Education, Children and Families Committee

10am, Thursday, 27 April 2023

Behaviours of Concern

Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1.   Recommendations

1.1   The Education, Children and Families Committee is asked to:

1.1.1   Note the significant efforts and continued partnership between staff in schools, central officers and trades unions to minimise, manage, report and keep under review dysregulated behaviours/behaviours of concern.

1.1.2   Request a follow-through report within 18 months.

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Report

2. Executive Summary

2.1 This report provides a summary of self-evaluation activity, including a Thematic Review, to investigate the impact of actions taken over several sessions to minimise and manage behaviours of concern in the city's schools. This included desk top analysis of data, feedback from specialist staff, questionnaires, and focus groups in a sample of schools. The analysis concluded that while good progress has been made in ensuring Behaviours of Concerns are managed, understood and reduced, the work should be continued to improve consistency, and to ensure that new staff, including school leaders, are supported and trained appropriately.

3. Background

3.1 In 2019 following a deputation https://edinburgh.public-.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/460068/start_time/612000 to Education, Children and Families Committee, a working group was formed to review how dysregulation (behaviours of concern) from pupils could be better managed. The group comprised officers, trades union members and Headteachers. It reviewed the actions taken to minimise behaviours occurring, as well as ways in which incidents were reported and followed up.

3.2 Through analysis of the data, it was recognised that many incidents involved learners who have additional support needs affecting their ability to regulate their emotions and resulting behaviour. It was acknowledged that although significant training was in place to support learners with Additional Support Needs, improvements should be made to clarify: roles, remits and responsibilities; application of policy; communication and support, and quality assurance by senior officers, including Headteachers.

3.3 The training and professional learning for teaching and support staff is provided by the Additional Support for Learning Service and the Edinburgh Learns Team. This includes training on differentiation, autism, nurture, de-escalation and environments for learning.

3.4 Learners with additional support needs should have a (GIRFEC) Support Plan or differentiated learning made available. This sets out the ways in which teachers can adapt learning processes and environment to ensure they are fully included.

3.5 The authority tracking and monitoring system 'SHE' is used to record incidents at source and to ensure that appropriate follow up actions are taken. This Management Information System is extensively used by the Education Leadership Team, with support from the Health and Safety Team.

3.6 An Internal Audit took place in 2020 which noted various strengths in the process and made recommendations for follow up work. These included increased self-evaluation activity and a refresh of the Council's Managing Violent Incidents policy. The former is the subject of this report.

3.7   Increased concerns about pupil behaviour are noted nationally. A national survey: Behaviour in Scottish Schools 2023 is currently underway including sampling in City of Edinburgh schools. The HMI National Thematic Inspection: Inclusion: promoting positive behaviour (phase 2) is also underway, featuring a good practice visit to one of our secondary schools.

3.8   Policies and procedures to support and manage additional support needs and behaviour are set out in the Edinburgh Learns Inclusion Framework. Our Managing and Reducing Risk procedure details the process for dealing with behaviours causing potentially serious risk to self or others within schools.

3.9   In March 2023, trades unions raised a concern at the Joint Consultative Group about the numbers 'assaults on staff in schools' citing that '66% of all employee injuries for 2022 were assaults on staff in schools.' Assaults with injury was 61%. This information was analysed as part of the Thematic Review.

4. Main report

4.1   The 2019 working group identified a number of key areas and recommendations including increased oversight of data by the Education Leadership Team (Senior Education Managers). Monthly scrutiny of SHE referrals has continued at ELT since 2019, with follow up activity in certain school as appropriate.

4.2   In addition, the following actions were taken forward and communicated to schools through Headteacher Briefings, Additional Support for Learning Briefings and at ELT. These are collated under the Quality Indicators used across schools (How Good is Our School 4)

4.3   Self-evaluation for self-improvement:

- In 2019 BoC was added to the Education Risk Register. Now identified as a managed issue with elements of risk, it was removed from the register in 2023.

- BoC Checklist video added to the Health and Safety Annual Assurance Matrix by all schools.

- Audit of individual school progress discussed at annual Inclusion Review and Planning Meetings attended by Head Teachers, Educational Psychologists and staff from the Additional Support for Learning Service.

4.4   Leadership of Learning

- Intensive professional learning opportunities offered to staff in schools including a focus on differentiated teaching and learning, enhanced induction for staff working the Additional Support for Learning Service and the development of a training framework for support staff in schools.

- A key focus was the introduction of Social Communication, Emotional Regulation and Transactional Support (SCERTS) training for staff and partners working in specialist provision or in Inclusion Services. With this training, staff are more skilled and able to identifying support needs, triggers and potential interventions.

4.5 Leadership of Change

- Significant resources have been allocated to establish Enhanced Support Bases in 8 primary and 9 secondary schools and Wellbeing Hubs in 23 secondary schools.

- Mental Health Councillors recruited for each learning community with training and guidance offered centrally.

- An audit of available GIRFEC supports for learners across Learning Communities

- A partnership between Edinburgh University and the Learning Estates Team to develop the 'Shared and Agile Space Learning Estate Toolkit'. The evidence-based resource guides schools to create learning spaces which supports pupils to regulate their emotions

4.6 Leadership and Management of Staff

- Behaviour of Concerns Education Briefing March 2022 defining roles and responsibilities (see appendix 2):
- Repeated Behaviour of Concern Education briefing to share effective practice (October 2022)

Thematic Review

4.7 In order to be assured that the actions taken were having an impact, a thematic review took place in February 2023. Led by the Head of Inclusion Services, the group comprised of Quality Improvement Education Managers, Health and Safety Advisor, Operations Manager, Trades Union Reps, Educational Psychologist, Additional Support for Learning Depute and a representation of school leaders from early years, special, primary and secondary schools.

4.8 11 education settings participated in the review. They were chosen based on numbers of SHE portal incidents (high/low/improved) and numbers of exclusions (high/low/improved)

4.9 363 staff across the 11 settings were asked if they felt safe at work. 88% stated they did. The table below shows this broken down by sector:

	Staff who responded yes when asked if they feel safe at work?
Early years	100% (35/35)
Primary	93% (156/168)
Secondary	80% (109/136)
Special	79% (19/24)
Total	88% (319/363)

It is recognised that the percentages in secondary and special schools would correlate with the age, size and complexity of needs of pupils. Supporting children and young people with self and mutual regulation when they have additional support needs that impact on their ability to manage this, is challenging. Staff require specialist training and physical environment need to be adapted to support this need.

4.10 In the best examples, the following were noticed to be in place:

- Strong, visible leadership from the Headteacher who was fully committed to meeting learners' needs, trained and applying GIRFEC principles and procedures, and implementing clear systems and processes to manage incidents where they occurred

- All staff, including support staff, had participated in high quality professional learning focussing on GIRFEC, promoting relationships and nurture, and supporting children and young people with additional support needs.

- The mental health and wellbeing needs of young people were being addressed through school counselling; the health and wellbeing needs of staff were being addressed in specific ways through access to council and school approaches and resources. Staff felt well supported by managers when incidents occurred.

- An active Health and Safety Committee met regularly and had clear roles, remits and responsibilities, including the management of BoC

- The learning environment including individual classes and breakout spaces had been carefully considered, often through discussion with ASL specialist staff, to minimise dysregulation; Learning Walks took place to view the school day from the learner's point of view

- Behaviours of concern were recorded and addressed in a consistent way through clear processes which were observable and communicated to all – this included posters in the staffroom and addition of Health and Safety onto the agenda for whole staff meetings

- Sensitive and timely support was offered to staff with clear feedback about next steps following any incident

4.11 The following areas for development were also noted:

- In some schools up to 25% of respondents were not clear on processes to manage incidents or felt that they had accessed sufficient training

- Referrals to SHE were not consistent in certain schools

- The majority of support staff noted the benefits of specialist training and called for more on de-escalation; they also noted the lack of time to embed learning and to plan and consult with teachers

- Not enough schools had active Health and Safety Committees that focussed on Health and Wellbeing and Behaviours of Concern (half of those surveyed)

4.12 Feedback from Learners provides the clearest insight into how well policies are being applied. The comments and suggestions below came from Pupil Focus Groups and relate to a range of issues that when managed well, will result in fewer Behaviours of Concern

Primary and Special
o More break out spaces
o Allowing children who struggle with emotions, time to play with friends in another room
o Use of outdoor spaces and local parks

- More teachers in the playground
- More planned activities in the playground

Secondary
- Crack down on vaping
- Fix locks on toilets and changing rooms
- Manage lunch queues and bells to prevent running for lunch/pushing in corridors
- School could be more open about how it addresses difficult issues such as racism, bullying etc to reassure young people that it is being acted on.
- School should share what its priorities are in terms of keeping people safe.
- For incidents that happen outside of school, be helpful to know if the school can support with this.
- Be helpful if the school could follow-up/check-in with young people following an incident. School does act at the time but be reassuring to check-in later.
- Sometimes appears that the person who caused the upset, gets more support than the 'victim'.

5. Key Findings / Next Steps

The following will be recorded in the Behaviours of Concern Action Plan for Session 23/24 and reported to Committee within 18 months.

1. Staff absence and high turnover affects the level of experience and specialism available to meet needs.

   - Effective onboarding and induction for all new Pupil Support staff, particularly those working with learners who have severe and complex needs

2. The majority of staff feel well supported when they have experienced physical incidents but many highlighted the need to understand the purpose of SHE recording and how this can support the school and staff affected. They also highlighted the need to understand how lessons learned inform policy and planning at school level.

   - Ongoing training for School Leaders and H&S committee members to ensure systems clearly shared with staff and revisited throughout the school year and to remind staff of processes and systems in place.

3. Ensure support staff are given more time given to embed skills learned in training and time for collaborative planning

   - Incorporate this finding into Support Staff Review

4. The design and use of the physical environment to support self and mutual regulation was highlighted as key to reducing numbers of physical incidents. This includes access to break out spaces and creative use of spaces in school and learning communities as learning environments.

   - The QIEO for Learning Estates will work with colleagues to refresh guidance.

5. Pressures on managers impact on their ability to respond effectively to need at times.

   - Senior Leaders, including Support for Learning Coordinators and DHT 3.1 (secondary) will be asked to complete Stress Risk Assessments to record and moderate pressures

6. There are a few dysregulated children impacting on numbers of incidents in schools. Often this can be as a result of parental choice over-riding professional advice.

- GIRFEC guidance will be refreshed to provide more advice to professionals and parents

7. Relationships are key.

- Trauma informed practice and Nurture will be planned and delivered in a more strategic basis over the next 2 sessions.

6. Financial impact

6.1 There are no additional financial implications contained in this report.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

7.1 This work will continue to be taken forward and follow up activity undertaken in certain schools. This will include more stakeholder surveys and focus groups.

8. Background reading/external references

8.1 [Quality Improvement Framework for Trauma Informed Services, Systems and Workforces | Improvement Service](#)

8.2 [Trauma-informed practice: toolkit - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)](#)

8.3 [Edinburgh Learns Inclusion Framework](#)

9. Appendices

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