.

**Trugs** is a structured phonics reading resource to support students who are learning to read. The card games for the teaching of discrete, daily sessions progressing from simple to more complex phonic knowledge and skills.

**Vocabulary Enrichment Programme** creates an awareness of how improved vocabulary knowledge can be used to enhance learning in school and social interactions in school and home environments. The programme encourages an awareness and interest in words and language, introduces the concept of words and meanings and
identifies their role and use in language, communication and social interaction. It provides effective strategies for word learning to encourage independent word learning skills and a range of cueing techniques to aid in word retrieval as well as teaching effective and efficient use of the dictionaries as a tool for word learning.

**Where’s My Stuff** aims to help students get organised and includes how to systematically organise the Big Three—school, time and space. The school section includes instructions on how to set up binders, notebooks and a study space.

**Why Try?** 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. The programme aims to improve student retention, academic performance and school climate. It teaches students critical social and emotional skills required for success in school and life after school. The programme also provides the students with strategies and tools to help change patterns of failure and indifference. It has proven to be highly effective at impacting negative student behaviour.

**Working Things Out** can be used as a preventative programme to educate adolescents about positive mental health. The programme contains the personal stories of adolescents who overcame personal problems in their lives such as Bullying, School Pressures, Conflict with Parents as well as mental health issues such as Anxiety, Depression, ADHD, OCD, Self-harm and Suicide. The stories are illustrated by animation and graphics, narrated by young people and backed up by mental health information and handouts for facilitators/teachers.

*Additional information on the programmes, resources and interventions used in NBSS partner schools can be found on the [NBSS website](http://www.nbss.ie) - www.nbss.ie*
National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS)
Navan Education Centre
Athlumney
Navan
Co. Meath

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