

department for

# education and skills

creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith Street  
Westminster  
London SW1P 3BT

tel: 0870 0012345

fax: 020 7925 6000

info@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

www.dfes.gov.uk

Chief Education Officers  
Directors of Children's Services

18 November 2004

## Behaviour in Schools

In recent years the Government has made a significant financial investment in measures to improve behaviour in schools. Much has been channelled into support for schools in challenging areas, through Excellence in Cities and the Behaviour Improvement Programme. We are also now providing support for all secondary schools' behaviour management through the KS3 strategy. We have taken strong action against bullying and have also increased the powers of schools to tackle behavioural problems, so that, for example, schools can use permanent exclusion for violence, even when it is a first offence.

There is a broad measure of consensus about this approach, including among the teacher unions. We believe the time is now right to build on the solid progress that has been made and to accelerate the pace at which effective practice in behaviour improvement is adopted in schools and local authorities across the country.

In a speech on 18 November to new heads, Charles Clarke made a statement about the Government's expectations of schools and local authorities on behaviour. The Secretary of State emphasised the leadership role of heads and others in schools in setting clear and consistent standards of behaviour, and in applying effective practice in behaviour management. But his statement also makes clear that in return heads are entitled to the support of the Government, LEAs and the wider community so that, for example, in every local area there is specialist support for schools to deal with pupils with more severe behaviour problems and arrangements to offer alternative provision for pupils who need a period out of school as well as for those who have been permanently excluded. It is important that there is available in every local area the right types of educational facilities for those pupils who should not be in mainstream schools.

Additionally the speech develops the proposals flagged in the Department's Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners to address the issue of schools that are asked to admit disproportionate numbers of hard to place pupils. In particular it is important that no school should be asked to take an excessive number of pupils who have been excluded from other schools. The Government expects that every local Admission Forum which does not already have one will agree a protocol for sharing hard to place pupils and that these protocols will



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

be agreed with schools and in place for the school year starting September 2005 at the latest. The protocols should include a fixed percentage limit to be agreed locally on the number of previously excluded pupils to be admitted in any one year group in any school. We want Forums to focus on developing such protocols for secondary schools in the first instance, but they should take a view on whether protocols are also required to cover primary schools in their areas. The first of the notes enclosed with this letter offers guidance to Forums on developing and agreeing protocols.

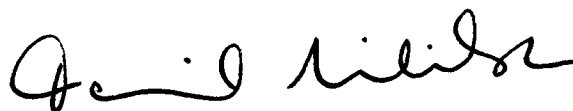
Action to share hard to place pupils more fairly between schools needs to be backed up by adequate support for schools taking in challenging pupils and by better arrangements for pupils for whom mainstream education is not appropriate. We think the way forward here is to give groups of schools both the funding and responsibility for alternative provision, with the schools working together to manage pupils with challenging behaviour; to develop preventative strategies which reduce the need for exclusions from school; and to place pupils in a range of alternative provision. There are a number of examples around the country where this approach is already working effectively and we want all LEAs to develop arrangements on these lines, initially for the secondary sector, in consultation with their schools. The second note enclosed with this letter offers guidance on how such arrangements can work. The foundation partnership model outlined in the Five Year Strategy offers a promising vehicle for this kind of collaboration: the Department plans to issue a prospectus for foundation partnerships in December.

Charles Clarke's speech on 18 November also set out new proposals to reduce the incidence of knife carrying in schools and to help head teachers respond to such incidents more effectively when they occur; and new action in relation to allegations against teachers.

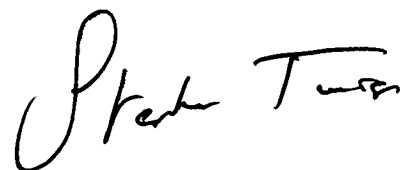
### **Action required**

The immediate action for you and your staff is

- To set in hand work with your Admission Forum towards a protocol on admission of hard to place pupils as outlined above and taking account of the guidance note enclosed. The Department will be providing further advice on the guidance on admissions protocols at a series of regional events for LEA Admission Managers, starting on 1 December.
- To work with heads on delegating or devolving funding to groups of schools to enable them to take collective responsibility for managing difficult pupils and making alternative provision where necessary, taking account of the second guidance note enclosed. The Department has already identified a number of LEAs which are committed to doing this and we will be working with them to support early progress. We are keen to hear from other LEAs who would like to join this group by 17 December so that we can plan a number of workshops around the country in January and February 2005.



**DAVID MILIBAND**



**STEPHEN TWIGG**