

RESPECT IN SCHOOLS: LEADERSHIP GROUP ON BEHAVIOUR AND DISCIPLINE

Heads and teachers who are experts in school discipline will form a new group to work with Government and key national stakeholders, including all the teacher unions, to press home the drive to tackle pupil behaviour, Schools Minister Jacqui Smith confirmed today.

The new Leadership Group on Behaviour and Discipline will advise the Government on how effective school discipline reaches every classroom, how to improve parental responsibility for their children's behaviour and deliver a culture of respect in all schools.

Jacqui Smith said:

"Real progress had been made in tackling serious bad behaviour in schools. However, a culture of respect, good behaviour and firm discipline must be the norm in all schools all of the time.

"The Government has provided schools with powers, training, and support to deal with disruptive behaviour, but we know that the real work is done on the front line by heads and teachers. We cannot simply legislate bad behaviour out of the classroom. It has to be delivered on the ground by teachers with the full backing of parents."

Teaching unions and other professional associations have been invited to nominate Heads and teachers who have a proven track record in managing behaviour to sit on the Group, chaired by Sir Alan Steer of the Seven Kings School, Ilford. Among the issues it will examine are:

- **effective practice:** serious incidents are rare, and the majority of schools already have good discipline, but what needs to happen to ensure this is the norm in all schools?
- **new powers:** schools have powers and a wide range of support to deal with unruly behaviour, but what more or different support would

help? Ministers are not ruling out an extension of Heads' powers if Heads believe these are required and they would make a practical difference.

- **teacher training:** can teachers be further supported through initial teacher training or professional development to ensure they are fully equipped to manage poor behaviour?
- **parents' responsibility:** schools have every right to expect parents' full support, not challenge, when it comes to discipline - at home and in school. Penalty fines and parenting contracts and orders are making an impact, but what more could be done to ensure that all parents take responsibility for their children's behaviour in school?
- **collaboration:** schools can tackle many discipline issues by working together - for example in *Education Improvement Partnerships*, using resources from local education authorities to fund out of class provision such as Learning Support Units to 'cool off' disruptive pupils or places in Pupil Referral Units to remove the most unruly pupils from schools. How can we build up effective collaboration and spread best practice?
- **national discipline code:** is there merit in creating a national code on behaviour which sets out the roles and responsibilities of schools, pupils and parents, in promoting good behaviour?
- **exclusion appeals panels:** while exclusion appeals panels are vital to keep disputes from lengthy and expensive court cases, could the process be made more effective to ensure that Heads' authority and the interests of the school are paramount when excluding pupils?
- **protecting teachers:** although assaults on teachers are rare, they should not happen at all, how can we press home to parents that new sentencing guidelines now make it a more serious offence to assault those working in the public sector, such as school staff?

The Leadership Group on Behaviour and Discipline will work intensively over the next few months to produce a detailed report by the end of October to be considered by a high level stakeholder group chaired by Jacqui Smith including all the teacher unions, Ofsted, local authority and Parent Governor representatives.

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The high level Ministerial Stakeholders' Group builds on the Department's existing Behaviour and Attendance Reference Group, with membership drawn from the leadership of the key stakeholders.