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Teacher Resilience and the  
Perspectives of Secondary  
School Teachers on Pupils'  
Challenging Behaviour

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## Abstract

This research is about the challenging behaviour of pupils in secondary schools and how this behaviour is perceived and experienced by their teachers. The impetus for the research came from my work as a teacher with pupils who had been excluded from school. The spur was the significant rise in permanent exclusions from maintained schools in England and Wales in the decade following the implementation of the 1988 Education Reform Act.

The research began in 2000. It is a piece of small-scale educational research, which had a two stage research design. The perspective taken was phenomenological within a naturalistic paradigm. In the first stage of the research design questionnaires were distributed to all the teachers and teaching assistants in two secondary schools in an area of social deprivation in a suburb of London. These questionnaires were intended to elicit information about teacher perspectives regarding challenging behaviour. In stage two of the research design in-depth interviews were held with five teachers from one of the two schools. These teachers were interviewed up to six times each over a period of several months as I attempted to track their interactions and experiences with a pupil whom they had identified as having challenging behaviour.

The data from the questionnaires revealed that a significant majority of the teacher respondents believed that incidences of challenging behaviour were increasing. The second stage of the research explored what these teachers meant by challenging behaviour and what challenging behaviour meant for them. The analysis of the data from these interviews revealed that for this group of teachers challenging behaviour predominantly meant disruption to their lessons. A key issue to emerge from the project was that of teacher resilience in relation to managing challenging behaviour.

The main findings of the thesis explore issues around the relationships between teachers and pupils with challenging behaviour. A model is proposed which illustrates levels of persistence on the part of the teachers when they are engaged with pupils with challenging behaviour. The model explores differing responses from teachers when managing what they perceived as challenging behaviour. It illustrates how and whether they disengage with the process of actively trying to make the pupils conform to classroom expectations in order to achieve learning outcomes. The model illustrates the inter-relationship of characteristics of teacher

resilience and demonstrates how resilience plays a part in determining whether teachers are able to manage disruptive behaviour in the classroom in order to achieve learning outcomes.

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## Chapter One

### An Introduction to the Thesis

#### 1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will begin by explaining my rationale and impetus for wanting to undertake this piece of small-scale educational research. The chapter explains how I became curious about the phenomenon of exclusion from school. In the context of my own professional involvement, as a teacher working with pupils excluded from school, I wanted to be in a position to contribute to the debate about school exclusion in a meaningful and constructive way.

This introduction includes my research questions and explains why I chose to conduct my research from the teacher perspective and the resulting direction in which this research journey has led me. Context is very important in terms of qualitative research and this chapter explains the relevance of both the national and local context for the topic of my research. It then introduces how an understanding of what teachers have commonly come to refer to as ‘challenging behaviour’ became vital to the research.

The research looks at how teachers perceive and experience challenging behaviour among their pupils. It is not chiefly concerned with the factors which arise outside school and which can contribute to pupils exhibiting challenging behaviour. These are factors which many have come to regard as ‘socio-economic’ and which tend to be largely outside the sphere of influence of the teacher to significantly change or control. However, it does look at school-based factors which may influence the behaviour of the pupils and which arguably could, or should, fall under the jurisdiction of the teachers to change or control. In this respect, the research also examines issues about professional autonomy and teacher agency.

The chapter discusses the research design and how it changed and evolved from a piece of small-scale educational research using a case study approach, into a piece of small-scale educational research using a phenomenological approach within a qualitative research design. Finally, the chapter looks at the organisation of the thesis.

## 2. Impetus and Rationale for the Research

I have been a qualified teacher for thirty years. My research began in 2000 when I was working for the children's charity Barnardo's as an Education Services Manager. At that time, I was managing educational provision for young people who had been permanently excluded from secondary schools.

During my career, I had developed skills in working with the kind of young people who appeared to be at risk of exclusion. I had been teaching in special schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) for eighteen years when I went to work for Barnardo's in 1998. I had developed expertise in working with young people who exhibited what my colleagues called 'bad' or 'unacceptable' behaviour. These children were disinclined to work in the classroom, they often argued with teachers and conventional, authoritarian approaches usually failed to make them comply. There was a feeling among many of my colleagues that the client group at the school was changing and that more children with 'difficult' behaviour were being admitted; I found it was necessary to build relationships with these children in order to work with them. It was not possible to adopt the more traditional stance of 'I am the adult, you are the child and I am in charge', because it simply did not work.

Until coming to work for Barnardo's I had little experience of exclusion from school, but I had been involved in the permanent exclusion of two pupils from the special school where I had previously worked. Both of these exclusions had been for incidences of behaviour, which the school felt it could not safely manage and both these young people had a statement of special educational needs and the school from which they were excluded was a school for young people with moderate learning difficulties (MLD). However, the needs of these two young people were deemed to be predominantly about their behaviour rather than their learning ability.

After the exclusions, both pupils were transferred to schools for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, known at that time as EBD Schools. Following the 1980 Education Act, which introduced parental choice and included the right for a child with special educational needs to be educated in a mainstream rather than a special school and the 1981 Act, which covered the identification and assessment of children with special educational

needs (SEN), a number of special schools had been closed. This had led to more pupils with special educational needs being educated in mainstream schools.

The formal mechanism for transferring pupils with special educational needs to other educational provision, for example either from mainstream to special school or from one kind of special school to another is via an annual review of the statement of the pupils 'special educational needs'. The success of this process depends upon the agreement of the local authority and on the availability of suitable placements. This process can take a number of months to complete and sometimes pupils with behavioural difficulties are excluded before a suitable alternative placement can be identified. The Lamb Inquiry into parental confidence in SEN published in December 2009, identified that pupils with SEN are still disproportionately represented in the exclusion figures, a fact that was identified earlier by writers such as Slee (1998), Parsons (1999) and Hayden (2000),

“Pupils with SEN (both with and without statements) are over 8 times more likely to be permanently excluded than those pupils with no SEN. In 2007/08, 33 in every 10,000 pupils with statements of SEN and 38 in every 10,000 pupils with SEN without statements were permanently excluded from school. This compares with 4 in every 10,000 pupils with no SEN”. (The Lamb Inquiry 2009 pg. 21)

If a pupil cannot be transferred to other provision, a school that cannot meet their needs may, in a perverse way, view an exclusion in these circumstances to be in the best interests of pupil and a way of ensuring that their needs are met, a sort of 'benign exclusion'. I had worked closely with the two aforementioned young people and deeply regretted the fact that at the time their exclusion was seen as the only way of getting any more support for them. Later in my career, I found that excluded pupils often took precedence for places in schools for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD, formerly EBD) because their needs were seen as more urgent or extreme.

Pupil referral units (PRUs) were set up in 1996 to provide education for permanently excluded pupils. Parsons (1999) writes that in areas where PRUs were established incidences of exclusions rose. Is a possible explanation for this that head teachers could see that alternative provision now existed for pupils whose behaviour they could no longer manage?

Shortly after I went to work for Barnardo's, I went to a seminar about exclusion where Carl Parsons spoke. Coincidentally the seminar took place in the local authority where I later conducted my research, an authority that had an extremely high rate of exclusion from school. After the seminar I bought a copy of the book, 'Education, Exclusion and Citizenship' (Parsons 1999) and in reading it, discovered that, according to Parsons (1999), exclusion from school was a serious problem and that I appeared to be working in the educational equivalent of a 'growth industry'.

Parsons (1999) had written about the significant rise in permanent exclusions from maintained schools in England and Wales during the 1990s: in the academic year 1990/01, 2,910 pupils were permanently excluded from schools in England and Wales; by 1997/8, the figure had risen to 13,041. In the last decade of the twentieth century in addition to the sharp rise in school exclusions Parsons (1999) estimated that 0.4% of pupils were permanently excluded. He also estimated that 3% were on fixed term exclusions, 9% were frequently truanting, 20% were involved in other truanting and 20% were underachieving and/or withdrawn from class. I came from the predominantly needs-led pedagogy of special education and according to those statistics the education system appeared to be failing to meet the needs of a significant proportion of the school population.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, I had been very interested in the kind of needs-led curricula for children with special education needs that were being promoted by academics and writers such as Ainscow and Tweddle (1979). They had developed the objectives based curriculum, which I had successfully implemented in the special school where I was working in the early 1980s. However, in 1988 The Education Reform Act heralded the arrival of the national curriculum. The national curriculum was introduced as an entitlement curriculum and many of those working with young people with special educational needs saw this as an issue of equality.

People with a range of disabilities were now entitled to be taught the same curriculum as everyone else and to argue against this was seen by many as being discriminatory. The national curriculum was very prescriptive, it was intended to be a body of knowledge that teachers had to deliver and when it was first introduced teachers recognised that the national curriculum would have to be adapted to meet the needs of pupils with special educational

needs. My professional instinct was that a prescriptive, entitlement curriculum would be at odds with the needs-led philosophy of special education as it had been.

The concept of entitlement and equality for young people with special educational needs should be applauded, but where, for example, pupils had developmental delays the curriculum could not be delivered across the four key stages of the national curriculum without significant adaptation. In defending a special, needs-led curriculum for pupils with special educational needs Ainscow and Tweddle (1979) had talked about what they described as, the ‘watered down curriculum’. Prior to ideas like the objectives based curriculum being introduced there was no curriculum designed specifically for pupils with, for example, learning difficulties, instead they had to make do with a ‘watered down’ version of the curriculum that was offered to most pupils. Was there now a danger that a differentiated national curriculum was simply the return of the ‘watered down curriculum’ masquerading as entitlement? Parsons (1999) recognised that an entitlement curriculum would make it more difficult for schools to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and that this could increase exclusions,

“Some children will find it less easy to achieve some objectives, such as maximising Key Stage assessment results or the achievement of five-plus A\*-C grades in the General Certificate of Education (GCSE) examinations. Badly behaved children make it more difficult, not simply by depressing results by their own low achievement, but also by disrupting classes and drawing resources away from other children. From 1988 onwards there was a distinct shift towards schools being required to impart personal status passage credits and away from fulfilling a community shaping function. The Education Reform Act 1988, a fixed, entitlement curriculum, testing and published league tables, are all likely to push exclusions up.” (Parsons 1999 pg. 20)

However, the popular perception was not that the exclusion figures represented a failure of the school system, but rather that the school system was being called upon to work with pupils who displayed increasingly high levels of unacceptable behaviour. Parsons (1999) writes at length about the ‘demonising’ of the excluded and the role played by the media in reinforcing this view,

“The media play their part in shaping the discourse and defining the unacceptability and undeservingness of the excluded” (Parsons 1999 pg. 137)

As a teacher working with excluded pupils I began to question the significant rise in exclusions over a comparatively short space of time. Permanent exclusion was first sanctioned by the Education Act of 1986 but was a rare occurrence before the 1990s and I wanted to examine and illuminate possible reasons for this. The rise in exclusions came in the decade following the implementation of the 1988 Education Reform Act. I began to question whether there was a connection between the rise in exclusions and the implementation of the Act. By thinking about the implementation of the 1988 Education Reform Act and the subsequent rise in exclusions from maintained schools in England and Wales I formulated some questions which directed the rationale for the research which were:-

- Does the national curriculum, despite being offered as an entitlement, meet the needs of all pupils and if the needs of some pupils are not met what are the consequences of that for them and for their behaviour?
- Are pupils with special educational needs vulnerable to exclusion because teachers find it difficult to meet their needs in an increasingly competitive educational market?
- Are pupils with some types of special educational need, for example those who have EBD, now more often called BESD, more vulnerable to exclusion because in an increasingly market driven education system they are required to conform in a way they find difficult?
- Has the removal of control over the curriculum led to a decline in professional autonomy and teacher agency and if so has this impacted negatively on the exclusion figures?
- Has the ‘blame culture’ in education, where teachers are under pressure to get good academic results and impose high standards of behaviour, without the concomitant power to change what they can offer in terms of the curriculum impacted negatively on the exclusion figures?

- Do children who find it difficult to conform to the pressures of an academic curriculum pose a threat to the academic success of some schools and become vulnerable to exclusion?
- Has the education service failed to respond to changing social needs and trends over the last twenty to thirty years, which has led to increased educational and social exclusion?

### 3. Teacher Perspectives

Even as my topic and rationale were developing I decided early on that I wanted my research to be from the teacher perspective. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, most of the writing about exclusion is from the perspective of the pupils. Where teachers are written about it is usually from two extreme perspectives. These are either from the perspective of the teaching unions (Parsons 1999) who vociferously advocate for their members and often support the withdrawal of labour by teachers, rather than have them teach disruptive pupils, particularly those who have been re-instated following a successful independent appeal against a permanent exclusion. This tends to portray the teachers as potential victims of their pupils. Alternatively, teachers are portrayed in the context of what I will call the 'blame culture'.

After the introduction of the Education Reform Act in 1988 writers such as Ainscow (1991) who had previously advocated separate needs-led curricula for young people with special education needs (Ainscow & Tweddle 1979) were advocating from a different point of view,

“It seems reasonable to assume that when children experience significant difficulties in Schools, they arise as a result of the interaction of a complex range of factors. In practice, however the problem is a curriculum one. What we are witnessing is the inability of a teacher or group of teachers to provide classroom experiences that are meaningful and relevant given the interests, experiences, and existing skills and knowledge of particular children.”  
(Ainscow 1991 pg.3)

The introduction of a prescriptive national curriculum created the imperative for all teachers to implement it successfully in the classroom. This had consequences for professional autonomy and has led to a decline in teacher agency. Michael Barber, an advisor to the Blair



Government talked about the 'blind alley' of professional autonomy (Barber 1996). Parsons (1999) however saw a link between the decline in professional autonomy and exclusion from school, "the decline in that autonomy and its consequences for professionalism are an important part of the exclusion story." (pg.11)

Since the introduction of the Education Reform Act in 1988 the underlying assumption in our schools has been that, within the constraints of a prescribed curriculum, teachers must provide access to an interesting learning experience that engages pupils of all abilities. They must be skilled in 'behaviour management' in order to engage the disaffected or disruptive pupils, but equally they should be able to challenge the 'gifted and talented' pupil. If all this could be achieved then all was well and all children would succeed. If it could not be achieved then someone must be to blame, so inevitably we tended to end up with either the model of a deficit pupil, who despite all the interventions continues to fail, or the deficit teacher, who has obviously not tried hard enough. I decided I wanted to seek the perspectives of the teachers themselves.

I wondered whether, as I had originally suspected, the implementation of the 1988 Education Reform Act was a significant factor in the rise in exclusions. I wanted to illuminate the teacher perspective on that. I wanted to determine whether, for example, from the perspective of teachers had young people simply become more difficult to teach? On the other hand, was there anything in the way in which education was now being delivered which was contributing to the marginalisation of particular groups of pupils?

According to Davies and Edwards (2001) the national curriculum was "constructed from a collection of existing school subjects on the assumption that a coherent whole would emerge from the parts" (pg. 97). Searle (1996) cites the inappropriateness of the national curriculum for children from ethnic minorities. Slee (1998) cites the inability of the national curriculum to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. Both these groups of pupils continue to be disproportionately represented in the exclusion figures,

"What the 1988 Act failed to provide was a coherent rationale whereby its broad aims could be translated into a national curriculum which could be adapted to meet the needs of schools operating in a variety of context and circumstances." (Davis & Edwards 2001 pg. 97)

Since much of the rhetoric about exclusions concerns challenging behaviour I decided to ask the teachers what challenging behaviour meant for them in the context of their work. In terms of trying to establish the probable causes of exclusion I thought that teachers would have important insights into the relationship between behaviour in school and exclusion from school and I thought their perspectives on the reasons for particular behaviours would be invaluable.

I wanted to find out if, in their experience the circumstances that contributed to children behaving in particular ways were situated within the school, or were external in origin. I also wanted to find out whether, in either case did teachers feel that it was within their control to ameliorate these behaviours. I wanted to gain an insight into the perspectives of teachers on what would make it necessary, from their perspective, for a pupil to be excluded and conversely, on how hard one could or should strive to ensure that a particular pupil was not excluded. Finally and perhaps most importantly I think the views of teachers are under-represented and I wanted to go some way towards redressing that balance.

#### 4. The National Context

It is important to establish from the outset that this research is concerned with challenging behaviour and exclusion from schools in England. Parsons (1999) argues that in the United Kingdom, Scotland and Northern Ireland are subject to different educational legislation and exclude at a lesser rate than in England and Wales. Although the same legislation applies to both England and Wales there are fewer exclusions in Wales than there are in England. Parsons (2005) argues that the English approach is based on a punitive pedagogy and writes about what he describes as “the will to punish”.

He argues that the approach to exclusion in England differs, even to the approach in the rest of the United Kingdom and is significantly different to the approach in continental Europe. He argues that this punitive approach is reflected in our very high prison population. According to Parsons (2005) this punitive approach is also found in other English speaking countries such as the USA and Australia. One could argue that the presence of this approach in countries that we formerly colonised and the absence of it in the countries of continental Europe where we did not have that influence could be evidence that England may have exported a punitive pedagogy.

Ball (2008) is among many writers who have highlighted the link between social class and education in England. He says that the constructs of social class in England have a profound effect on how education is organised and delivered and consequently on exclusion from education. Parsons (1999) explains that by labelling a group of people the ‘underclass’ we have merely found a new term for describing the ‘undeserving poor’, which is how Himmelfarb (1985) says that the Victorians would have described the same group of people within their society. By making a group of people appear undeserving, and demonising them (Parsons 1999 and 2005) it is easier to justify excluding them. Understanding the historical, cultural and political strands of English life proved important in getting to grips with why exclusion from school has become an ‘acceptable’ part of the educational landscape in England in the twenty first century.

Parsons (1999 and 2005) explains that in England there are procedures and processes, which are enshrined in law about how to exclude pupils from school. A pupil may be excluded from school for a fixed term or permanently. A pupil who is excluded for a fixed term will not be allowed to return to school for a number of days, but after that they are allowed to return and a reintegration meeting should take place between the pupil, the school and the parents. A pupil who is permanently excluded has the right to appeal to the discipline committee of the schools governing body, who can either uphold or overturn the exclusion. If the discipline committee upholds the exclusion the pupil has the right of appeal to an independent panel. If they too uphold the exclusion the pupil is not allowed to return to the school that has excluded them.

Blair’s Labour government set targets for schools to reduce exclusions. According to Ball (2008) the overarching target was a reduction in the number of permanent exclusions to 8,400 per year by 2002. When the figures fell to 8,600 in 1999/2000 targets were abandoned and David Blunkett, the then Secretary of State for Education, declared that a ‘sustainable’ level had been reached. This ‘sustainable level’ was almost three times a year higher than the annual figures recorded for exclusions when school league tables were first introduced in 1992.

The figure also ignored the fact that permanent exclusion from school was a rare occurrence prior to the implementation of the Education Reform Act in 1988, but that, to all intents and

purposes, it had now become an unfortunate, but acceptable hazard of the schooling experience which was apparently condoned, as long as it was kept within 'sustainable levels'. In the same year, 2002, local authorities were required to provide full-time education for permanently excluded pupils. This enshrined the policy of exclusion as a fundamental part of English education because what became known as 'alternative provision' had to be established as a parallel full-time education service running alongside mainstream education. Instead of taking a critical look at the education system at the beginning of the twenty first century to see if causes or trends could be identified within the system itself to indicate why pupils were being excluded in large numbers, the government placed the responsibility for 'managing' exclusions and keeping them within 'sustainable levels' with the teachers.

## 5. The Local Context

Within this wider context, the local authority where I carried out my research was one that was struggling to reduce exclusions at the time that I first began gathering data in the Summer term of 2004. For a time the authority had the dubious distinction of being the highest excluding local authority in the country. The authority had a diverse population and at the time of the research it was estimated that 24% were from the black and ethnic minority communities. However, this population was not evenly divided across the authority because there was a geographical 'north south divide' which separated the more prosperous and predominantly white community in the south from the less well off and predominantly non-white community in the north of the authority.

There was a majority black and ethnic minority community in the north of the area covered by the authority, exemplified by one of the wards, where the population was 54% from the black and ethnic communities. By contrast, in one of the wards to the south the same population was only 7.1% of the total. The schools where I gathered my data were in the south of the area but served a large estate of social housing where the population was predominantly White British. Eleven wards in the authority showed significant deprivation and were ranked within the bottom third in the country. All of these were located in the north of the authority, apart from two, which were located in social housing estates, which were in the south east in a geographically isolated area of the authority and one of which was where the schools from which the data was collected were located.

In a 1998 study the geographical area that the authority served was recognised as a ‘divided suburban economy’. The area had significant social and economical differences, which were exemplified by the geographical ‘north south divide’. There were pockets of deprivation in the more prosperous parts of the area, usually, but not exclusively, located in social housing estates.

At the time educational provision for most of the secondary age pupils was made in 11-16 comprehensive schools, although some Faith and Foundation Schools had sixth forms. The authority was bounded to the west and east by two other authorities, both of which had grammar schools. There was also a proliferation of fee-paying schools in the area and anecdotal information suggests that 15% of the school population was educated privately; this is more than double the national average of 7%. At the time there were forty-two independent schools listed by the Independent Schools Information Service (ISIS) as being in the authority or in the surrounding area. Twenty-four of these worked with pupils of secondary age.

A consequence of this, coupled with the proximity of grammar schools meant that an acknowledged problem for the authority was that many children left the authority to be educated either privately or in neighbouring grammar schools at the age of eleven and did not transfer to the maintained secondary schools in the area. A consequence of this exodus to selective schools appears to have been individual schools within the authority having a disproportionate number of less academically able pupils, including those with SEN, what Johnson (1999) calls the ‘critical mass’, in terms of how many pupils a school has who may have behavioural difficulties.

The authority had six pupil referral units, one for primary age pupils, two for key stage three and key stage four pupils, one for emotionally based school refusers and one for year eleven pupils only. The authority had eight schools participating in the BIP (Behaviour Improvement in Practice) programme and data for the research was collected from two of these schools. In the academic year 2004/5 one of these two schools excluded nine pupils, but the other only excluded one. To put this in context, all the schools taking part in the BIP programme in the authority excluded at least one pupil and two excluded thirteen each. The highest number excluded from a BIP school in that year was sixteen. In this context it can be seen that one of the two schools from which data was collected was excluding at a

significantly lower rate. This became significant in terms of the research and is explained in the data chapters.

## 6. Behaviour Perceived as Challenging

Why are children excluded from education? As a teacher it is difficult to talk or write about exclusion from school without talking in terms of challenging behaviour so as a researcher I had to confront two ‘taken for granted’ assumptions that firstly, exclusion and challenging behaviour are linked and secondly that pupils who are excluded tend to exhibit high levels of behaviour perceived as challenging. I also had to confront the ‘taken for granted’ assumption that challenging behaviour is something that can be easily described and explained. These problems are explored in more detail in chapter three of this thesis.

Whatever the dilemmas may be for the researcher, for many teachers in England in the closing years of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century the term ‘challenging behaviour’ has become synonymous with pupils who disrupt their lessons and make it difficult for them to deliver the curriculum. There are a number of publications and courses available to help teachers ‘manage’ challenging behaviour in their classrooms. A Google search for ‘challenging behaviour’ brings up 379,000 responses and lists a range of sites dealing with various aspects of challenging behaviour in a variety of different contexts. These range from sites dealing with pupils with severe autism to others giving advice to teachers in mainstream schools, including a site which described challenging behaviour in the following terms,

“In a school setting challenging behaviour is acknowledged to be any form of behaviour that causes concern to teachers.” (www.additionalneeds.net.)

This would seem to indicate that teacher perceptions are critical in determining what constitutes challenging behaviour. The government acknowledges that behaviour in some schools does not conform to what they regard as acceptable standards and has developed a number of initiatives to try to address the problems of both behaviour and attendance. In December 2002 they set out to improve behaviour in schools through a national programme, which had three main aims:

- To raise standards of behaviour and improve attendance in schools, making every school a place of inclusive learning in which pupils achieve their potential and have respect for others.
- To ensure all children receive a high quality education including those who have been excluded or who have fallen out of the education system.
- To engage pupils and parents more actively in behaviour and attendance in schools.

Fundamental to the programme was the Behaviour Improvement Programme (BIP). The programme funded local authorities to form clusters of schools with the specific aim of working together to improve behaviour and attendance. I was fortunate enough to represent Barnardo's at what was then the DfES, when the BIP Programme was being developed and so I witnessed it from its inception and I later collected the data for this project in BIP schools.

In July 2003 the DfES published the Key Stage Three National Strategy: Behaviour and Attendance ([www.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk)). This strand of the Key Stage Three Strategy made a clear link between behaviour and attendance and effective teaching and learning, placing the onus for improving behaviour with the teachers. The behaviour of pupils in schools had become a significant issue and was and is at the heart of current educational legislation and debate. Five years later on 7th April 2008, under the headline 'Tories outline rowdy pupils plan' the BBC reported on the Conservative Party's proposals for strengthening the powers of head teachers to permanently exclude pupils, which included removing the current parental right to an independent appeal against the exclusion ([news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/7333859.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7333859.stm)). David Cameron, the leader of the Conservative Party was quoted as saying that schools had a 'severe discipline problem'.

I have been working in education throughout this period and my developing thinking has moved more and more towards exploring what is actually meant by challenging behaviour and trying to define and describe it. I have chosen to do this by exploring teacher perspectives and specifically trying to illuminate what challenging behaviour means for them. This thesis seeks to understand the nature of challenging behaviour by illuminating the

perspectives of secondary school teachers on disruption, disaffection and exclusion in and from school. In doing this the research will also explore why teachers find certain behaviours challenging and try to illuminate some of the wider educational issues concerning challenging behaviour and more specifically, the relationship between challenging behaviour and exclusion from school.

From April 2003 until April 2008 I was the head teacher of a local authority pupil referral unit (PRU). This gave me considerable insight into the issues, both personal and professional surrounding exclusion from school and served to increase my expertise in what is called behaviour management. I have worked on a daily basis with young people who have been excluded from school, many of whom exhibited what I, from my own perspective, would describe as challenging behaviour. This research has made me confront a number of my own assumptions about challenging behaviour and caused me to question, what impact does challenging behaviour have upon schools and the individuals within them? Is there evidence to suggest that these behaviours have always been a feature of our education system? If that is the case then how have our responses differed over time and what effect has the prevailing culture in education and the wider society had upon how we respond to these behaviours? Alternatively, is there evidence to suggest that challenging behaviour is increasing in instance and severity and if so, are there demonstrable causes for this phenomenon? If there are what are they and where are they located?

## 7. Research Questions

I formulated my research questions over a period of time, but always with the perspectives of teachers very much in mind. The questions took time to evolve as the proposals developed, but came to be about teacher perspectives on challenging behaviour, specifically:

1. What do teachers regard as challenging behaviour and how do they manage it?
2. What factors do teachers believe:
  - i) to be significant in contributing to challenging behaviour among the pupils they teach?
  - ii) affect their ability to manage challenging behaviour?



## 8. Research Design

My original registration was for an M. Phil and the research proposal was submitted in 2001. I proposed a piece of small-scale educational research using a case study approach. However, in the intervening years the work has evolved and quite early within the process I realised that I was moving away from the case study approach. From the beginning I was concerned with meaning and I came to realise that a phenomenological approach would best suit the direction in which I was moving.

I used a case study approach and a significant development in my methodology was the influence of phenomenology as an approach both to guide the research and in the analysis and interpretation of the data. During analysis of what came to be the first stage of my research, during the academic year 2004/5, the issue of teacher resilience emerged. At the time I was seeking an upgrade from an M. Phil to a D. Phil and so I submitted a second Research Proposal in 2006.

The literature suggests that the notion of resilience is bound up with the importance of meaning and is not something that is located within the individual (Gilligan 2004). How individuals ascribe meaning to their experiences can actually promote resilience. Within an interpretive paradigm, I have used phenomenology as an approach to interpreting and analysing the data from the research. This approach focuses both on meaning and how we experience things and ascribe meaning to them. The research explored the impact of working with challenging behaviour on a group of teachers and looked at the situations in which the challenging behaviour emerged. The thesis discusses how educational, social and political circumstances may influence the situations in which the challenging behaviours are found.

I decided that I needed to take a naturalistic, rather than a positivist approach to the research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000). If something is to be quantified or measured using a positivist approach then it is reasonable to assume that the subjects will always behave in the same way and that if the circumstances can be replicated, then the context becomes unimportant. The naturalistic approach assumes that in human interactions the context cannot be replicated. In my view this indicates the appropriateness of a naturalistic approach as a desirable and effective way of investigating social organisations. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) describe the naturalistic approach to research in the social sciences as, “a

means of dealing with the direct experience of people in specific contexts”. The context is very important in the social sciences and especially important when examining instances of behaviour that are perceived as being challenging.

My decision to use a qualitative approach was reinforced by my conviction that much of the current educational policy and in particular the Education Reform Act of 1988 appeared to be derived from a very positivist agenda and that it could be argued that this positivist agenda was contributing to the problem of exclusion. There appeared to me to be a dichotomy between the apparently functionalist agenda in education, which was market driven, relies on a prescriptive national curriculum and has spawned the school effectiveness and the school improvement movements and the requirement for schools to be more inclusive. A view shared by Slee (1998),

“However, the epistemology of school effectiveness and the suggested educational stratagems of the ‘school improvers’ were unavoidably functionalist - school improvers never refer to the ways in which the National Curriculum is prohibitive to disabled students or cultural minorities - and contributed to enduring disablement.” (Slee 1998 pg.107)

I am using a phenomenological approach within a qualitative research design and I think that some clarification is important at this point. Qualitative research can mean different things; Denzin and Lincoln (2005) make the point that qualitative research is an approach which does not have a ‘distinct set of methods or practices that are entirely its own’ and that qualitative researchers may draw on a range of different approaches, including phenomenology.

Statistics, tables and graphs are more usually associated with a quantitative approach to research, but they are also useful to qualitative researchers and I have used them in this thesis when dealing with, for example data from respondents where statistics are useful in enabling the reader to understand a point more readily. It is a question of making a distinction between methodology, the perspective taken and the methods that are most appropriate to illuminate findings from data. However, although tables, graphs and other quantitative tools are useful and necessary for displaying and interpreting certain kinds of data, even within a qualitative research design, a fully quantitative approach does not enable us to illuminate the perspectives of individual people.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) say that the task of qualitative research is to interpret various phenomena, in terms of the meanings, which individuals bring to them. My research is an attempt to interpret the phenomenon of challenging behaviour in terms of the perceptions of a group of secondary school teachers working in a secondary school, which took part in the BIP programme, and where challenging behaviour was acknowledged as a daily reality and reducing exclusion was a constant imperative.

## 9. Organisation of the Thesis

The thesis is organised in two parts. Part One contains chapters one to four. Chapter one is the introduction, which sets out to explain the impetus for the research. Chapter two explains in more detail the educational policy context of the research, including the impact of the 1988 Education Reform Act and the apparent dichotomy between that and the 1980 Education Act which was consequent upon the 1978 Warnock Report and introduced the concept of integration into mainstream schools for pupils with special educational needs. Chapter three looks in detail at challenging behaviour, what is it and how do we define it and respond to it? Chapter four describes the methodology underpinning the research and the methods used to conduct it.

Part two of the research provides an analysis of the research data and contains chapters five to eight. Chapter five looks at teacher perceptions on what I have called ‘the challenge of inclusion’ . Chapter six looks at teacher perspectives on challenging behaviour. These two chapters illuminate some of the apparent dichotomies in education, which are referred to in Part one of the thesis but from the perspectives of a particular group of secondary school teachers. Chapter seven looks at the emergence of teacher resilience in relation to challenging behaviour as a finding of the research and chapter eight is a conclusion of the findings.

## Chapter Two

### The Cultural Context of Educational Policy

#### 1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to contextualise the research through an examination of the educational policies of the last thirty years. These policies have determined the culture in which schooling takes place in England and have shaped the way in which education is experienced by both pupils and teachers.

In the context of my research, the most significant of these policies are those which are enshrined in the Education Reform Act of 1988. However, the act does not exist in a vacuum and since its implementation there has been a plethora of other policies which Ball (2008) refers to as policy overload. In 1997, after eighteen years of Conservative government Tony Blair's 'New Labour' government was elected. During the pre-election speech in 1996 the now famous mantra, 'education, education, education' was heard for the first time. The Labour Party manifesto for the 1997 election campaign stated quite unequivocally that, 'Some things the Conservatives got right. We will not change them.' Even though the new government proposed not to make significant changes to educational policy, a deluge of educational initiatives appeared. At the 1998 Labour Party Conference forty-seven education related policies and initiatives were announced, but the requirements of the 1988 Education Reform Act remained as they had been under the Conservatives.

An important part of the rationale for this research is the apparent dichotomy in education which stems from the possible tensions created between what has come to be described as the 'standards agenda' and the imperative for schools to be more inclusive institutions. Ainscow, Booth & Dyson (2006) suggest that there may be inherent problems with this and that the 'standards agenda' and the requirement to be inclusive, far from being complementary, may actually be competing agendas,

“Since Schools are held to account for the attainment of their students and are required to make themselves attractive to families who are most able to exercise choice of school for their children, low attaining students, students who demand high levels of attention and resource and students who are seen

not to conform to school and classroom behavioural norms become unattractive to many schools”. (Ainscow, Booth & Dyson 2006)

This chapter seeks to explore this apparent dichotomy. Is there a tension between the ‘standards agenda’ and inclusive practice in our schools? If there is, then have the educational policies of the last three decades created or contributed to this dichotomy? How does the phenomenon of challenging behaviour fit into this scenario? Dyson, Gallannaugh & Millward (2003) acknowledge that schools can find it difficult to implement an inclusive agenda within the context of constantly raising academic standards. However, in their view, there are many schools that are committed to doing this, but they suggest that the policy context in which these schools are required to operate does not make it easy for them,

“It is, we suggest, highly unlikely that governments will entirely abandon the standards-based reforms to which they have committed themselves in recent years – even if such an outcome were desirable. It is probable, therefore, that the development of more inclusive practices will have to be undertaken within a somewhat hostile policy environment for the foreseeable future.” (Dyson, Gallannaugh & Millward 2003 pg. 242)

## 2. The Curriculum – A Historical Perspective

Prior to the introduction of the national curriculum, which was one of the fundamental planks of the Education Reform Act 1988; teachers had control over the curriculum. In the secondary schools, their control was constrained to a certain extent by the examination syllabus, but generally, this only applied to those teaching more able pupils who were taking GCE (General Certificate of Education) examinations. There was more flexibility with the CSE (Certificate of Secondary Education) examinations, which were generally taken by the less academic pupils, and the mode three CSE could be designed by the teachers themselves.

These constraints did not apply in the special schools, where the teachers traditionally determined the curriculum and pupils seldom sat for examinations. In the 1960’s, 70’s and early 80’s there was a definite trend towards making the curriculum for pupils in special schools different from that of the mainstream. Writers such as Tansley and Gulliford (1960), Segal (1963), Ainscow and Tweddle (1979), Brennan (1979), Wilson (1981) and Devereux (1982) all promoted different approaches to curriculum development for pupils with learning difficulties which were all predominantly needs-led. The idea of a national curriculum to be delivered to everyone conflicts with the previous, needs-led philosophy of educationalists

such as Brennan (1979). Brennan (1979) made an important distinction between equality and equity. He argued that equality meant treating people in the same way, whereas equity involved treating them according to their needs, on the basis that individual needs differ. In terms of educational provision, Brennan's idea sanctioned different provision and, in particular, different curricular provision for those with special educational needs.

There had been a compulsory curriculum in England since 1903, but it was repealed by Baldwin's Conservative government and the decision was a political one. According to Brooks (2002), it was widely believed at the time that Lord Eustace Percy, President of the Board of Trade in Baldwin's government (1924-1929) was trying to strengthen the position of the Conservatives because he believed the Labour Party would use the curriculum to disseminate socialist ideas. When he withdrew government support for the compulsory curriculum in elementary schools the Morning Post greeted the decision with enthusiasm,

“...wisely leaving the framing of the course of instruction in the elementary schools to Local Authorities and to teachers.” (The Morning Post May 1926)

The next major piece of educational legislation to affect the curriculum was the Education Act of 1944, which made decisions about curriculum content and teaching methods the responsibility of the local education authority. The only stipulation in this act was that the curriculum had to be suitable to the age, aptitude and ability of the pupils. According to Helsby (2000), in practice, this responsibility was left to the discretion of head teachers and their staff. In this way the tradition was perpetuated that the curriculum was the responsibility of the teacher,

“When Sir David Eccles, the then Minister of Education, referred in March 1960 to the ‘secret garden of the curriculum’ (Hansard 1960), he was coining a phrase that came to symbolise the freedom accorded to school teachers in England and Wales to control what they taught and how they taught it.” (McCulloch 2000 pg.26)

The Schools Council for England and Wales operated from 1964 until 1982, when Sir Keith Joseph, the then Secretary of State for Education abolished it. It was a potentially powerful institution through which curriculum development could be pursued. Opinions about the effectiveness of the Schools Council are divided. Dunford (1999) said that the Schools Council was progressive and child centred and that the governing body was determined to

protect professional autonomy. Parsons (1999) said that the Schools Council suffered from ‘union politicking’ and failed to make a credible proposal for a national curriculum.

By the time the Schools Council was abolished in 1982 there was already disquiet in political circles about the wisdom of allowing teachers to determine the curriculum. Some of the concern stemmed from experiments such as those undertaken by the staff at William Tyndale School where the teachers largely abandoned traditional teaching methods,

“What we have to realise, however is that the William Tyndale story is not just a matter of a go-go head who puts up the backs of parents because the children no longer do sums and tables - a style of argument which is wearily familiar to every primary head who does not actually make his children wear dunces caps. What Ellis, Hadow and the others were trying to do was to run an establishment which directly confronted a whole range of unwritten assumptions about what a school ought to be like, and which, ultimately, might not have been a school, in the sense that most of us would recognise that term at all.” (Gerald Haigh in the Times Educational Supplement 22nd October 1976)

The lack of trust in teachers to determine the curriculum played an important part in the decision of the Conservative government to bring in the 1988 Education Reform Act. The subsequent culture of accountability and blame in education has its roots in this lack of trust.

### 3. Equality of Opportunity – The Imperative to be Inclusive

It was the publication of the Warnock Report (DES 1978) which can be seen as a pivotal moment for the concept of inclusion in education. Overall the report called for pupils with a range of disabilities to be defined in terms of their educational needs rather than in terms of the category into which they had been placed, categories with descriptions which are unacceptable thirty years later, such as ‘educationally sub-normal’ (ESN) and ‘maladjusted’. The report also called for pupils with disabilities to be given the opportunity to be educated in a mainstream school and not automatically sent to a special school. However the report also states, “...we are entirely convinced that special schools will continue to be needed, particularly for the following three groups of children: ... (ii) those with severe emotional or behavioural disorders who have very great difficulty in forming relationships with others or whose behaviour is so extreme or unpredictable that it causes severe disruption in an ordinary school or inhibits the educational progress of other children”. (pg. 96).

The Warnock Report (DES 1978) stated that behaviour could be contextual and that for this reason the term ‘maladjusted’ could be a useful one. The understanding that behaviour can sometimes only be understood within the context in which it occurs showed that in the Warnock Report there was a genuine understanding that different kinds of provision would still be needed,

“However, although there is a good case for referring to children as having emotional or behavioural disorders, we think that the term maladjusted also remains a serviceable form of description and should be retained. Indeed, we consider that the implication of this term (namely that behaviour can sometimes be meaningfully considered only in relation to the circumstances in which it occurs) is an advantage rather than a disadvantage. This consideration in our opinion outweighs the possible harm of stigmatization.”  
(Warnock Report 1978 pg. 44)

In spite of this, the report was widely interpreted as a call for an end to segregated schooling for children who, prior to the publication of the report would have been termed ‘handicapped’. As a consequence of the report and the education acts which followed it many special schools were closed, including those catering for children with severe behavioural problems. The universal term, ‘special educational need’ with which we are now all so familiar was itself born out of the Warnock Report. The post Warnock shift towards integration into mainstream schooling for pupils with disabilities was not simply an educational phenomenon; it reflected changing attitudes in society and a shift towards more equality of opportunity generally.

The concept of integration paved the way for inclusion, but was also fundamentally different from the concept of inclusion. Integration gave pupils an opportunity to ‘fit into’ a mainstream school. Inclusion makes it an imperative to make whatever changes may be necessary to enable all pupils, irrespective of any difficulties or disabilities, which they may have, to be included within the same educational institutions. This is enshrined in legislation, firstly in the 1996 Education Act, which required local authorities to have regard to the guidance on the statutory framework for inclusion and latterly in the revised Disability Discrimination Act of 2005, which gives people with disabilities specific rights with regard to equality of educational opportunity.



Ideas, such as equality of opportunity have become so much a part of our post-modern culture that it would be almost impossible to argue against these ideas with any credibility. It is a 'taken for granted assumption' that equality of opportunity is 'a good thing'. Mount (2004) says that although the impact of equality of opportunity is questionable, no one can deny its potency as a political idea,

“What has changed emphatically and irredeemably is the universal acceptance of the principle of equal opportunity. As a slogan, an ideology, a political programme, equality of opportunity is now supreme.” (Mount 2004 pg. 55)

Changing attitudes have brought legislation, which makes it a requirement to include everyone within the same educational institutions. Furthermore the imperative to include applies to everyone, not just those with special educational needs, but also those who may have been historically marginalised,

“International organisations and national governments have committed themselves to the inclusive development of education, at least at the level of rhetoric....In England, this has taken the form of a subscription to the principles of the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) and the promulgation of a range of documents to schools.....,which imply not only that schools should educate increasing numbers of students with disabilities, but that they should concern themselves with increasing the participation and broad educational achievements of all groups of learners who have been historically marginalised.” (Ainscow, Booth & Dyson 2006 pg. 295)

Those who have historically been marginalised include those from the lower socio-economic groups, ethnic minority groups, the disabled and those with 'challenging behaviour' who were previously termed 'the maladjusted' and who could not adjust to the requirements either of conventional schooling or even of society as a whole. The way in which challenging behaviour has historically been 'managed' differs from how it is currently 'managed' chiefly because of the policy of inclusion.

There have always been a number of young people with challenging or anti-social behaviour, but prior to the 1980 Education Act there was no requirement for them to be taught in ordinary schools. Therefore, only those teachers who chose to work with pupils who had been termed 'maladjusted' were required to manage challenging behaviour. The legislation surrounding inclusion requires that teachers make their institutions inclusive, so that

everyone can be accommodated irrespective of any disability or problem, which they may have.

The problem with disability, challenging behaviour and equality of opportunity is essentially one of perception. How do we, as a society, perceive the disabled? Since April 2008 I have worked as an independent educational consultant and in that role I have been involved in helping schools to develop their Disability Equality Schemes, which all schools have been required to have since 2007. I have not been greatly surprised to find that most schools still think of disability in terms of sensory or physical disabilities or perhaps learning difficulties, but there can be a reluctance to see behavioural difficulties in terms of a disability. This has implications for the inclusion of pupils with behaviour that is perceived as challenging. How far should a school go to accommodate pupils with behaviour that many people regard as 'anti-social' and requiring punitive strategies, not accommodation?

In terms of behavioural difficulties there is still what can only be described as a 'grey area' in terms of perception and recognition. Are children with challenging behaviour disabled? If they have a statement of special educational needs for emotional and behavioural difficulties then unquestionably they are classified as having a disability. However, that does not make this particular type of disability easy to understand for the majority of teachers or easy to manage, which can pose problems when these pupils are included into mainstream schools. Mary Warnock recognised this thirty years ago when she called for the term 'maladjusted' to be retained, but the ferocity of the equal opportunities lobby has, in reality, meant that young people whose disability, by its very nature, can have a detrimental effect on the educational experience of other pupils, now have a right to be included within the mainstream education system. The responsibility for managing the situations that their challenging behaviour will inevitably create now rests with the teachers.

An example of the supposed difficulties faced by teachers in including pupils with special educational needs can be found in an article published on the BBC News website on 16th May 2006 under the heading School Inclusion 'can be abuse'. ([news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/4774407.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/4774407.stm)). This was a comment on a report written by John MacBeath of Cambridge University for the National Union of Teachers. Basically the NUT was questioning the Government's policy on inclusion. The Government, in the form of Schools Minister Lord Adonis, vigorously defended its policy. The subtle undertones in

the news report were that, although no teachers were advocating against inclusion as a principle, in practice it was extremely difficult to implement and sometimes it was implemented to the detriment of other pupils.

Here there are echoes of Araujo (2005), using the term ‘disruptive’, applying to those with challenging behaviour or ‘disrupted’, the effect their behaviour has on the education of the other pupils. According to the BBC in MacBeath’s report staff spoke of the ‘awful realities’ of the lives of some young people, which were ‘beyond imagination’. This reinforces the popular perception of disruptive pupils from hapless homes disrupting the education of the more deserving and the perception of the teachers as the ‘victims’ of these pupils,

“...head teachers must have the right to exclude pupils who are violent or persistently disruptive. Individual pupils cannot be allowed to disrupt classes, to the detriment of teachers in the school and the education of their fellow pupils”. (DFES, 2001 pg. 26)

If behaviour is contextual then it can be influenced, ameliorated or even controlled through the creation of an appropriate context, by, for example the provision of a suitable curriculum combined with different approaches used by teachers skilled in behaviour management. However, the ‘one size fits all’ philosophy of the national curriculum, masquerading as ‘entitlement’ and ‘equality of opportunity’ actually ignores these important factors, which are imperative when considering the management of certain kinds of behaviour. This has contributed to the ‘tension’ between the ‘standards agenda’ and the imperative to include everyone.

Students who cannot, or will not, make a positive contribution to the requirement for a school to continuously raise its standards of attainment and who divert attention from this imperative because they are needy, time consuming and often simply disruptive to the learning of others present a very uncomfortable dilemma for teachers. Is this the dilemma that is sometimes played out in the exclusion figures and a possible reason why pupils with special educational needs are disproportionately represented in these figures (The Lamb Inquiry 2009)?

#### 4. The 'Blame Culture' in Education

Changes in education over the last thirty years, which began with the way in which the Warnock Report (1978) was interpreted and continued with the implementation of the 1988 Education Reform Act, have placed increasing numbers of pupils in mainstream school classrooms who would not previously have been there. In terms of a 'blame culture', the emphasis shifted away from the model of a deficit pupil, who was traditionally seen as having a problem or difficulty which prevented them from being educated with their peers, to the potential for the model of the deficit teacher who, as Clarke (1991) explained, now had responsibility to meet a complex range of needs within the mainstream context,

“The impact of this legislation taken as a whole is clear. The notion that there is a definable group of pupils who have special educational needs in the mainstream context is likely to be less than helpful. Schools will not be able to make separate provision in curricular terms for particular groups of pupils. They will not be able to emphasise one area of the curriculum at the expense of another because the concepts of breadth and balance are to be applied to all. The entitlement curriculum will become a reality and the job which teachers will face in classrooms is to make that curriculum accessible to all and to take pupils on from where they ought to be on their individual journey through the National Curriculum.” (Clarke 1991 pg. 109)

Gold, Bowe and Ball (1993) wrote about the subtle dichotomy, which began to emerge,

“It may equally well be that the National Curriculum becomes a set of constraints on good special educational needs practice which makes it increasingly difficult to achieve ‘sensitivity to individual needs.’ Too much may be expected of teachers given current levels of, or even reducing levels of, resources and support.” (Gold, Bowe & Ball 1993 pg.56)

With the term ‘Too much may be expected of teachers...’ Gold, Bowe and Ball (1993) appear to be indicating that teachers could be faced with increasingly complex situations in the classroom, placing difficult and exacting demands upon them. Gold, Ball & Bowe (1993) were referring to pupils classified as having special educational needs. However, in terms of inclusion the requirement for all pupils to be in mainstream school does not just apply to those with identified special educational needs, but can be applied equally to the demands placed upon teachers to meet the needs of pupils, who (prior to inclusion) were often marginalised in education (Garner 1999 and Ball 2008) and who may or may not have identifiable special educational needs.

In addition to the national curriculum and teacher accountability, the Education Reform Act 1988 also introduced the idea of a market economy in education. A market led education service meant that schools continued to have a requirement to be inclusive but also had to be attractive to largely middle class parents, who tended to exercise their choice options more rigorously (Tomlinson 2000).

The national curriculum was an entitlement curriculum for all, but over which teachers had no control, this led to a decline in the professional autonomy of teachers. Ainscow (1991) suggested that the inability of teachers to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs within the constraints of the national curriculum was not about ‘blaming teachers’. He wrote at length about the characteristics of ‘effective schools’ and he appeared to be suggesting that teachers would only be effective if they worked in effective schools, which had implications for teacher agency. Ball (2008) points out that the cumulative effect of these changes has had a radical impact on how teachers are perceived,

“Inside classrooms teachers are caught between the imperatives of prescription and the disciplines of performance. Their practice is both ‘steered’ and ‘rowed’. It is still the case that teachers are not trusted.” (Ball 2008 pg. 150)

In the late 1990s the concept of ‘school effectiveness’ changed and became ‘school improvement’. Schools were now required to be seen to be continually improving against criteria prescribed by the government and in relation to the ‘standards agenda’. The assumption at the heart of a prescribed, entitlement curriculum is that all pupils will learn things to the required standard, if they are properly taught. The requirement for accountability and continual improvement in education has led inexorably to a ‘blame culture’ when, for whatever reason this does not happen.

In terms of pupils with special educational needs, the emphasis appears to have shifted from the model of a deficit pupil, who required a modified curriculum, to a deficit teacher who ought to be able to deliver the same curriculum to everyone. Ball (2008) explains two notions or concepts that were at work in the design and implementation of the Education Reform Act 1988. The first was that education was to blame for at least some of the country’s economic and industrial difficulties because the needs of industry were not being well served

by the education system. The second was that progressive ideas, such as those epitomised by the William Tyndale experiment, were eroding traditional and national culture. Together these ideas led to the conclusion that teachers could not be trusted, particularly with the curriculum,

“...policy and public discourses about ‘untrustworthy teachers’ creates the basis for the assertion of more accountability and more control over their certification and performance and legitimates the withdrawal of aspects of their professional autonomies.” (Ball 2008 pg.111)

Teachers must teach that which is prescribed and learners must learn it and be assessed to determine how well they have learned it. The Office for Standards in Education continues to set very strict criteria for ensuring that this happens. Schools that successfully conform to these criteria are set targets to make them even better. Schools that cannot, run the risk of being ‘named and shamed’,

“The argument, deployed vigorously by ministers and the Chief Inspector of Schools, Chris Woodhead (1996), is that if good practice, and correspondingly good results, can be found in some difficult areas then it can appear in all. The ‘blame’ is mostly placed with local providers. ‘The residents of disadvantaged urban areas covered by this survey are poorly served by the education system’ (OFSTED, 1993a; 6).” (Parsons 1999 p38)

Although teachers work in a culture where they are accountable and open to ‘blame’ if they fail to meet the educational targets that they are required to meet, there is a concomitant culture of pupil blame with regard to pupils with what is perceived as challenging behaviour. There has been a tendency (Parsons 1999 and 2005) to demonise excluded pupils and to blame pupils with poor behaviour for disrupting the learning of others. In this way, by means of their own, unacceptable behaviour they disenfranchise themselves and so no longer deserve to be educated. By convincing ourselves that excluded pupils are undeserving, we can sanction exclusion. In this we see that the depiction of the ‘under classes’ as the ‘undeserving poor’ (Parsons 1999) is played out.

According to Mount (2004) the groups within society from which the young people with behavioural difficulties are seen to come are increasingly referred to as the ‘underclass’ and this perpetuates the idea of the ‘undeserving’, socially and educationally,

“The ‘underclass’, unhelpful as a sociological category, is helpful as a political myth and covers the mass of undeserving poor”. (Parsons 1999 pg. 167)

This shifts the blame from the teachers to the pupils and the concept of inclusion is subtly changed from an inalienable right into something that must be earned or deserved. This is seen in the writing of Corbett (2001), according to whom a good inclusive school is one which understands which ‘challenges’ it is able to meet and does not try to deal with ‘problems’ with which it cannot cope. This negates the concept of inclusion as a right,

“Those pupils or students who challenge the system with their disruptive and disaffected behaviour and attitudes threaten inclusive values.” (Corbett 2001 pg.69)

What is implicit in what Corbett (2001) is saying is this; that whilst those with certain kinds of special educational needs, probably physical or sensory disabilities who will not disrupt the learning of others are deserving of inclusion, those who may disrupt the learning of others are not. These pupils are likely to be those who display behaviour perceived as challenging. They may or may not have a statement of special educational needs. Some of them may be from groups in society that have traditionally been marginalised in education, but because they disrupt the education of others, they run the risk of being disenfranchised from education through exclusion. Through this process they are ‘blamed’ and held to account for their failings, they are also further marginalised.

## 5. Social Class, Educational Policy and the Problem of Inclusion

As previously stated in chapter one, this research is predominantly about English education and it is impossible to write about English education, even in the twenty first century, without discussing social class and how it permeates educational culture and policy. The concept of the neighbourhood comprehensive, even if it was never completely fulfilled, was that all localities would have schools serving them which catered for pupils of all abilities from that particular neighbourhood. These schools were meant to do away with the perceived inequalities of the old system of grammar, secondary modern and technical schools, which had divided children at eleven into those who were capable of achieving academically and those who were not.

The principle behind the comprehensive school was that it would end inequality in education. Children would no longer be tested at eleven years and sent to the grammar school for an academic education if they passed or sent to the secondary modern school for a more practical education if they failed. The grammar school route could lead to a place at university, but the secondary modern schools had no sixth forms and sometimes offered either inferior qualifications or none at all. A pupil sent to a secondary modern school at the age of eleven had already had a number of what we would today call ‘career opportunities’ closed off to them forever.

The Education Reform Act of 1988 heralded the arrival of open enrolment and strengthened the concept of parental choice in education, which had been enshrined in previous Education Acts. The idea of the neighbourhood school disappeared almost entirely, with children travelling considerable distances to go to schools that were perceived as more successful. Ball (2008) argues that this system favoured the middle classes. With the introduction of comprehensive education schools theoretically became more egalitarian. Tomlinson (2000) suggests that middle class parents became concerned that their children might be supplanted by ‘bright working class children’ and Ball (2008) suggests that middle class parents were able to exploit parental choice to manipulate the education system to the advantage of their own children,

“There is also a considerable body of evidence that choice systems in themselves promote inequality in as much as ‘choice policies’ create social spaces within which class strategies and ‘opportunistic behaviours’ can flourish and within which the middle classes can use their social and cultural skills and capitals advantages to good effect.” (Ball 2008 pg. 132/133)

Tomlinson (2000) argues that the middle classes have increasingly viewed education as a way of preserving and promoting opportunities for their children, rather than as a means of spreading equality,

“A study of the perceived needs of the middle classes will probably help to explain educational exclusion better than any study of the characteristics of the excluded.” (Tomlinson 2000 pg. 241)

The traditional bourgeois middle classes based their status on ownership of capital. In England, for example, an important step towards equality was the abolition of the requirement to own property in order to be entitled to vote, with the passing of the Parliamentary Reform Act of 1867. This act enabled urban working class men to vote, a right



which was not extended to the countryside until the Reform Act of 1884. The 1884 act led to universal male suffrage. Tomlinson (2000) suggests that the ‘new’ middle classes emerging in the twentieth century whose social class was not defined entirely by property ownership, decided to embrace education as the route to the ‘good life’ for their children and said that most studies of this emerging middle class,

“....point to the part played by education and qualifications in the emergence of the property-less Middle Class, and explains the commitment of this group to the education of their children.” (Tomlinson 2000 pg. 241)

One way of looking at this situation is that the middle classes, seeing their educational advantage being eroded by the demise of the grammar schools decided to ensure that this would not happen by making sure that the education system perpetuated middle class values. It could be argued therefore, that children who meet middle class expectations in terms of behaviour and attainment are welcomed as new recruits to the middle classes and are, in turn, evidence of the success of ‘equality of opportunity’. However Thacker, Strudwick and Babbedge (2002) point out that a consequence of this is that some pupils may be resentful and may not conform, running the risk of being labelled as exhibiting ‘challenging behaviour,’

“Children who do not meet middle-class expectations may be labelled as deviant. Another way of looking at stropky working-class boys is to ask whether they are trying to stop the systematic assault on their dignity which constitutes much of the secondary school experience...” (Thacker, Strudwick and Babbedge 2002 pg. 18)

Educational reformers hoped that the comprehensive schools, which would cater for pupils of all abilities, would end discrimination and enhance opportunities for all and particularly those in the lower socio-economic groups. It is now widely accepted that these schools have not achieved all that the reformers had hoped. At the Labour Party Conference in 2002 both Estelle Morris, the then Secretary of State for Education and herself a former teacher and Tony Blair each described Britain as being in a ‘post-comprehensive era’. Estelle Morris voiced her disappointment in the comprehensive system in her speech to the conference,

“It hasn’t achieved all that we campaigned for. I thought it would break the link between poverty and achievement. It hasn’t. I hoped it would end the massive under achievement of ethnic minorities. It hasn’t”. (Blackpool Conference, 2nd October 2002)

In 1990 John Major, the then Conservative Prime Minister said that it was his intention to turn Britain into a ‘classless society’. One could argue that it is significant that at the beginning of the last decade of the twentieth century he thought it necessary to mention class at all. However Garner (1999) argues that overall attitudes towards certain sections of society have remained fundamentally unchanged in the last hundred years or so, particularly in terms of how society as a whole views those from the lower socio-economic groups or less privileged minorities.

It is assumed by many that the old class distinctions which defined British life have been swept away by modern ideas, such as equality of opportunity. However, Mount (2004) argues that in spite of equality of opportunity old class distinctions have simply been replaced by new ones. Ball (2008) argues that class differences and inequalities are firmly entrenched in the English education system,

“However, despite the undeniable and very basic reforms in the way in which education is governed, structured and organised it is still possible to see the contemporary traces, and current re-emergence of social patterns and organisational forms and preoccupations within educational policy that have been inherent in the English education system since the beginning of the 19th century” (Ball 2008 pg. 195)

The call for an end to segregation for those with special educational needs came later than the call for an end to segregated schooling for all pupils. Just as at the beginning of the twenty first century equality of opportunity is a ‘taken for granted assumption’, at the beginning of the twentieth century segregated schooling was a ‘taken for granted assumption’. Tomlinson (2000) explains that education in England was traditionally organised along lines of social class, with public schools for the upper classes, grammar schools for the middle classes and elementary schools for the rest. However, between the 1920s and the 1970s there was a new shift in society towards equality of opportunity.

From within the terms of our current culture of equality and inclusion it is difficult to argue that any young person should be denied access to the same educational opportunities as the majority of others on any grounds and least of all on grounds of their social class. In spite of this there is evidence, in the exclusion figures, that significant numbers of young people are being denied access to the same education as their peers, just as they were in the days of the

Industrial Schools. How does this circumstance sit with equality of opportunity? Do we simply justify it, as Parsons (2005) suggests by blaming the pupils? In this way, it is not the system being inequitable, rather it is the pupils themselves being undeserving.

The Education Reform Act of 1988 was a fundamental turning point in educational reform. Ball (2008) identified six key elements of this Act,

“establishment of a ‘national’ curriculum that would entrench traditional subjects and British cultural heritage over and against ‘misguided relativism’ and multiculturalism;

suspicion of teacher professionalism and the ‘politics’ of teachers and the need for systems of control and accountability;

concomitant press for forms of ‘teacher-proof’ evaluation and assessment, alongside a distrust of public examinations, as a way of identifying ‘poor’ schools and ‘failing’ teachers as well as providing parents with ‘market information’;

offering parents ‘choice’, that is, the right to express a preference, among state schools submitted to the disciplines of the market;

devolution of control over budgets from LEAs to schools;

enhancement of the roles and responsibilities of both governors and head teachers through Local Management of Schools (LMS)” (Ball 2008 pg. 80)

One of the ways in which traditional middle class values have been promoted is through the implementation of the 1988 Education Reform Act. The national curriculum was introduced as an entitlement curriculum to be delivered to all, but whose curriculum is it? Whose culture was it intended to promulgate and upon whose values was it originally based? According to Ball (2008) it was a ‘fantasy curriculum’ based on “Victorian myths about the inventions of ethnic Englishness and an assertion of tradition...” (pg.83). Understanding the values which underpinned the national curriculum at its inception are important if we are to understand the various criticisms which have been levelled at it since and which suggest that it does not meet the needs of either those with special educational needs (Slee 1998) or pupils from ethnic minorities (Parsons 1999 and Searle 1996),

“To make them (the teachers) subject to ‘orders’ from a command curriculum is to force on to them a system of formulaic and dead knowledge being passed on by a teacher who is a reluctant servant of government to a

pupil who may or may not be a willing receptacle. This is the distortion of the education process which lies at the centre of the National Curriculum and it is the children and young people of the inner city, particularly those from the black communities, who are the first to rebel against it - sometimes with the consequence of the pupil's final removal from his or her school." (Searle 1996 pg. 43)

The introduction of the publication of examination league tables in 1992 meant that schools were under even greater pressure to be academically successful and attractive to parents and generally that meant middle class parents. The fundamental way that most secondary schools were obliged to do this was by rigorously enforcing the wearing of uniform and consistently achieving higher and higher examination rates. This is basically the old grammar school model, which is particularly attractive to middle class parents, many of whom either went to grammar schools or had parents who did.

What is irrefutable is the evidence which suggests that the young people who are being excluded are almost exclusively drawn from the least affluent, least privileged sections of our society. Those people referred to by some sections of the media as the 'underclass'. It is also true that large numbers of ethnic minority children (Searle 1996) and children with special educational needs (Slee 1998, Hayden 2000 and Lamb 2009) are also being excluded. There is no evidence to suggest that the children of the middle classes are being excluded in large numbers.

'Failing School Failing City' by Martin Johnson (1999) is a controversial book. Johnson is not an academic and his book is not based on research. He had been a teacher in inner city schools for many years. He was President of the NASUWT in 2000. He paints an uncompromisingly grim picture of education in what many people would refer to, as 'sink schools' and OFSTED would probably call 'failing schools'. He did not see the national curriculum in terms of an entitlement which offers equality of opportunity for all,

"I remain convinced that the introduction of the National Curriculum has had an almost wholly negative influence on Working Class achievement." (Johnson 1999 pg.142).

According to Ball (2008) the education service in England contains many of the same inequalities as it did one hundred years ago. The idea that the education service offers equality of opportunity is therefore belied by the idea that it is actually a complex exercise in social

engineering which favours the classes who are able to use the system to the advantage of their children and the possible detriment of others. One hundred years ago, there was no requirement to be inclusive and appalling inequalities were an accepted fact. The popular concept of equality simply did not exist for women, for ethnic minorities, for the disabled or for those from the lower socio-economic groups. However, now these imperatives do exist and yet, according to Ball (2008) and evidenced by the exclusion figures, the education service does not appear to provide access to equality of opportunity in the way that many people probably assume that it does.

Is it worth considering that perhaps Brennan (1979) was right when he advocated equity, rather than equality? Perhaps expecting everyone to operate within the same, prescribed parameters from an early age (and these are parameters which arguably already favour certain classes and groups within society, notably the middle classes) is not the best way of ensuring that everyone reaches their full potential?

In retrospect and in terms of the consequences of this for our society as a whole perhaps it is worth considering something said by Sir Alec Clegg over thirty years ago. Sir Alec Clegg was the Chief Education Officer for the West Riding of Yorkshire and a passionate advocate of professional autonomy for teachers. In the same edition of the Times Educational Supplement in 1976 which carried the article about William Tyndale School he said this,

“But the aim must be as the \*Act puts it, to educate each child according to his age, ability and aptitude. The principle behind this is not education at the behest of the politicians or the unions, but as Carlyle put it, that each child should become all that he was created capable of being.....So is education to respond to what experienced educationalists like Holmes and Morrell said to what thinkers like Carlyle, Ruskin and Einstein have told us, or are we to teach solely what the building up of the gross national product demands and devil take the hindmost? If we do the latter the hindmost will be the children who can least cope with the common core, and we shall need a plentiful supply of plastic bullets to control them.” (Sir Alec Clegg in the Times Educational Supplement 22nd October 1976)

\*The 1944 Education Act

Twenty years after the implementation of the Education Reform Act in 1988 and in the face of ‘sustainable’ levels of permanent exclusion, increasing concerns about social exclusion, the

rise in anti-social behaviour (particularly among the young) and the emergence of an 'underclass' (Mount 2004) the words of Sir Alec Clegg have an uncomfortable resonance.

## Chapter Three

### What is Challenging Behaviour?

#### 1. Introduction

Challenging behaviour is a hugely contested and problematic term. A definition of what constitutes challenging behaviour depends upon the context in which it occurs and on how it is perceived. In attempting to understand why some behaviours are classified as ‘challenging’ it is important also to have an understanding of the context in which the behaviour occurs and what the behavioural expectations are within that context. In the context of this research that means understanding schools and how they work and what behavioural expectations they have. This chapter looks at the context of challenging behaviour in schools.

Some types of behaviour will challenge some teachers in a way that they do not challenge others. For example, some teachers will be able to manage or tolerate levels of disruption to their lessons, which others cannot. Some behaviours are regarded as ‘good’ in some contexts but ‘bad’ in others. For example, a child who runs enthusiastically around the running track on sports day, never pausing for breath, will be regarded, in this context as having done well and is likely to be rewarded. If the same child exhibits the same behaviour in the corridor of the school then they are likely to be punished for it. It is not necessarily the behaviour that challenges, rather the circumstances in which the behaviour happens which make it challenging and that again depends on how the behaviour is perceived within that context or by individuals within that context. One teacher might be amused by the athlete who runs just as fast in the corridor as they do on the running track and deal with them in a less punitive way than another teacher, who may be appalled by the same behaviour.

Common examples of challenging behaviour in schools include ‘low level disruption’ whereby lessons are constantly disrupted, for example, by pupils continually talking and being inattentive, they may throw paper or other objects across the room or insist on using mobile ‘phones in the lesson. All of these things result in disrupted learning. Other examples of challenging behaviour include the refusal to wear uniform or comply with school rules or regulations.

More serious examples of challenging behaviour can involve violence or the threat of violence or bringing drugs or weapons into school. From the point of view of the teacher and depending on the regime of the school, the more serious incidences may be paradoxically easier to manage, on the basis that a serious incident may provoke an immediate response, for example a temporary or even a permanent exclusion. At a simplistic level this makes the management of the situation easier for the teacher because it removes the problem, either temporarily or permanently.

However persistent, low level disruption has been reported as the most serious cause of teacher stress (Rogers 2004). Low-level disruption can rumble on incessantly and can become much more of a problem for individual teachers because it is more problematic to deal with than an isolated serious incident. This chapter looks at how the education service has historically responded to challenging behaviour and asks if our responses have changed over time and if so, why? The chapter also discusses the perceived causes of challenging behaviour and how this may influence how education is delivered. The chapter also looks at whether the way in which education is delivered may in fact contribute to the instances of challenging behaviour in schools.

This purpose of this chapter is to address the notion of challenging behaviour in schools in England. What is challenging behaviour and how do we recognise it, define it, explain it and crucially, respond to it? What are the factors, social, emotional, cultural and political that may have influenced the way in which the education system in England has responded to challenging behaviour and what is the relationship between challenging behaviour, disruption, disaffection and exclusion from school?

This thesis seeks to explore what it is that is being challenged by indiscipline in schools in England. Is it the authority of the teacher? Children with challenging behaviour do not necessarily present as a challenge to all teachers or in all lessons. Is it the way in which education is delivered and do we need to probe deeper into the appropriateness of the education that is being offered and whether it is that which is being challenged, either directly or indirectly?



## 2. What is the Language of Challenging Behaviour?

How we talk about something says a lot about what we think about it and so the language used to describe challenging behaviour is important. When Rogers (2004) uses the term 'behaviour disorder', he appears to be describing a condition, 'behaviour disorder', the result of which is challenging behaviour. Is challenging behaviour always the manifestation of a behaviour disorder and if so what causes the behaviour disorder? Thirty years ago the Warnock Report (DES1978) used the term 'behaviour disorder' and did not use the term 'challenging behaviour' and it is difficult to pinpoint when the term 'challenging behaviour' first came into common usage in education, so synonymous has it become with disruption in the classroom. Children are frequently described in terms of their 'challenging behaviour', but not all of them are described in terms of having a 'behaviour disorder'.

The problem of definition persists and for this reason, this thesis seeks to problematise the term 'challenging behaviour'. Not only will a definition of what constitutes challenging behaviour depend largely on the context (Rogers 2004). It will also, crucially, depend upon the perceptions of the teachers who are confronted with the behaviour and the perceptions of the policy makers who create the legislation within which the teachers operate. Furthermore, if there are tensions between these two perceptions this in turn would add another layer of confusion and potential conflict.

Over the years, various attempts have been made to categorise challenging behaviour. For example, children who are described as having Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD, now often styled BESD or Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties) are usually assumed to have challenging behaviour in whatever context in which they are operating. Thacker, Strudwick and Babbedge (2002) refer to the Government Circular 23/89 (DES 1989) in which there is a definition of EBD, describing children with EBD as having set up 'barriers' between themselves and their learning environment, by displaying aggressive and inappropriate behaviour. However, if correctly identified these pupils are eligible for a statement of special educational needs, which will entitle them to additional support in the mainstream school or enable access to specialist provision. Children who are termed 'disaffected' may present with challenging behaviour in the context of school but not necessarily in another context, for example, on a work experience placement or indeed in the home.

Disaffection is more often associated with older students who may have become disillusioned with the process of schooling. One could therefore describe BESD as a condition that the child has and to which the school must respond and disaffection as a possible consequence of the schooling process. Reva Klein (1999) is a journalist. In her book 'Defying Disaffection', she quotes Professor Harry Daniels of Birmingham University's EBD Team,

“The term disaffection is fraught with difficulties. We’re seeing it being used more and more interchangeably with the term EBD. The fact is that they’re not the same. It’s possible to have a child with EBD who isn’t disaffected”.(Klein 1999 p. 25)

Klein quotes the deputy head of an EBD School in a London Borough who offers the opinion that a disaffected child can choose to behave differently in different contexts and that their disaffection is effectively locational and usually associated with school, whereas a child with emotional and behavioural difficulties is likely to behave in the same way irrespective of location.

Kinder (1995) identifies three main factors of disaffection: -

- Individual pathologies or personality traits.
- Family circumstances or values and/or social factors within the non-attenders communities.
- School factors often located in either the curriculum or the ethos and relationships encountered by the pupils.

Pupils termed 'disaffected' are not eligible for statements and according to Jones & Dockling (1992), the Education Act 1981 specifically excluded them from the requirement. Indeed, Long (2005) argues that disaffection may simply be a feature of adolescence for some pupils,

“It is not uncommon for some students, especially during the adolescent years, to become disaffected. This is a shorthand way both of saying they see little relevance to them of the curriculum they are expected to study and also

of challenging the rights of adults to control them now that they are ‘adults’ themselves”. (Long 2005 pg.22)

Parson’s (1999) refers to disaffection as an ‘umbrella’ term. He calls it a ‘generic concept’ used to describe pupils who display ‘challenging behaviour’ and he says that disaffection manifests itself in a variety of ways. Some pupils are aggressive and violent. These pupils are probably the most difficult to manage in school and the most likely to be excluded. Other pupils frequently truant, expressing their disaffection by simply not going to school. Disaffection is not a ‘disorder’, but it can be seen in terms of a particular response from the young person. Furthermore, disaffection is not exclusively an English problem,

“The problems of pupil indiscipline and disaffection facing schools are shared by all the societies of late modern western democracy. These are not small local difficulties, but part of the international experience, indeed the affluent, global youth experience” (Parsons 2005 pg.202).

This thesis is concerned with how the phenomenon of challenging behaviour is recognised and managed within the education system in England and so although it may be a global problem, what is relevant to this thesis is the way in which we respond to it within the education system in England.

One could argue that pupils with statements are seen in light of their ‘needs’, which may or may not engender tolerance and understanding. The term ‘challenging’ implies that some authority is being challenged. If the pupil ‘challenges’ because he or she has an identifiable ‘problem’, or better still a ‘label’ that justifies the issue of a statement of special educational needs and if there are perceived reasons or even excuses for the behaviour, then the responses to the behaviour may be more sympathetic. However pupils who are termed ‘disaffected’ are generally classified as being among the ‘undeserving’, both socially and educationally and as such as being outside the remit of the statementing process (Jones and Dockling 1992).

Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (EBD/BESD), is one of the ways in which the education system concisely ‘explains’ challenging behaviour. If it is possible to establish that a child has BESD, then within that umbrella term there could be many and various labels, which attempt to explain the child’s behaviour, for example, Attention Deficit

Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD) and Conduct Disorder (CD).

The language of challenged behaviour is therefore characterised to some extent by labels, but the responses to pupils with these labels are by no means universal. Some pupils with 'challenging behaviour' are classified as having special educational needs, but many, including those who are termed 'disaffected' are not. The language associated with challenging behaviour in education is not always helpful in assisting understanding of the phenomenon.

A child who displays challenging behaviour and who has a statement of special educational needs will generally be regarded by many as having a problem or difficulty, or even a disability, for which they need help, even though their behaviour may be extremely challenging. However, this is problematic because not all children with challenging behaviour get a statement of special educational needs. Schools are supposed to support pupils whose level of difficulty is not deemed severe enough to require a statement, or who fall outside the criteria for a statement. This support should come either from within their own resources through intervention at 'School Action' or with help from outside agencies, such as the educational psychologist at 'School Action Plus'. The criteria for interventions at these two stages are set out in the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice, which was revised in 2001. Many local authorities also have their own criteria for interventions at these stages and also statutory assessment, leading to the possibility of a child getting a statement of special educational needs. How these criteria are applied can vary, so that what constitutes behaviour that is seen to merit a statement in one school or indeed in one local authority may not in another. In this way, the allocation of statements and entitlement to provision becomes inextricably linked with questions of perception.

One could argue that a pupil with a statement of special educational needs, because they are deemed to have what amounts to a behavioural disorder, is more fortunate, in terms of their educational experience, because they have an entitlement to provision and are therefore more likely to be perceived as having a 'reason' for their behaviour. Beyond the normal entitlement to education for every child in England, the disaffected child, or the pupil with emotional and behavioural difficulties who has not qualified for a statement, apparently has neither an entitlement to specialist provision, nor an identifiable reason for their behaviour. This dilemma sets children with challenging behaviour apart from all other pupils and their

educational experience will be determined, largely by how their teachers perceive their behaviour. If they are perceived as being in need of help, they are likely to be supported. If they are perceived as violent, aggressive and difficult the reaction is likely to be more punitive. How they are perceived and therefore the response they get will depend, to a very large extent on the perceptions of their teachers.

### 3. Mad, Bad or Sad? Perceptions of Challenging Behaviour

Macleod (2006) described three approaches to what she called ‘young people in trouble’. These young people can be seen as passive victims of circumstance who are in need of help, in which case they are viewed as being ‘sad’. Alternatively they may be seen as individuals who are responsible for their own behaviour and who need to be punished if they transgress, in which case they may be described as ‘bad’. Thirdly, they may be seen as having a medical condition, which requires treatment, in which case they are ‘mad’. Macleod says that, “The co-existence of punitive and welfare approaches to working with the group of ..... ‘young people in trouble’ has long been recognised as a source of tension” (pg. 155).

In terms of education, those whom Macleod (2006) describes as ‘young people in trouble’ are frequently those who display challenging behaviour and Parsons (1999) acknowledges that, “In general there is confusion about the motives of these pupils and responses to their behaviour” (pg.52). Is this confusion played out in the idea that inclusion is not an inalienable right, but something that must be earned? (Corbett 2001).

Parsons (2005) argues that the response in English education and society has generally come from a punitive pedagogy. We cannot discount the possibility that the perceptions, attitudes and experiences of individual teachers will also influence their perception of whether pupils with challenging behaviour are ‘mad, bad or sad’. What is certain is that perception in some form will influence how both the policy makers and the individual teachers respond to these pupils (Parsons 2005).

In education the response to the view that people are responsible for their own behaviour is characterised by approaches such as, ‘zero tolerance’ and ultimately exclusion. This view sees inclusion not as an inalienable right but as something which must be earned or deserved by virtue of good behaviour and argues that pupils with challenging behaviour cannot be

allowed to disrupt the education of others, others who are perceived as more deserving (Corbett 2001). The 'mad' are generally seen as being in need of help. It is assumed that they have not chosen to behave as they do, but have a 'problem', which causes them to behave in certain ways. In educational terms, these pupils might be labelled EBD or BESD. The 'bad' however are delinquent and in need of punishment.

In the Daily Telegraph on 25th August 2007, Sam Leith was writing about the controversy, which had arisen around the decision not to deport an Italian born boy at the end of his sentence for murder. The boy was convicted of murdering Head teacher Phillip Lawrence. Mr Lawrence was protecting one of his pupils outside his school when he was stabbed. The boy accused of the murder was fifteen at the time of the offence. It is not the tragic circumstances of the death of Mr Lawrence that is the issue here, although one could argue that this has direct relevance for teachers on the implications of challenging behaviour, but rather the way in which we view such oppositional behaviour.

Leith posed the question; was he a 'tragically disturbed teenager' or an 'evil little thug' or, as he suggested, 'most likely both'. These descriptions embody two polarised views of challenging behaviour and indicate how they have become part of our culture. An 'evil little thug' implies a person who has a predisposition to commit terrible acts, someone who can and should take responsibility for the way they behave. A 'tragically disturbed teenager' implies someone whose behaviour is the unfortunate result of an unfavourable set of circumstances over which he may have had no control, they may be 'mad' or 'sad' or both.

The implication of this second view is that if his circumstances could have been improved then the outcomes for him may have been different. If, as Leith says, he was 'most likely both' this seems to suggest that a disturbed teenager, often, but not always, perceived by society to be in need of help, will rapidly become the 'evil little thug', if he does not get that help. The 'thug' is only seen to be in need of help by the very few and there are echoes here of the controversy which raged about the treatment of the murderers of Jamie Bulger in 1993. At the time, the arguments, which were played out in the media, ran very much along the lines that the two boys were evil, in need of punishment and beyond redemption. There were counter arguments from those who saw them as disturbed and in need of treatment, which could be redemptive, but these arguments were not generally promulgated by the popular press.

Parsons (2005) argues that we struggle with the terminology to describe young people with challenging behaviour and explains that in England pupils who are 'difficult' or 'challenging' are frequently excluded from school. He also argues that in England we exclude pupils from school in far greater numbers than most other countries, including the other countries of the United Kingdom. He acknowledges that the reason we 'struggle' with the terminology to describe these young people and their behaviours is that the choice of terminology determines our philosophical position in relation to these young people,

“Are they troubled or troublesome, disruptive or experiencing disrupted pathways, intolerable or just not tolerated?” (Parsons, 2005 pg. 187)

We also struggle with ways of explaining their behaviour. The approach taken to explaining reasons for the behaviour determines how the behaviour (or the consequences of the behaviour) will be viewed and so how the perpetrator will be treated. Parsons (2005) describes how cultural and political pressures have led to the punitive approach retaining its popularity. According to Macleod (2006) the notion that young people are in some way responsible for their own behaviour leads to punitive responses,

“Therefore, the use of restorative approaches alone will not be enough: a rejection of punitive policies and practices wherever they occur is also required; as is a continuing rejection of individual deficit notions of the causation of troubling behaviour in young people. It has been argued above that a punitive approach which construes young people as deliberately causing trouble and holds them (and sometimes their families) solely responsible for their behaviour shows no sign of diminishing”. (Macleod 2006 pgs. 164/165)

The notion of personal responsibility is deeply ingrained within our culture. Pupils must 'take responsibility' for their actions. Those who do take responsibility are generally held up as being capable of improvement. If we adhere very strongly to the idea of salvation through personal responsibility, as I believe we do in the English education system, then it is easy to see how failure to take responsibility is seen as a reason for punitive measures. However, those who accept responsibility will be rewarded. In view of what both Parsons (2005) and Macleod (2006) appear to be saying Foucault offers us an interesting perspective.

#### 4. The Ideas of Foucault and the Management of Challenging Behaviour

'Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison' was written by the philosopher Michel Foucault in 1975 and translated into English in 1977. The book opens with a graphic description of the brutal public execution in 1757 of Robert-Francois Damians who had attempted to kill Louis XV. The book compares this with a prison timetable from just over eighty years later, when the prison system had undergone reform, in the way that the treatment of the insane had been reformed. 'Discipline and Punish' is a genealogical study of the development of the 'gentler' modern way of imprisoning criminals rather than torturing or killing them.

The reader is surprised by Foucault, who, while recognising the element of genuinely enlightened reform, particularly emphasises how such reform also becomes a vehicle of more effective control: "to punish less, perhaps; but certainly to punish better". The idea is that it is more cruel to make people take responsibility for their transgressions against society, irrespective of whether these transgressions are due to their mental illness or because they have committed a crime, than it is to brutally punish them. Following reform, the punishment comes only after those who transgress have been given a chance to conform and have rejected it, thus their predicament becomes their fault and their responsibility,

"In fact Tuke created an asylum where he substituted for the free terror of madness the stifling anguish of responsibility; fear no longer reigned on the other side of the prison gates, it now raged under the seal of conscience." (Rabinow 1991 pg.145)

Foucault further argues that the new mode of punishment becomes the model for control of an entire society, with factories, hospitals, and schools modelled on the modern prison. At the core of Foucault's picture of modern 'disciplinary' society are three primary techniques of control: hierarchical observation, normalising judgment, and the examination. What Foucault describes is an institutional exercise of power where people must be disciplined in order to normalise them and normalised in order to control them,

"But it thereby generates an indifference; if the law does not reign universally, it is because there are men who do not recognise it, a class of society that lives in disorder, in negligence, and almost in illegality: 'If on the one hand we see



families prosper for a long series of years in the bosom of harmony and order and concord, how many others, especially in the lower classes, afflict the eye with a repulsive spectacle of debauchery, of dissensions, and shameful distress! That, according to my daily notes, is the most fertile source of the insanity we treat in the hospitals” (Rabinow 1991 pg. 149)

Ball (2008) refers to Foucault when discussing the policies of New Labour in terms of the extent to which they advocate and encourage ‘intervention’ in order to achieve certain predetermined outcomes, particularly in education. This is much wider debate than a question of pupils taking responsibility for their behaviour in school. Ball (2008) suggests that it extends to how parents are viewed and how what is offered to families in terms of education for their children depends on the compliance of the whole family. Here we see an example of how people must be ‘normalised’, in this case, to accept the beneficial consequences of New Labour policies. Ball (2008) suggests that, in accordance with Foucault’s philosophy, if they cannot be normalised then ‘interventions’ will be put into place which will ensure that the perceived deviance is corrected,

“In Foucault’s (1979) terms Blair is deploying ‘dividing practices’, a procedure that objectifies subjects (feckless parents) as socially and politically irresponsible, the ‘others’ of policy who need to be ‘saved’ from their uncivilised lives through expert ‘interventions’. They are incapable of being responsible for themselves and their children. Forms of expertise are brought to bear. In effect this is the same model of governing as that applied to institutions, a certain sort of freedom is offered, a virtuous, disciplined and responsible autonomy which, if not taken up appropriately provokes ‘intervention’, as in the case in ‘failing schools’. We even see here further extension of ‘contracting’ as a way of representing relationships between institutions, between individuals and institutions, and between individuals and one another, in the form of ‘home-school contracts’. Also deployed here is another form of reculturation wherein promoting a ‘culture of achievement’ means ‘changing attitudes’ and harnessing parents to the drive to raise standards in education.” (Ball 2008 pg. 178)

Foucault’s ideas are at first shocking for a number of reasons. Firstly, because they challenge another ‘taken for granted assumption’, namely that the benign reforms which ended brutality in the penal system are, in fact, another form of even more sinister control. Secondly, Ball (2008) has taken those ideas into a sphere that we can easily recognise the sphere of the modern education system. In what he says, it is possible to recognise processes in which those of us in education have participated and perpetrated, on the basis that it is a good thing for people to take responsibility for their own actions. Those who conform will

escape punishment and it is only those who refuse to conform, those who challenge, who represent a threat to the education system and must be punished.

These ideas resonate with the idea of challenging behaviour, which represents a threat to conformity. In Foucault's book 'The History of Sexuality' he states that "where there is power there is resistance" (Mills 2006),

"This is an important and problematic statement for many reasons. It is productive in that it allows us to consider the relationship between those in struggles over power as not simply reducible to a master-slave relation, or an oppressor-victim relationship. In order for there to be a relation where power is exercised, there has to be someone who resists. Foucault goes on to argue that where there is no resistance, it is not, in effect, a power relation." (Mills 2006 pg. 40)

This interpretation of how power is exercised means that both the powerful and the powerless have a role to play. It is not simply a case of the strong oppressing the weak. The strong cannot exercise power over the weak unless the weak comply by resisting. If they conform, then the relationship, according to Foucault, is not a power relationship. Foucault also examines the way that discipline, as a form of self-regulation, permeates modern societies,

"Indeed, so innate and 'natural' do these practices appear that we find it hard to conceptualise what life would be like without this constant checking of appetites and whims, and the constant instilling in children of the need to control their behaviour and their emotional responses, both by the educational system and through parental pressure." (Mills 2006 pg. 44)

Foucault's ideas are interesting because they reject much of the conventional received wisdom about oppression in society as epitomised by the great thinkers on the left, notably Marx. Therefore, if we consider challenging behaviour in terms of what Foucault says, it becomes a far more complex issue than a relatively simple struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. Instead, we see that by choosing to resist, the child who challenges creates the power relationship, which would not otherwise exist.

In the debate about the causes of challenging behaviour and in particular the argument whether pupils are in need of help and support, or punishment is by no means clear-cut. If we consider Foucault's perspective it makes very little difference if a child is 'mad, bad or sad' as

the consequences for failure to take responsibility for their actions remain punitive. What is difficult to ignore and much easier to explain are the popular perceptions about the sections of society in which young people with challenging behaviour are allegedly most likely to be found.

## 5. Challenging Behaviour and Social Class

Parsons (2005) writes extensively about the demonising of those pupils who are excluded from school and those who display challenging behaviour. He says that although there are those who take a redemptive and therapeutic approach to these young people they are in the minority,

“Part of the experience of disruptive behaviour among young people at school, is that they are hugely and publicly vilified, so are their parents and family, and so are those who support them (especially if successful), and the negative consequences can be quite severe” (Parsons 2005 pg.198)

It is a ‘taken for granted’ assumption by many that pupils with challenging behaviour are extremely likely to come from a socially deprived background. There is considerable evidence that those who are excluded from school are almost always among the most disadvantaged members of society, the ones to whom, one could argue, education should be offering hope, opportunity and ultimately advancement. Statistically, the excluded are disproportionately more likely either to have an identified level of special educational need (Hayden 2000), to be ‘looked after’ the local authority, or to be a boy from an Afro-Caribbean background (Parsons 1999).

It is another ‘taken for granted’ assumption that pupils from the lower socio-economic groups are more likely to be deprived, and that with deprivation comes oppositional behaviour. Garner (1999) refers to the “high incidence of problematic school-behaviour in children from socially and economically disadvantaged populations” and talks about the “depressing and deficit-laden picture of contemporary adolescent life in urban areas”. However he maintains that this attitude is “simply a re-presentation” of educational and social attitudes in England and Wales in the nineteen or early part of the twentieth century. He says that a number of common themes can be found which link current thinking to the

thinking of that time, primarily the socio-economic status of “disaffected school pupils and delinquents”.

Reasons for disaffection are often explained by looking at notions of deprivation and socio economic disadvantage, but it is important to remember that although, in educational terms, EBD or BESD and disaffection are supposed to be fundamentally different, the terms ‘special educational need’ and ‘disaffection’ are not mutually exclusive. The new title, ‘Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties’, which describes the behaviour of pupils who are more likely to get a statement of special educational needs suggests that the causes of challenging behaviour stem from the wider society and specifically from the communities and families whose children have not been well prepared for the experience of schooling.

According to Araujo (2005), pupils from ethnic minority groups and those from the lower socio-economic groups within society are disproportionately represented in the numbers of pupils who get a statement of special educational needs. Araujo (2005) says that the commitment of Blair’s Labour government to social justice through inclusion is ‘largely rhetoric’ because there is a marked tendency to blame indiscipline on pupils from certain sections of the community,

“Teachers are presented as being tested or challenged by pupils’ indiscipline, which is seen as being acquired at home. The strong emphasis on the problem of indiscipline as resulting from poor parenting and as a problem of individual pupils sits uncomfortably with a prescription of an active role for schools to play. The conception of indiscipline being put forward presupposes that it exists before, and independently of, pupils’ experiences of schooling. As a result, there is little room for schools and teachers to prevent indiscipline, and the role given to school is rather related to the amelioration/remediation of the indiscipline that is seen as acquired at home.” (Araujo 2005 pg. 246)

The reality is that many children who are excluded from school are excluded because of their challenging behaviour and are frequently dubbed ‘disaffected’ or ‘disruptive’. A common reason given for permanent exclusion from school is ‘persistent disruptive behaviour’. This behaviour is seldom seen in the context of the child’s school experience or the appropriateness of what the school offers in terms of an educational experience. It is almost always seen in terms of a deficit child and usually a deficit child from a particular kind of social background. This is particularly true in relation to schools in inner city or urban areas.

Ball (2008) refers to this when he writes about the introduction of the 1988 Education Reform Act, “Once again inner cities are represented as a pathological ‘other’ in relation to certain core values.” (pg. 82)

If social factors which are beyond the control of individual teachers are responsible for the challenging behaviours with which they are confronted, then what can or should the education service do to ameliorate these behaviours? According to Araujo (2005), the role of the school is simply to try and ‘ameliorate’ behaviours, which are seen as having been acquired at home,

“The roles of the curriculum, the quality of teaching and the social interactions taking place at school are largely downplayed. Consequently the institutional, political and contextual dimensions of indiscipline are not made problematic.” (Araujo 2005 pg. 264)

If the behaviour cannot be changed, modified or managed then exclusion from school is frequently an option. This brings us again to the idea that there are socio-economic and cultural factors, which must be considered in a discussion of challenging behaviour. For example, in the case of the national curriculum consideration needs to be given to whether it meets the needs of all sections of society or whether, as previously suggested by Ball (2008), it is promulgating largely middle class values, to the detriment of other sections of society, who then ‘challenge’ what is being offered?

Challenging behaviour in schools is also discussed widely outside education and references to it are seldom absent from the media. On 29th July 2004, the year in which my research began, the following headline appeared on the BBC News website,

“Pupil attacks: Thousands expelled  
Thousands of children were excluded from schools in England last summer for assaulting adults and other pupils, figures reveal.”  
(news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/3937629.stm, 29th July 2004)

The above extract as an example of the popular notion that children who are excluded are undeserving and who need to be punished, largely for the good of others (Parsons 1999 & 2005). Clearly, no teacher or pupil should expect to go to school to be attacked, nor to accept this as a reasonable assumption. Therefore, the news item and others written in this vein

reinforce the idea of the undeserving minority and the need to protect the deserving majority from them.

## 6. Educational Provision for the Lower Socio Economic Groups – A Historical Perspective or has it Always Been Like This?

Traditionally, little or no educational provision was made for the lower classes in England until the middle of the nineteenth century. The upper classes had for many years had the option of sending their children to private schools or engaging tutors to educate them at home. From the eighteenth century, there were ragged schools, which were set up mainly by churches and run by volunteers. They provided a rudimentary education for children who were literally so poor that they wore rags. By 1844, the government saw the need to regulate these schools and set up the Ragged School Union with Lord Shaftesbury as its chairman. In the beginning, there were just sixteen schools connected with it, but by 1861, there were one hundred and seventy six schools in the union.

Although those who were responsible for administering the ragged schools apparently wanted to give children a better life, there was also the underlying fear that if these poor children were not educated in order to enable them to earn a living, they would inevitably become criminals. Writing in *The Times* in 1855, Mr Locke of the Ragged School Union said,

“...thousands upon thousands [of children who] roam the streets unheeded and uncared for, to plunder and do mischief.” *The Times* 24th November 1855 (page 4)

Some people however felt that the ragged schools did not go far enough. There was a fear that some children, by virtue of their poverty and destitution, would become delinquent without immediate correction. In response to these concerns, the industrial schools were established. Industrial schools were intended to educate those children who were destitute but who had not yet committed any serious crime. The idea was to remove the child from bad influences, give them an education and teach them a trade. It is interesting that the premise upon which these schools were set up was not primarily to educate in order to empower and inspire, but rather to educate in order to prevent young people falling prey to criminal influences. There was a ‘taken for granted’ assumption that without education and guidance these destitute young people would become criminals.

It was therefore considered important to remove the child from the environment in which they had been living. Depending on the circumstances, the child would either attend the school daily or live in. The children began their day at 6.00am and they went to bed at 7.00pm. During the day there were set times for schooling, learning trades, housework, religion (in the form of family worship), meal times and provision was also made for a short time for play. The boys learned trades such as gardening, tailoring and shoemaking; the girls learned knitting, sewing, housework and washing.

At first like the ragged schools, the industrial schools were run on a voluntary basis. Then, in 1857, the Industrial Schools Act was passed. This changed the nature of these institutions in that it gave magistrates the power to sentence children between the ages of 7 and 14 years old to a period in an industrial school. The first act was aimed at children who were brought before the Courts for vagrancy. Their 'crime' being that they were homeless. In 1861, however a further act was passed and different categories of children were included:

- Any child apparently under the age of fourteen found begging or receiving alms (money or goods given as charity to the poor).
- Any child apparently under the age of fourteen found wandering and not having any home or visible means of support, or in company of reputed thieves.
- Any child apparently under the age of twelve who, having committed an offence punishable by imprisonment or less.
- Any child under the age of fourteen whose parents declare him to be beyond their control.

The act stated the child had to be 'apparently under the age of fourteen' because some of these children genuinely did not know how old they were. It was not compulsory to register births until 1875. It is also interesting to note that reference to any child beyond the control of their parents is a clear indication of behaviour, which was perceived as challenging within the family.

There was another category of school at this time, which should be mentioned, namely the Reformatories. Children who were sent to these schools had been convicted of criminal offences, whereas those who went to the industrial schools might only be destitute. Himmelfarb (1985) briefly outlines the school provision made,

“For the ragged classes ... there were the ragged schools. ... For the perishing classes who had not yet fallen into crime but were considered likely to, there were industrial schools. And for ‘juvenile offenders’ or ‘delinquents’ ... who had already committed crimes ... there were reformatory schools.”(Himmelfarb 1985 pg. 379)

In 1870, the Education Act, which came to be known as the Forster Act, is widely credited with introducing compulsory elementary schooling for pupils aged from five to thirteen years. It introduced school boards who were responsible for education in their area including ensuring attendance. The spectre of the ‘school board man’ who sought out truants survived into my school years in the 1960s and 1970s. The Act did not however replace the industrial schools.

Cole (1989) writes about the case of Mary Waters the ‘baby farmer’ who was hanged in 1871 after the filthy emaciated bodies of babies were found lying neglected around her house, four of whom died shortly after discovery. In the previous year, the bodies of two hundred and seventy six dead babies were found by the police in the streets of London. Cole (1989) says that if a child was able to survive such an appalling start in life they became the ‘street arabs’ portrayed by Dickens in the novel ‘Oliver Twist’ and provided the clientele for the industrial schools,

“By 1872 there were 100 such schools in what was the most fully developed and fastest growing sector catering for what can fairly be called ‘special’ children. At the end of 1869, 7,345 children were living in them. This number doubled over the ensuing decade. They came to be seen as a useful asset by some school boards, some of whom were to set up their own. By 1889, the London School Board had sent 13,000 children from disturbed homes, petty offenders and persistent truants to them.” (Cole 1989 pg. 20)

From these examples, we can see that segregation was enshrined in education in England from the very beginning of state regulated schooling, more importantly however, it was segregation of a very particular kind. It was segregation based on social class and on the idea



that the deprived might also become the depraved and that they needed to be separated from their more respectable neighbours for the good of all. From the very beginning of the provision of education for the masses, there was the assumption that the lower socio-economic groups represented a threat to the other groups within society. According to Garner (1999) and Ball (2008), there are still powerful echoes of this attitude in our education system in England today.

It is wrong, however, to assume that pupils with disabilities (many of whom would now be categorised as having special educational needs) have always been segregated from their peers. In 1875, the London school board made arrangements for the teaching of blind children in its elementary schools and Warnock (DES 1978) gave other such examples including similar arrangements for deaf children. Is it possible that perhaps these children were not seen as representing a threat in terms of their unruliness? It appears that in English society there has always been the concept of the ‘deserving’ and the ‘undeserving’ poor and the “ragged and dangerous classes” (Himmelfarb 1985) have always needed to be controlled. Perhaps it is not surprising then that pupils with behavioural difficulties have traditionally come under the heading of ‘undeserving’ and were almost always separated in education until the concept of ‘inclusion’ took hold.

## 7. Behaviour Management

The requirement for teachers in ordinary schools to ‘manage’ challenging behaviour exists because of the imperative for schools to be inclusive. Although the 1981 Education Act called for greater integration of pupils with special educational needs into mainstream schools, the term inclusion was not widely used before the 1990s. Inclusion is a different concept to integration and there are many definitions of inclusion (Florian 2000). Integration may be seen as an opportunity for pupils to ‘join in’ with education in mainstream schools and requires a degree of normalisation. Crucially pupils who are integrated may be seen as having a requirement to ‘fit in’ to the school, whereas inclusion puts the onus on the school to include the pupil,

“The opportunity to participate is quite different from making available patterns of life and conditions of everyday living. Opportunity to participate implies active involvement and choice as opposed to the passive receipt of a pattern or condition that has been made available. Locational, social and

functional integration are things that are made available. They are easily contrasted with inclusion, which cannot be made available because it requires participation”. (Florian 2000 pg.17)

The pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour may have a wide range of academic potential, but they characteristically lack motivation and appear reluctant to learn, which makes the job of the teacher, who is charged with delivering the curriculum, particularly difficult. The problem then becomes not simply one of describing or defining particular behaviours, it becomes a problem of managing these behaviours within the education system in order to retain children within a system where there is an imperative to be inclusive.

Rogers (2004) writes and lectures in ‘behaviour management’ for teachers and he suggests that the behaviours which one teacher may regard as challenging and likely to disrupt learning in their classroom may not pose problems for another teacher. It is reasonable to assume that what causes concern to teachers will not be universal and that it will depend upon the teacher, their experiences, attitudes and perceptions as well as upon the culture of the school, in terms of what is considered by them to be acceptable unacceptable behaviour,

“Behaviour disorder is a term that describes significant deviation from the normalcy which can be expected from most children of the same age and under the same circumstances. Of course, a definition may also depend on who is asked and when, and the beliefs, attitudes and experiences of the ‘asked’. I have had teachers describe as ‘deviant’ what other teachers describe as ‘annoying but normal’. Definition may also depend on socio-economic factors, as well as the school ethos.” (Rogers 2004 pg.13)

There appear to be discrepancies in describing challenging behaviour because the perception of teachers differs about what challenges them personally and what they regard as challenging generally. Long (2005) describes two kinds of behaviour; ‘active defensiveness’ which happens when the student ‘assaults’ the authority figure by means of disruptive behaviour and ‘passive withdrawal’ which happens when the student withdraws from the situation. Long (2005) says these responses are more commonly known as ‘fight’ or ‘flight’ and are how all human beings respond when threatened. In these circumstances, the behaviour of the student, in their perception, is quite rational,

“From the student’s point of view their behaviour remains functional in fulfilling their needs and/or defending them from challenges that are beyond them.” (Long 2005 pg. 27/8)

Long (2005) is writing from a particular perspective. He is attempting to explain why some children behave in certain ways, which may appear challenging to the teacher, but, if better understood would present less of a threat. He is also suggesting that the student may be challenging the teacher because they themselves feel challenged by the situation. This initiates the possibility of changing aspects of the pupil's experience to make it less challenging for them. However, this can only be done within the constraints of the prescribed curriculum by, for example, differentiation, or 'matching' the work to the ability of the pupil, but without changing the content. If this approach is not successful, the child remains a 'challenge', in defiance of the authority of the teacher.

Cole (2000) identified five approaches to understanding challenging behaviour:-

- Biological/medication explanations.
- The psychodynamic perspective/attachment theory.
- The behaviourist perspective.
- The humanist and cognitive/behaviourist perspectives.
- The ecosystemic perspective.

These approaches are offered as different ways of responding to or attempting to understand the underlying reasons for challenging behaviour. The inference is that, while teachers may differ ideologically about which approach to take, in terms of inclusion, an approach must be taken because there is a responsibility to work with the child and the behaviour. In this scenario, the teacher is not only responsible for managing the challenging behaviour, but Cole (2000) suggests that in some cases their actions can be seen as contributing to the problem of challenging behaviour. He suggests that while some teachers are able to 'amuse and motivate' the most difficult children, others can 'unwittingly' 'upset classes' which Cole (2000) suggests will precipitate challenging behaviour.

In September 2007 the journal, 'Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties' published five articles under the general heading of 'making sense of BESD: from perspective to assessment to intervention'. In the editorial, Cooper (2007) writes of the "value of clear theoretical underpinnings in assessment and intervention for BESD". This is evidence of the approach that sees the identification and assessment of behavioural difficulties underpinned by a theoretical framework. A child displaying challenging behaviour and falling within the scope of this kind of regime is likely to be seen as having a difficulty for which appropriate strategies and interventions can be implemented in order to alleviate the difficulty.

The requirement for schools to be inclusive places an obligation upon teachers to find ways to engage with disruptive pupils who are displaying challenging behaviour and give them access to the curriculum. This explains the prevalence of literature and courses advising teachers about how to 'manage' challenging behaviour. Challenging behaviour is not a new phenomenon, although calling disruptive behaviour 'challenging' is relatively new, say over the last twenty years and may be symptomatic of the current educational context. Warnock (DES1978) wrote about 'behavioural disorder' and said that there have always been children who were 'disturbed' and did not conform to the behavioural expectations of their teachers. In many cases, for the teacher, the challenge of the behaviour is the same, irrespective of the cause and this dilemma, coupled with the imperative to include all these pupils, may have given rise to the prevalence of the term 'challenging behaviour', which in itself is not very helpful. Like the term special educational needs it describes a spectrum which is extensive and varied and which contains within it situations and circumstances which may require fundamentally different responses and which may be perceived in different ways. The focus of this research is the perceptions of a group of secondary school teachers about this dilemma.

## Chapter Four

### Methodology and Methods

#### **Section One - Methodology**

##### 1. Constructing a Research Design: Positivist or Interpretive?

In constructing research design, it is necessary to begin by addressing some fundamental questions about the type of research that is being undertaken. These include, what are the purposes of the research? How will the data be gathered? From whom will the data be gathered? How will the data be analysed? Who will undertake the research? Who is the audience for the research? The way in which the researcher approaches these questions, in a developing process, leads to the construction of an appropriate research design.

According to Denzin & Lincoln (2005), ontology poses questions such as ‘what kind of being is the human being?’ and ‘what is the nature of reality?’ How each individual responds to these questions is fundamental to their own ontological position. Therefore constructing a research design in the social sciences makes one’s own ontological position both inescapable and fundamental to the decisions made. My ontological position led me instinctively towards an interpretive rather than a positivist approach and this inclination was confirmed in the relevant literature as being a particularly appropriate approach for the type of small-scale educational research that I was intending to undertake.

Secondly, there is my conviction that positivist influences in education may have contributed towards the significant rise in permanent exclusions in the decade following the implementation of the Education Reform Act in 1988 (Slee 1998). If there was any possibility that a positivist approach to educational change could have contributed to the problem of rising exclusions then it seemed more appropriate that an interpretive approach was needed to provide illumination of the problem.

The positivist approach may also be described as quantitative or empirical. Crucially, when applied to the social sciences this approach assumes that aspects of human behaviour can be observed and measured. Denzin & Lincoln (2005) define positivism in this way, “positivism asserts that objective accounts of the real world can be given” (pg. 27). A positivist researcher

does not differentiate between the processes of the natural world and the social world and believes that they can both be examined and investigated in the same way. By contrast the interpretive approach, also called the qualitative or naturalistic approach puts individual 'actors' at the centre and places an emphasis on culture, context and meaning,

“A qualitative research orientation places individual actors at its centre; it will focus upon context, meaning, culture, history and biography.” (Hitchcock and Hughes 1995 pg. 16)

Society is made up of complex groups and groupings, many of which overlap or influence one another. These organisations may appear to be similar, for example, two schools operating in similar catchment areas and serving similar demographics will probably have features in common with one another, but they may also have considerable differences, which can be due to a variety of factors. These factors include the ethos of the individual institutions, the dynamics of the different staff groups and how they interact with each other. These interactions will all be influenced by the culture, context, history and biography both of the individuals and of the institution itself.

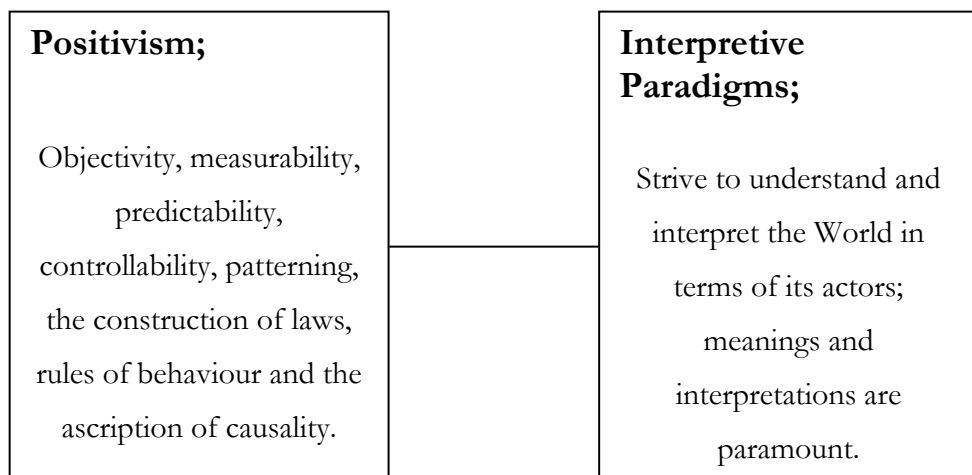
There is a compelling argument that if one is comparing 'like with like' then using empirical methods is a sensible approach. However, social organisations can be significantly different even when appearing to be similar, because they are populated with individuals whose attitudes and values will influence both their actions and the interpretations of the situations in which they find themselves. It follows that two similar institutions, (for example two schools where there are a large proportion of pupils with challenging behaviour) may approach the problem of challenging behaviour entirely differently. The implication for the researcher is that significant differences may emerge between two places, which could otherwise be described as similar. In my view, a meaningful piece of research will not result from attempting to quantify these differences using a positivist approach.

Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) make the point that a naturalistic or qualitative approach is appropriate to certain types of educational research, particularly where it is important to get an insight into and understanding of a number of factors and how they impinge on one another,

“Applied to educational contexts qualitative or naturalistic research recognises that what goes on in our classrooms is made up of complex layers of meanings, interpretations, values and attitudes. Schools, classrooms and their participants have histories and careers, teachers and pupils have their own educational and life histories, departmental members engage in interpersonal relations, conflicts and alliances emerge, responses to institutionalisation ensure that schools and classrooms have cultures and an ethos. A firm understanding of these variables and the ways in which they interact to create the politics and dynamics of educational change requires a qualitative appreciation of these factors. That is qualification of actions, ideas, values and meanings through the eyes of participants rather than quantification through the eyes of an outside observer”. (Hitchcock and Hughes 1995 pg. 26)

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) describe the naturalistic approach to research in the social sciences as, ‘a means of dealing with the direct experience of people in specific contexts’. The context is very important in the social sciences. If something is to be quantified or measured using a positivist approach, then it is reasonable to assume that the subjects will always behave in the same way and if the circumstances can be replicated then the context becomes unimportant. The naturalistic approach assumes that in human interactions the context cannot be replicated. This indicates the appropriateness of a naturalistic approach as a desirable and effective way of investigating social organisations.

Denzin & Lincoln (2005) explain that a research paradigm is determined by how the researcher approaches the question, ‘how do we know the world or gain knowledge of it?’ In my case, this led me instinctively towards an interpretive rather than a positivist paradigm. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000) see these approaches as being at opposite ends of a continuum,



My ontological position has been influenced by my developing thinking around the implementation of the 1988 Education Reform Act and the subsequent rise in exclusions from schools in England and Wales. This piece of legislation is intrinsic to the research that I subsequently undertook.

## 2. The Functionalist Agenda in Education

At the time that I began the research project in 2000 there appeared to me to be a dichotomy between the apparently functionalist agenda in education, which was market driven and relied upon a prescriptive national curriculum and had spawned the school effectiveness and the school improvement movements and the requirement for schools to be more inclusive institutions. To be institutions that are more inclusive schools need to adapt to accommodating the needs of a wide range of people. There will be a tension between a prescriptive, market driven agenda in education and one that is required to adjust to meet the needs of individuals or minority groups. For example, if the school admits young people with learning difficulties this should require considerable adaptations to the curriculum. However, this is likely to be difficult to implement where there is a prescriptive curriculum, which is divided into key stages and stipulates what should be taught at each key stage.

As a teacher, I am concerned that education should be a force for change, rather than the passive recipient of social trends and changes. Failing to include significant numbers of pupils by excluding them from school posed a question about whether the education service was failing to ameliorate the external factors contributing to exclusion and thus failing to facilitate young people experiencing a 'level playing field' in their education. Alternatively, was there a question about the way in which education was being delivered, as Slee (1998) suggests, actually contributing to the rising exclusion rate? In other words were we experiencing exclusion as a predominantly social problem or as an educational problem?

At the time there was compelling evidence, (Parsons 1999, Hayden 2000, Slee 1998 and Searle 1996) that those who were being excluded were drawn almost exclusively from the lower socio-economic groups, the ethnic minorities and in particular black, Afro Caribbean boys and those with special educational needs,



“Indeed when recognition of SEN at any level is included in the analysis...it tends to show that the majority of excluded children have some level of identified and recognised SEN.” (Hayden 2000 pg. 75)

The findings of the Lamb Inquiry (2009) have shown that pupils with special educational needs are still disproportionately represented in the exclusion figures.

The choice of an interpretive paradigm was further influenced by the evidence, from writers such as Slee (1998), that much of the current educational policy was derived from a positivist agenda and that this positivist agenda was contributing to the problem of exclusion. The positivist agenda is not concerned with context. Harris (2001) pointed out that this was particularly true of the school improvement movement, “little account is taken of culture, context, socio-economic status, catchment areas, the trajectory of improvement and, indeed, of all independent variables” (pg. 16).

For me the context is extremely important. To ignore the context in which an event takes place is to assume that the event can be replicated under any circumstances and in my experience, this is not the case. My own ontological position made me interested in how the exclusion statistics could be interpreted in human terms. I wanted to know why this was happening and how individual teachers felt about it. Initially I decided that I wanted my research to illuminate the perspectives of teachers into the issues surrounding exclusion from school. I sought to give a voice to a group whose views I believe have been under-represented in this debate, that of the teachers themselves. As the research progressed and my ideas developed, it became clear that what was needed was an insight into the perspectives of teachers about challenging behaviour.

A great deal has been written and said about the effects of exclusion on those who are excluded. For example, the Blair government thought it was sufficiently important to look at these phenomena to warrant the setting up of the Social Inclusion Policy Unit. However, not a great deal has been said about the perspectives of the teachers on exclusion. There was and is evidence which suggests that those who are being excluded are among the most vulnerable and marginalised in our society and their number includes both those with special educational needs (Hayden 2000 and Lamb 2009) and those from the ethnic minorities (Parsons 1999). It occurred to me that if some sections of the school population have been marginalised by a functionalist policy agenda in education was it possible that the views of the

teachers had also been marginalised? Was it possible that the policies and processes in education had become more important than the views and experiences of the people who implement them? This concern is reflected in earlier chapters concerning the rise of a 'blame culture' in education and the loss of professional autonomy (Barber 1996 and Parsons 1999). I wanted to illuminate the perspectives of teachers and to be in a position to put those perspectives into the context of other research in this field.

A recognised research method, which takes full account of context, is the case study and I therefore began to be drawn towards using a case study approach. Initially I envisaged a piece of small scale, qualitative research using a case study approach and was drawn towards what Stake (2005) describes as the 'instrumental case study'. This is where a particular case is examined to provide insight into an issue, the case itself plays a supportive role, but it facilitates our understanding of something else.

Another important aspect of the case study approach, which appealed to me, was that of the interaction with the reader. The case study approach provides an opportunity to illuminate a perspective that will resonate with someone else who may be able to say, 'yes, it is like that for me too',

"Case studies strive to portray 'what it is like' to be in a particular situation, to catch the close-up reality and 'thick description' (Geertz) of participants' lived experiences of, thoughts about and feelings for, a situation." (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2001 pg. 182)

Teachers may know 'what it is like' to work in the school in which they are employed, but not necessarily 'what it is like' to work in other schools. In this sense they could be quite isolated, and only be focussing on the immediate concerns of their environment, rather than on the wider educational picture. If it is possible to reveal 'what it is like' to be in a particular situation then we can give others the opportunity of saying whether that experience also resonates with them. This is all the researcher using naturalistic methods can hope to do, by illuminating a perspective to open a window onto a particular situation or set of circumstances and to reveal how that situation is experienced by those participants and by doing so to invite other people to consider whether the experience of those people resonates with them.

When writing about the case study approach Stake (1997) says that there are ‘many stories to be told’ and it was these stories that interested me. Habermas (1984) writes in terms of ‘actors’. The ‘actors’ in the case of exclusions are either the children who are being or who have been excluded and their families, or the people responsible for making the decision to exclude them and those people are the teachers. I made the decision to look at the problem of exclusions from the perspective of the teachers and make them my ‘actors’,

“...the interpretive paradigms strive to understand and interpret the world in terms of its actors....meanings and interpretations are paramount.”  
(Habermas 1984 pg. 109/10)

I decided that the case study approach was appropriate because it would be impossible to gain insight into the perspective of every teacher, but it would be possible to explore in-depth the perspectives of a group of teachers in a particular situation or ‘case’. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) argue that case studies are the ‘preferred strategy’ when ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions are being asked. I wanted to ask some fundamental how and why questions of teachers with regard to challenging behaviour. For example, what constituted challenging behaviour for them? How did they manage challenging behaviour in their classrooms? Did some pupils pose more of a challenge than others did and if so was the context a factor in this? Did some teachers manage challenging behaviour better than others did and if so why? Why did they think particular individuals or groups of pupils behaved in particular ways? Did they think they could do anything to make the situations in which they found themselves any better? These were some of the questions that I wanted to ask, but crucially I wanted to know what the perceptions of the teachers were and what meanings they ascribed to their experiences.

### 3. A Two Stage Research Design

My research design became a piece of small scale, educational research using an interpretive approach and qualitative methods, which developed in two stages. I began in 2000 and at that time I was sure that I would be embarking on a case study of a particular school and looking at how challenging behaviour was managed in that school. I spent time designing and trialling questionnaires and after intermitting for a year in 2003 to take up a new post as the head teacher of a pupil referral unit, I distributed my questionnaires in two secondary schools in the Summer term of 2004. This was the beginning of stage one of the research design.

After the questionnaires had been returned, I began a round of follow-up interviews in one of the two schools, which I have called Arthur High School. The issue of teacher resilience emerged from the analysis of these initial interviews and this was something that I wanted to explore further. At this stage, I was becoming more aware of a range of theoretical positions in terms of methodology and that, together with my increasing interest in how teachers experienced challenging behaviour, made me see the value and importance of phenomenology as a way of understanding and interpreting data. In my case studies of individual teachers, I became influenced by phenomenology because I was concerned to understand how they experienced the phenomena of challenging behaviour.

According to Moran (2010), phenomenology, “focuses on the structure and qualities of objects and situations as they are experienced *by the subject*” (pg. 2). In the first stage of the research, I had carried out my follow-up interviews at Arthur High School. Therefore in the second stage, I decided to return there, to try to contact the same teachers and to conduct a series of in-depth interviews with each one.

As I approached the interviews this time I was influenced by phenomenology in both the planning and the conducting of the interviews, as well as in how the data were analysed. As Kvale and Brinkman (2009) state:

“The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects’ points of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences.” (pg.1).

I was interested in trying to understand the meaning behind the experiences of these teachers in managing challenging behaviour. The data from the original questionnaires and the first round of interviews highlighted the extent to which challenging behaviour was an issue for these teachers. Analysis had also revealed that, in some cases, the teachers were required to be fairly resilient in order to cope with situations that arose from managing challenging behaviour. I wanted to explore this further, especially what it meant for the teachers and within my case study approach, I wanted ‘...participants’ lived experiences of, thoughts about and feelings for, a situation’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2001 pg. 182).

Almost a year had elapsed since I had conducted the original interviews and although all six of the teachers I had originally interviewed in stage one had indicated to me their willingness to be further involved, I needed to explain to them why there had been a time lag and re-introduce myself. If any of the teachers had left I would also need to identify other teachers who were willing to participate. I had already obtained permission, in principle, from the head to return and continue my research at the school and when I approached him again he was extremely helpful in allowing me access to the school.

The second stage of the research consisted of a series of up to six interviews with five teachers over a period of several months. All of these interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed.

#### 4. Influences in Methodology – Phenomenology

What had begun as an intrinsic case study (Stake 2005) into behaviour management in a particular school was developing into a series of individual case studies of a group of teachers. I was increasingly influenced by phenomenology as a way of thinking to guide me within an interpretive paradigm. Phenomenology is an approach to collecting, interpreting and analysing data, which focuses on meaning, how we experience things and ascribe meaning to those experiences. From the outset, my research was about the experiences and perceptions of others and how those experiences (and their understanding of them) could be interpreted and have meaning ascribed to them. Brady (2005) describes phenomenology in terms of watching a film and how we usually watch the screen and pay little attention to the projectionist,

“Phenomenology brings the observer’s equipment to the fore and makes it part of the equation of meaningful construction and participation.” (Brady 2005 pg. 1007)

This led me to explore phenomenology as a way of informing and guiding me in relation to all aspects of methodology. It influenced my approach to data gathering, analysis, and interpretation. In particular, it guided me in terms of data collection as I moved more towards what Kvale & Brinkman (2009) call ‘conversation as research’.

As Brady (2005) explains, phenomenology helps to define the phenomena on which knowledge claims rest, for example perception, thought and imagination all within the context of the experience as a whole. In the practice of phenomenology, we classify, describe, interpret, and analyse structures of experiences in ways that resonate with our own experience. A phenomenological approach was appropriate for my research because it is concerned with meaning. Moran (2010) explains that what is important in phenomenological terms is not what others think is happening in a particular situation, but what the participants think is happening, or more accurately how they are experiencing the phenomena, whatever it may be,

“Thus, for example, in the phenomenology of religion, the focus is on the manner in which the sacred is experienced by the religious practitioner – or indeed as denied by the atheist – rather than on the attempt to ascertain if there really is or is not a domain of the sacred as it were ‘behind’ the belief” (Moran 2010 pg. 6)

My research was concerned with the experiences and perspectives of teachers in relation to the phenomena of challenging behaviour and how they ascribed meaning to those experiences.

Phenomenologists may differ among themselves on particular issues, but there is general agreement on the following points, described by Curtis (1978), which can be taken as the distinguishing features of their philosophical viewpoint:

- a belief in the importance, and in a sense the primacy, of subjective consciousness;
- an understanding of consciousness as active, as meaning bestowing; and
- a claim that there are certain essential structures to consciousness of which we gain direct knowledge by a certain kind of reflection. Exactly what these structures are is a point about which phenomenologists have differed.

Edmund Husserl may be credited with launching the philosophical tradition of phenomenology in the first half of the Twentieth Century. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001) explain that Schutz was concerned with relating Husserl’s ideas to the issues of

Sociology and the scientific study of social behaviour. In the practice of phenomenology, we classify, describe, interpret, and analyse structures of experiences in ways that resonate with our own experience. This resonated with my understanding of the case study as a means of striving to, "...portray 'what it is like' to be in a particular situation" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2001 pg. 182). I wanted to be in a position to portray 'what it was like' for a group of teachers managing challenging behaviour.

## **Section Two – Methods**

### **1. The School Context**

Choosing a secondary school in which to conduct the research was very important, even at the first stage of the research when my thinking had not developed in methodological terms. The school needed to meet certain specific criteria. It would need to be a school that would exhibit one or more of the following characteristics:-

- A secondary school with a non-selective intake.
- A school, which had experienced recent difficulties, for example, being just out of special measures or having had an OFSTED, report showing 'serious weaknesses'.
- A school with a higher than average exclusion rate.
- A school serving an area of social deprivation.

My reasons for setting these criteria were essentially very simple, I felt that they would give me the best chance of selecting a school where there was likely to be a high level of disruptive behaviour. In setting the criteria I was influenced by the effects of what I have described previously as a 'functionalist policy agenda'; therefore I felt that a school which appeared to be doing less well in terms of this agenda, for example one with an unfavourable Ofsted report, would be more likely to yield useful data.

At the time I was the head teacher of a pupil referral unit, working with a designated number of schools within the local authority by whom I was employed. I therefore decided to try to identify a school that was inside the authority, but outside this designated group. One of the schools that I approached I shall call Arthur High School. Arthur High School fulfilled all but one of my four criteria. Arthur High School was a mixed secondary school with a non-selective intake and no sixth form, serving a large estate of local authority housing. According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation published in 2000, the estate fell within the bottom 30% of the population as a whole in terms of social disadvantage. Ofsted had inspected Arthur High School just two months before I distributed my questionnaires in July 2004. It was praised as an improving school with strong leadership and management, but described as one that was underachieving.

The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals at that time was well above the national average, running at 50% in years seven and eight. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, at about one third of the total school population, was also significantly above the national average. What Arthur High School did not have, however, was a high exclusion rate. The head teacher had a reputation for making strenuous efforts not to exclude pupils and in recent years the exclusion rate had fallen.

Initially I approached three schools, hoping to get at least one positive response. Arthur High School responded very positively and I was delighted because it fulfilled my criteria so well. The second school I approached politely declined, and I did not get a response from the third. However, the head of Arthur High School persuaded the head of the school which I called Sullivan School (the school that had not responded to me) to allow me to distribute questionnaires in his school. Arthur and Sullivan Schools were geographically close together and had a similar profiles and I therefore decided to distribute questionnaires in both schools.

## 2. Stage One of the Research

### i) **Designing and Trialling the Questionnaires**

The questionnaire is a tool, which is often used in the case study approach to gather data, and initially this was why I chose it. It represents a relatively straightforward way of collecting information from a reasonably large group of people. The data from the questionnaires, which I had designed, was intended to do two basic things; firstly, to provide data from a



larger group of people than I could realistically hope to interview and secondly, the questionnaires would provide a way of identifying staff who might be prepared to be interviewed at a later date. I decided to gather information using questionnaires in order to reach all the staff in each school and give everyone the opportunity to respond. These questionnaires were used to gather data, including contextual information about the staff and their individual experiences. According to Youngman (1979) in terms of designing a questionnaire, it is important to consider how the data will be analysed,

“...the questionnaire structure must include all the facilities deemed to be necessary for a successful analysis...Similarly the role of open-ended questions should be decided upon in advance since failure to do so may result in the loss of essential factual information.” (Youngman 1979 pg. 153)

I spent a lot of time thinking about how to frame the questions to get the information that I wanted. For example, eventually I used open-ended questions to enable respondents to give reasons for their answers; I felt that this would give me more insight into their perspective. This was finally borne out in the simple data summaries, which subsequently formed part of the analysis of the data from the questionnaires. For example, I found that where respondents were invited to give reasons for a Yes/No answer and then clarify their answers, the reasons varied significantly.

The fundamental purpose of the questionnaire was to elicit the perspectives of teachers. A perspective, by its very nature, is personal to the person whose perception it is. A simple ‘Yes or No’ answer tells the questioner if another person agrees or disagrees with a particular statement, but it does not give any insight into why that person agrees or disagrees. It is possible to hold the same opinion or a similar opinion to another person, but for entirely different reasons. For me, it was important to try to get at these reasons. However, I had little or no experience in designing questionnaires and I was initially reluctant to use open-ended questions. Instead, I relied much more on closed questions, which initially appeared simpler to construct. As a result of this I discovered that there is a complicated process involved in deciding what information is required and deducing how to get at that information.

The first draft of the questionnaire had three sections. The first section was designed to collect the contextual information about the respondents, which I considered to be important. The information about the respondents was related to their age; type of training;

number of years they had been teaching and the type of teaching experience. The second section was related to their training in behaviour management. I felt it was important to ascertain how much training (if any) teachers had had in working with children with challenging behaviour and whether they had found this useful. The third section was aimed at gathering specific views about exclusion.

In this first attempt at the questionnaire I had asked teachers to rate what factors they thought contributed to exclusion on a scale of 1-4. These factors had included circumstances beyond the control of the school, for example; the home circumstances of a pupil; disaffection with the curriculum or the culture of the school and whether the pupil had special educational needs. The scale was intended to show how significant teachers thought these factors were in contributing towards a pupil being excluded, with one being least significant and four being most significant.

- i) Never contributes to exclusion
- ii) Occasionally contributes to exclusion
- iii) Frequently contributes to exclusion
- iv) Always contributes to exclusion

The third section also contained closed questions, one of which later became very significant to the final version of the questionnaire and was eventually phrased as a more open-ended question. This question concerned whether teachers thought that incidences of challenging behaviour were increasing. In designing the questionnaire, there were a number of considerations and these could be categorised in two main ways: as theoretical considerations and as practical ones.

The first challenge in terms of the data collection was to translate the research questions into a questionnaire that would enable the respondents to answer my questions in such a way as to provide me with useful data, which would provide answers to the research questions. This included considerations about how to frame the questions and whether to use open ended or closed questions. The second was to address more practical concerns, such as how long the

questionnaire should reasonably be in order to be successful. I decided that busy teachers were unlikely to have the time to complete more than two sides of A4 sized paper. I thought that a long questionnaire would discourage a significant number of people from completing it and would therefore narrow down the number of respondents. I wanted the initial response to be as large as possible. Using both sides of a sheet of A4 sized paper also had the advantage of confining the questionnaire to one piece of paper. In my opinion one piece of paper is far less daunting for the respondent than several. It also makes it easier for the researcher because the information cannot be fragmented by the pages of the questionnaire accidentally becoming separated at some point in the process.

The completion of the questionnaire was voluntary and anonymous, I only asked for contact details if the respondents were willing to take part in a follow-up interview. It was important to make the questionnaire as 'user friendly' as possible.

My questionnaire was designed to elicit the perspectives of teachers. I was clear from the beginning that those perspectives would exist in the context of their personal and professional experiences and that these experiences would be influenced by a large number of factors; also that these factors needed to be covered in the questionnaire. I questioned on such factors as, type of training; age and length of experience and subjects or age groups taught. I designed my questionnaire in such a way as to demonstrate that the context is very important, for example, personal information about the respondents, their experience and training was sought in an effort to put their views into the context of their experience.

The questionnaire was trialled for two main reasons. Firstly, it was important to see how easy the questionnaire was to complete. For this reason respondents were invited to comment on how they thought the structure of the questionnaire could be improved. Secondly, I needed to know whether the questionnaire was going to give me the information that I wanted.

I sent twenty-five copies of the first draft to a colleague who works in a comprehensive school in a local authority some distance away from the one in which the research was intended to take place. Twelve of these questionnaires were completed and returned very promptly. I found this very encouraging for a number of reasons: Firstly, this was virtually a 50% response, which was in itself encouraging. Secondly the comments made by the teachers on the design and purposes of the questionnaire were useful and constructive. Thirdly, the

answers they gave were in themselves a clear indication of whether the questions I had asked and the way in which I had asked them were going to give me the information that I wanted.

The questionnaire was modified after the first trial, in the light of the comments from the first group of respondents. The most important revision was the decision to use open-ended questions in the next draft, which gave respondents the opportunity to explain the reasons for their answers. Following the trial there were a number of basic revisions to be made to the first draft of the questionnaire. The structure of the questionnaire was changed to make it easier to complete by reducing the number of sections from three to two. The first section was still concerned with personal information about the respondent, but this was altered to include not only their teaching experience and length of service, but also their role within the school. A question about behaviour management training was included in this section, since I had come to the conclusion that the training a teacher has received is crucial to their personal experience and should not be seen as separate from it and whether or not they had received training in managing challenging behaviour could have a bearing on their perspective on challenging behaviour. In response to comments from one of the respondents in the first trial, I also specified what type of training it had been. For example, whether they had attended a one-day course or an extended course, and whether this had been part of their initial training or in-service training.

Another important and significant change to the questionnaire was to the second section, so that the emphasis was now on inclusion rather than exclusion. I felt it was better to see exclusion as a failure of inclusion, rather than as a phenomenon in its own right. I made this change as a result of my own reflections. I felt it was a more pro-active approach and would elicit more objective answers. The significant question referred to in the previous section remained but was prefixed with the words, 'In your experience' and respondents were invited to comment on their answers, so that the final question became;

In your experience do you find that incidences of challenging behaviour among pupils are increasing? Yes/No *Please comment on your answer.*

Trying to tease out the personal experiences of the respondents became very significant. As the questionnaire developed I became convinced that the information that I wanted to elicit was not what teachers thought was happening generally, but what was happening to them personally. We are all susceptible to versions of events, which come to us from outside our

own experiences. This appears to be particularly true in education, on which there is extensive reporting in the press and other media. To what extent are our opinions formed by what we are told is happening around us and to what extent are they formed by our direct experiences?

Of course we cannot assume that any or all teachers have read or been influenced by what they have read in the media. Equally, we cannot assume that they have not, as it is reasonable to suppose that the media could influence the way people think or perceive things. Under these circumstances if a teacher is asked the question 'Do you think the incidences of challenging behaviour among pupils are increasing?' it is not unreasonable to suppose that they may think this question refers to circumstances generally, rather than to their own specific experiences, which may be different. They may therefore respond from a point of view that is influenced by factors outside their own experiences. For example, their own classes may be very orderly and therefore their own experience may not bear out what other sources are reporting is happening in education elsewhere, or even elsewhere within the same school.

There appeared to be a possible tension in trying to distinguish between asking people to comment on what was happening in their opinion, for example, what do you think is happening? Bearing in mind that these opinions could be based on a variety of factors including external influences and in asking them to comment on their own personal experience of what is happening, for example, what is it like for you? The answer to this question is in itself likely to be influenced by a number of factors including length of teaching experience and this in turn underlines the importance to the questionnaire of the context in which the questions are being asked and answered. I felt that I needed to be aware of this and so finally I decided to ask respondents to write about what they thought was happening from within their own experience.

Another change to the second draft of the questionnaire was the inclusion of the final question; 'If there was one thing you could change to improve education today, what would it be?' I thought it would be interesting to see what kind of responses were given to this question, since this might elicit responses that had not occurred to me or that I had not given an opportunity for within my structured questions.

The second draft of the questionnaire was now ready to be trialled and was sent to a colleague in another secondary school in a local authority which was different both from where the first trial had taken place and from where the eventual research would take place. By the time of the second trial I was negotiating with the schools where I hoped to conduct the actual research.

The heads of both Arthur and Sullivan schools requested that I also include non-teaching staff. Although I had no objection to including them, it required some thought because originally the questionnaire had not been aimed at non-teaching staff. After some discussion with my tutor, it was agreed to revise section one of the second draft of the questionnaire in order to make the questions about training and experience relevant to non-teaching staff. Section two was left exactly as it stood, but with the addition of the phrase 'or working with' to the question, 'Do you feel confident about teaching *or working with* pupils with challenging behaviour?' Finally the questionnaires were colour coded; green for teaching staff and yellow for non-teaching staff.

Twenty-five teaching questionnaires and ten non-teaching questionnaires were sent out for the second trial. Nine teaching and three non-teaching were returned. Overall this was not such a good response as the original trial, but was still encouraging. What was more encouraging was that there were no adverse comments about the structure of the questionnaire. There was one positive comment,

“It was pretty easy to complete. It took about twenty minutes.”

I had made it clear to those taking part in the trial that I would not use their answers in the research. However, it was evident from their answers that the questionnaire in its second draft had not presented any difficulties to those completing it and the answers they had given indicated that it could be used to provide me with the information that I was seeking. The schools were ready and willing for me to go in. I therefore decided to proceed with the questionnaire in its present form. The final version of the questionnaire appears as Appendix One.

After the completion of the trials, in July 2004 the final version of the questionnaires were distributed to the teaching and non-teaching staff in both Arthur and Sullivan schools. I

typed and printed the questionnaires and then took them into both schools myself. In Arthur School I had the opportunity to introduce myself at a staff meeting and to explain the purposes of the research. There were fifty-eight teachers employed at the school and I made ample questionnaires available, to enable every teacher to have the opportunity to complete one if they so wished. However, I was not expecting that every teacher would complete one. In the event, twenty-four questionnaires were returned from the teaching staff and in percentage terms this was a 41% response. I received six questionnaires back from the non-teaching staff.

It had never been my intention to distribute the questionnaires to non-teaching staff because this was not originally part of my research design. However, as I had been asked to do so I distributed questionnaires to teaching and non-teaching staff in both schools and subsequently did a very basic analysis of the responses for the benefit of the head teachers in both schools. They were interested to use this information as part of the BIP programme, in which both schools were participants.

After I spoke to the staff at Arthur High School I left the questionnaires with the head. He said that he would distribute them via departmental meetings. He had also offered to collect them. I had been aware of this prior to my visit and I was concerned about issues of confidentiality and wondered whether the staff would give me frank responses if they knew the head was going to see their answers? This seemed unsatisfactory, although I don't have any reason to believe that the head was trying to be anything other than helpful.

For the sake of the validity of my research it was necessary to be able to assure the staff that their responses would be confidential to me. I needed a way of collecting the questionnaires, which would ensure confidentiality. I could do this by personally collecting every questionnaire myself but this would have been unacceptably time consuming and impractical. I decided to designate a collection point within the school where staff could return the questionnaires and I could collect them, once they had had a reasonable amount of time to complete them.

I decided to make collection boxes, which consisted of two sealed cardboard boxes, closed apart from a post-box sized slot in the top. These were left in the staff room for about ten days after the questionnaires were distributed so that staff could post the questionnaires into

the boxes as they completed them. I then collected the boxes, which could only be opened by cutting into them. To echo the colour coding of the questionnaires, green for teaching staff and yellow for non-teaching staff, one box was covered in green paper and the other in yellow paper. When I opened the boxes all the questionnaires had been correctly posted.

In Sullivan School the process was exactly the same, but unfortunately I did not get the opportunity to introduce myself to the staff and explain the research. In spite of this the response was very encouraging. Sullivan School employed sixty teachers and returned twenty-nine questionnaires, fractionally less than a 50% response. I received nine responses from non-teaching staff at Sullivan School.

## **ii) The Stage One Interviews**

Having collected the data from the questionnaires I decided that the next stage was to interview a sample of the teachers who had responded in order to explore the issue of challenging behaviour in more detail. For a number of reasons, most of them to do with time constraints; I decided to concentrate on one school only for the interviews. The questionnaire data from both schools was analysed, but the interviewees in both the first and second stage of the research all came from Arthur High School.

Having tried, through the distributing, collecting and analysis of the questionnaires, to elicit information about the perspectives of teachers from their experience I now wanted to speak to some of these teachers and dig deeper. The data from the questionnaires had shown that 74% of teacher respondents from both schools (39 out of 53) had said that in their experience incidences of challenging behaviour were increasing. I now needed to try to find out what this meant for them. What did they mean by challenging behaviour? I designed six interview questions with the aim of trying to illuminate this further. These questions were:

- i) Describe a child you teach in terms of challenging behaviour.
- ii) How do you deal with this?
- iii) At what point does this behaviour become unmanageable in the classroom and what happens then?



- iv) Are you able to pinpoint the circumstances/lessons when this pupil is most difficult to teach?
- v) Can you give reasons for this?
- vi) Can you give me examples of strategies, which you use for dealing with challenging behaviour?

These were the main questions from which I hoped to gain the most information, but I was also interested in what I thought of as ‘the SEN dimension’ to challenging behaviour. There was a strong indication in the literature (Slee 1998, Parsons 1999 and Hayden 2000) that pupils with SEN were disproportionately represented in the exclusion figures. I devised three supplementary questions to try to find out what the perspectives of the teachers were on pupils with SEN and challenging behaviour:

- i) Do you teach pupils with statements for behaviour (EBD)?
- ii) Can you describe how these pupils behave and how does it differ from the behaviour of pupils without statements?
- iii) Do you know anything about the criteria for pupils getting statements?

Finally, there was one ‘catch all’ question that I wanted to ask, similar to the one at the end of the questionnaire; ‘If there was one thing you could change about education in this country at the present time, what would it be?’ Each teacher who responded to the questionnaires was invited to give me their name and contact details if they were willing to be identified and contacted for a follow-up interview. Nine of the teachers at Arthur High School gave me their contact details and I decided to contact them all. However, some had left at the end of term and eventually I contacted four of the original nine who agreed to be interviewed and they were able to suggest two other teachers, who were keen to participate. I consider it very fortunate that by using this method I was able to get a reasonable spread of age, gender and experience.

The first teacher I interviewed was male, an Assistant Head with twenty-nine years teaching experience who taught Design Technology. The second interviewee was also male, with thirty-one years teaching experience. He had previously been part of the management team and was now head of Media Studies. The third interviewee was female, had started her career in Further Education and had six years experience as a qualified teacher. She taught Textiles. The fourth teacher I interviewed was female and had about twenty years experience, she taught English, was a Pastoral Head and was a member of the management team. The fifth teacher interviewed was female and had trained overseas; she had taught in this country (at Arthur High School) for two and a half years. She taught Science. Lastly, I interviewed another female teacher who was a Teach First teacher at the end of her first year. She taught English.

In each case, I made personal contact with each interviewee and arranged to meet them at Arthur High School. They were all happy to meet me at the school. Some of the interviews took a while to arrange as we tried to work around timetable constraints and other personal commitments. When I met with each member of staff, I was able to see them alone, either in their classroom or in their office, if they had one.

In this first stage of the research, I did not tape any of the interviews. This was not because of any objection on the part of the interviewees. I had no experience of transcribing interviews and at that time, I was not really comfortable with the technology. I was entirely confident about talking, listening and writing however and so I decided to record the interviews in the way in which I felt most confident. I asked each interviewee the six main questions, recording their answers in writing as we went along. All the interviews were recorded in an A4 size spiral bound notebook. All direct quotations were recorded with speech marks. If time permitted I asked the supplementary questions, but sometimes the teachers spent time giving me details about their experience and challenging behaviour, some of which was very useful, but it occasionally precluded me asking all the questions.

What struck me about all the interviewees was that they all appeared pleased to be asked for their opinions. They were all, without exception, willing to talk in detail about their teaching experiences and did not appear to resent giving me their time, which amounted to at least an hour in each case. Most of them were willing to give up some of their non-contact time to see me. I am very grateful to them all for their candid responses and in each case; their answers

went far beyond a simple answer to each of my questions, as they gave me anecdotes and other information. This made me think two things. Firstly, that perhaps they relished the opportunity to give their thoughts about their work and in particular, what it was like to work with pupils with challenging behaviour. Perhaps they did not often get the opportunity to say these things to someone whom they regarded as non-judgemental? I had introduced myself as a teacher who was interested in the views of other teachers for the purpose of research into teacher perspectives on challenging behaviour, so I was not there to judge them or their performance. Secondly, from a research point of view, I decided that semi-structured interviews were likely to yield me rich data, more rich than if I stuck rigidly to a set of questions and did not allow the interviewees to expand on their answers with their anecdotes and stories of their teaching experiences.

After I had recorded their interviews I went away and as quickly as possible after the interview wrote out the interview again, clarifying anything that I had recorded in note form and recording direct quotations in red ink. Going over the interviews again in this way was very helpful and it also started me thinking about the process of analysing the interviews and how this could be done.

### 3. Stage Two of the Research

#### i) **The Interviews**

At the beginning of the Autumn Term 2006/7, I again contacted the six original teachers, writing to each one personally. Five of these teachers were subsequently interviewed for the second stage of the research. One had left, but following consultation with the head, I approached a Teach First teacher who agreed to participate in place of them. I wanted a spread of age and experience and as the teacher who had left had been relatively inexperienced a Teach First teacher was a good replacement. He was also teaching the same subject, which was helpful. The teacher of textiles had originally agreed to be interviewed but now asked to postpone her interview because of professional commitments. As time passed it became evident that this teacher would not be available for interview and as a consequence of this the sample of interviewees in the second stage of the research was five teachers, rather than six. Time constraints precluded the finding of a sixth teacher.

Table 4:1 below, which gives details the teachers who took part in the second stage of the research and gives their experience, gender and the subjects they taught. The names used are pseudonyms because anonymity was guaranteed for all those taking part.

**Fig. 4:1 Details of Teachers Interviewed in the Second Stage of the Research**

<b><u>TEACHER</u></b>	<b><u>SUBJECT TAUGHT</u></b>	<b><u>GENDER AND EXPERIENCE</u></b>
Phillip	Science	Male. Teach First Teacher in the first year of teaching. Was <b>NOT</b> interviewed in Stage One
Harriet	English	Female. Teach First Teacher in the second year of teaching. Was interviewed in Stage One.
Tony	Design Technology	Male. Assistant Head with thirty years teaching experience. Was interviewed in Stage One.
Julian	English & Media Studies	Male. Recently given up being Head of Department. Leaving the profession at the end of the academic year in which he was interviewed. Was interviewed in Stage One.
Angela	English	Female. Deputy Head with over twenty years teaching experience. Was interviewed in Stage One.

Angela posed an interesting problem for me when I had my initial meeting with her on my return to the school at the beginning of the second stage of the research. She said that as she was now the Deputy Head she only taught one class. She had an excellent relationship with them and could not identify anyone who was challenging. I was therefore unable to pursue my original plan with her, but her response was so interesting in terms of challenging behaviour and the importance of relationships that I went back after all the other interviews were complete and interviewed her specifically about the importance of relationships.

In the second stage of the research my intention was to ask each teacher to identify a pupil whose behaviour they found to be particularly challenging. I did not want this pupil to be identified to me, other than by their age and gender, but I asked the teachers to describe to me why the behaviour of this particular pupil was challenging to them. I then returned in the following months and we tracked the progress of the relationship between pupil and teacher over the course of up to six interviews with each teacher, trying to illuminate how each teacher was responding to the challenges of working with that particular pupil over time.

In many respects, my research has felt like a journey and as with all journeys, I have on occasions been lost or taken a wrong turning. This had begun to worry me; surely, a responsible traveller would start out with a detailed map and a well-constructed plan for their

journey? On the other hand, are not the best discoveries often made by those who journey hopefully into the unknown? The principle ‘tool’ on my research journey has been the interview. I was therefore encouraged to read Kvale’s (1996) description of two contrasting metaphors for the interviewer, the ‘miner’ and the ‘traveller’. The miner is looking for ‘nuggets of essential meaning’, while the traveller, ‘...wanders through the landscape and enters into conversations with the people encountered.’ The latter resonated with me because I have indeed felt like a traveller on my research journey. The semi-structured interviews, which constitute the method by which I have collected the bulk of my data, have indeed been a series of conversations. I may well have found ‘nuggets’ along the way, indeed I hope I have, but I found them while ‘wandering through the landscape’. Having said that, I think in retrospect I was a ‘traveller’ in the first stage but became a ‘miner’ in the second stage as I ‘dug deeper’ to get at the meaning.

I decided in the second stage of the research design that it was important to record the interviews on tape and these were all subsequently transcribed. In listening to the tapes since the interviews took place I have come to think of them in terms of ‘conversations with colleagues’. Kvale (1996) calls interviews like this ‘conversations with a purpose’. The broad areas covered by the interview questions were about the challenges that the pupil presented with; the context of the behaviour; what effect had this had on the teacher (either positive or negative) and how the teacher responded to these challenges.

Kvale & Brinkman (2009) refer to the “semi-structured life world interview, in part inspired by phenomenology” (pg 14). During my ‘conversations with a purpose’, I was anxious to get at and portray the perspectives of the teachers using this form of research interview,

“A semi-structured life world interview attempts to understand themes of the lived everyday world from the subject’s own perspectives. This kind of interview seeks to obtain descriptions of the interviewees’ lived world with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena”.  
(Kvale & Brinkman 2009 pg. 27)

With my own background in education and experience as a teacher, my ‘interpretation of the meaning’ is also present in the data analysis. I was seeking the perspectives of a group of teachers, but I also had a personal interest in what the implications might be for education if their perspectives were known. I tried faithfully to portray the perspectives of this group of teachers, but inevitably my voice entered the analysis as I engaged with the data and

attempted to interpret their perspectives. This was a challenge for me within the research process as I analysed, interpreted and presented the data.

I wanted to establish the perspectives of the staff about the behaviour of the pupil whom they found challenging. Inevitably, as the process went on, the teachers gave me rich data about other pupils, their feelings about teaching and behaviour in general and these 'conversations' developed into a rich vein of meaning about the experiences of being a teacher at Arthur High School and managing challenging behaviour on a daily basis.

I was aware of the need to consider the ethical issues involved in the research and to consider the well being of my respondents at all times. I sought informed consent and having identified six teachers who were willing to participate, I sent each teacher two copies of a typed agreement. This detailed the terms and conditions under which we would work and set out issues of confidentiality. Each teacher signed a copy and returned it to me, keeping the other for their records. The form highlighted their right to withdraw at any time. A copy of this agreement appears as Appendix Two.

I made it clear that everything would be anonymised in the thesis. Although within the school it was known which staff I was visiting, none of the teachers had any concerns about their colleagues knowing that they were taking part in the research. When the teachers realised that I was seeking their perspectives they were very keen to take part. As previously stated, I think they saw the interviews as a way of making their opinions heard. Part of my findings from the research is a strong feeling, both implicit and explicit, that the respondents thought that teachers lacked a voice.

## **ii) Respondent Validation**

During the course of the interviews I used respondent validation. After the third interview with each person I 'condensed' (Giorgi 1985 & Kvale 1996) the essence of what I thought the main themes had been so far and presented these back to the interviewees. I did this by listening to the tapes and making notes as I went. The process of respondent validation served three important functions in terms of the research. Firstly, in terms of phenomenology, I was concerned to uncover the meaning of the experiences for the respondents as explained to me. My voice had entered the analysis of the data as I portrayed

their perspectives. Kvale & Brinkman (2009) say that to validate is to question and respondent validation gives the researcher an opportunity to question the respondents. This approach was particularly important as it allowed me to check my interpretation directly with each respondent. Secondly, respondent validation formed an early stage of data analysis using a method of condensation (Giorgi 1985, Kvale 1996) that I subsequently used more formally. Lastly, it gave me areas to explore further and to expand upon in the final stage of the interviewing.

#### 4. Data Analysis

In deciding how to analyse any data there are a number of fundamental questions, which must be answered before the process of analysis can begin. These questions are often practical ones, but also essentially epistemological ones. I discovered that how one is NOT going to do something becomes almost as important as how one IS going to do something. My research was qualitative, but there are different approaches to Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) and my first priority was to find a method of analysing the data that matched my epistemological position. In the early stages a significant question for me was whether to analyse the data by hand, or use a computer programme. This is a good example of a choice, which is practical, but also epistemological.

One of the most widely used methods for analysing data from questionnaires is coding and this approach lends itself to computer analysis,

“As the developers of the popular NUD\*IST packages acknowledge, ‘because the code and retrieve method was easily supported by computers (it) became the basis of most QDA (Qualitative Data Analysis) software.’”  
(Hollway & Jefferson 2001 pg. 68)

The ‘code & retrieve’ method of data analysis, as described by Swift in Sapsford & Jupp (1996) involves, for example in the case of data from questionnaires, giving each answer on the questionnaire a numerical code. Coding can be used for closed or open-ended questions. It has advantages where, for example, a large number of questionnaires have to be analysed involving a number of different people. The coding system also allows the data to be processed by more than one person.

However, there are also disadvantages to using this method. Hollway & Jefferson (2001) believe that coding data causes each individual piece of data to be seen in isolation, rather than as part of the whole. They state that in this way the data becomes decontextualised and can become fragmented.

At this point I returned to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000) whom I had read when I first decided to use a case study approach for my research. This confirmed for me that, according to them, one of the characteristics of the case study approach is, 'holistic treatment of phenomena'. It seemed to me that one of the drawbacks of coding would be a tendency to see the data in isolation and that these component parts of the research might be in danger of becoming greater than the whole. I was becoming increasingly convinced that coding was not a method that I wanted to use and therefore computer analysis was really unnecessary. My thoughts on the subject coincided with those of Hollway and Jefferson,

“..the problem and the excitement is that QDA is probably the most subtle and intuitive of human epistemological enterprises and therefore likely to be the last to achieve satisfactory computerisation.” (Hollway & Jefferson 2001 pg. 68)

I became convinced that for the purposes of my research the coding approach would be complicated and unwieldy and (most importantly) would not elicit the information I wanted. The single most important part of my research was to gain insight into the perspectives of teachers. The very nature of a perspective is that it is different depending upon the position of the individual. This means that any number of factors can influence that perspective and a holistic approach is therefore essential.

Having decided how I was not going to analyse the data, the rather more difficult question to answer was how I was going to analyse the data. According to Hollway & Jefferson (2001) there are four core questions associated with analysing any qualitative data:

- What do we notice?
- Why do we notice what we notice?
- How can we interpret what we notice?



- How can we know that our interpretation is the ‘right’ one?

I was then able to look at the four points made above in terms of my own research. I decided that what I noticed would determine how I would proceed to the next stage of research, the next move if you like. Why I noticed it would depend on a number of factors including my own perspective, how to interpret it would depend on whether I was able to find a real and accurate way of interpreting the meanings that the teachers had ascribed to their experiences.

I came to the conclusion that I simply had to read through the questionnaires, painstakingly noting similarities and differences in the answers and noting things, which were unusual or unexpected. It would also be important to record any references to any significant areas from the original research proposal. For example any reference to the national curriculum. While recording this information I would also make note of any relationship between the age, experience or training of the teachers and their answers. Rather like painting by numbers it occurred to me that only after I had filled in some of the ‘squares’, i.e. looked at and recorded some of the answers, would any kind of recognisable picture begin to emerge. This was how the important initial finding that a significant majority of the respondents, 74% of the total from both schools, thought that in their experience, incidences of challenging behaviour were increasing emerged.

In spite of having determined my approach to the analysis of the data, the questionnaires remained largely ‘unanalysed’. I had confused the coding approach, which I had rejected on epistemological grounds, with the need to organise the data so that I could actually handle it. I made this initial mistake of trying to deal with the raw data without organising it, because I thought that the organising of it would in some way change my epistemological stance. To begin with, the data summaries seemed to me to be too quantitative. However when I was able to see them as a useful tool for organising the data, so that it could be analysed in more depth, they began to make more sense to me.

## 5. Problems with Analysis

I still had some questionnaire data to analyse and I was accumulating large quantities of interview transcripts. Kvale (1996) asserts that one should never pose the question of how to analyse the data after the interviews are complete, in other words, the interviews should be conducted knowing in advance the method that will be used for analysis, however I had not been in this position. In terms of the case study approach, particularly in relation to analysis, I kept returning to what Stake (2005) says in relation to qualitative case work and how he stresses the importance of reflection,

“Perhaps the simplest rule for method in qualitative casework is this: ‘Place your best intellect into the thick of what is going on.’”(Stake 2005 pg. 449)

Influenced by phenomenology, I was ready to be responsive and reflective with the interview data and as Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe, I was excited at the prospect that I might make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. The problem was precisely how I was to do that in a way that would have validity and enable those findings to be communicated to other people? What I lacked was an actual method of doing this and for a long time I struggled. Wasn’t thinking, reading and reflection enough?

However, the danger of that way of thinking is that without a structured approach of some kind one can end up with a stream of consciousness, which cannot even remotely be described as data analysis. I struggled on with this and then decided that I would try to analyse my interview data using dilemma analysis (Altrichter, Posch and Somekh 1993).

In looking at the teacher perceptions it seemed likely that there would be a number of dilemmas and these can be characterised in the text as ‘on the one hand, on the other hand’. For example, one of my original interviewees, a teacher of textiles cited just such an apparent contradiction when she said, ‘on the one hand he responds well in practical lessons, but on the other hand he is challenging when he has to put pen to paper.’ Altrichter, Posch & Somekh (1993) highlight that it is the contradictions that are important,

“In carrying out dilemma analysis, data is selected, structured and interpreted so that contradictions come to light rather than commonalities. This method of analysis is easier when applied to data that interpret social reality and reveal its tensions”. (Altrichter, Posch & Somekh, 1993 pg. 149)

Contradictions, like the one described above, are likely to be common when working with challenging behaviour, much of which can be contextual. For example, children do not always behave in the same way in all circumstances. The same children can be very challenging in some lessons, but not in others. The relevant question in terms of teacher resilience is, why?

Two of the questions which dilemma analysis encourages the researcher to ask are; whether the dilemma is solvable - which I believe has relevance to teacher autonomy and teacher agency and secondly, whether the dilemma is emotionally stressful and this has relevance for teacher resilience. I therefore thought that this would be a particularly appropriate method of data analysis for this particular research project.

Having become influenced by phenomenology affected the way that I engaged with the analysis of the data. Slowly it occurred to me that what I had already done with the data did not look like random acts, but fell into place as a coherent part of my approach. Analysing qualitative data is not a precise science. Hycner (1985) says that a phenomenological approach to analysing interview data is more of an attitude rather than a set of prescribed methods.

## 6. A Phenomenological Approach to Data Analysis

In spite of what Hycner (1985) says he goes on to describe various methods that can be used for data analysis using a phenomenological approach, including respondent validation, which I had already used. My problem was that for a long time I think I had the attitude, but I could not find the method and that by this time I had considered and rejected dilemma analysis. Kvale (1996) describes five main approaches to the analysis of interview data; Condensation, Categorization, Narrative, Interpretation and Ad hoc. The method, which I eventually used, for analysing my interviews was condensation,

“...this empirical phenomenological method may serve to analyse extensive and often complex interview texts by looking for natural meaning units and explicating their main themes.” (Kvale 1996 pg 196)

When writing about condensation as a method of data analysis Giorgi (1985) is concerned with the ‘interpersonal context of learning’. He maintains that we do not learn in isolation, our learning is influenced by interactions with others. This interaction influences the way we construct and attribute meaning to our experiences. It occurred to me that this was relevant not simply in terms of the teachers whom I had interviewed and their interactions with their pupils, but also in terms of their interactions with me as an interviewer. They knew me as a fellow teacher and not simply a researcher. My data suggests that they were probably more open and candid with me than they might have been with someone whose professional experience was different to their own. There were two stages to my research design and correspondingly there were two stages of analysis, the second one far more thorough than the first.

The data collected in the first stage of the research was not analysed as thoroughly as the data from the second stage, but was used to ‘sign post’ the second stage of the research. For example, the finding that a significant majority of respondents to the questionnaire in both schools said that in their experience incidences of challenging behaviour were increasing provided the spur for the first round of interviews, as I tried to discover what this meant for them.

Through the process of transcribing the interviews from the first stage of the research a tentative stage of data analysis took place which involved my examining what I had written and extricating meaning from the text, using a form of condensation (Kvale 1996). This indicated to me that teacher resilience in relation to challenging behaviour was an emerging issue. I decided that I wanted to pursue this issue. That formed the focus for the next stage of the research and no further analysis from the first stage of the research took place. I moved onto the second stage of the research, intending to interview those six teachers again, this time in much more depth to try and explore the issue of teacher resilience in terms of challenging behaviour.

## 7. Condensation as a Method of Data Analysis

In the second stage of the research, I used condensation (Kvale 1996) to analyse the interview data. This is a method of analysis by which the text of the interview is broken down by the researcher into units of meaning. Kvale (1996) describes five stages in what he calls

this ‘empirical phenomenological analysis’ of data. Firstly, the whole transcript is read through to get a sense of the meaning as a whole. I had also listened to the tapes on several occasions, for the same reason, to get a sense of the whole. Listening to the interview as a whole is important to get a sense of the overall meaning, including any emphasis or nuances that may not be evident in print. For me it is important that the data is not fragmented.

The second stage of the condensation process is when the researcher determines the ‘natural meaning units’. This means pulling what the researcher determines to be the salient points from the interview out of the text. Having done this, these units need to be arranged separately in two columns on a separate sheet of paper with the natural meaning units on the left and what the researcher determines to be the central themes on the right. The central themes are the highly ‘condensed’ issues or ideas, which are extracted from the text. This is where this method of analysis derives its name. I could also get very excited about this simple procedure of arranging columns on a sheet of paper because, although the process which produces the words to be written on the paper is very complex, the method by which it is undertaken is very simple and that is what I had lacked thus far on the journey, the certainty of knowing that ‘this is what I am going to do’.

The third stage of condensation is when the researcher expresses these ‘central themes’ as clearly as possible. In the fourth stage these central themes are related to the original research questions. The fifth stage is when all these non-redundant themes (because not all of the findings will be relevant to the research questions) are tied together in a coherent whole, which will become the findings of the research.

It is important to state that all the themes, which were identified during the research (for example the perception of an increase in incidences of challenging behaviour) were the teachers’ themes and not mine. The process of respondent validation helped to me to be confident about presenting them as I have. My voice entered the analysis as I attempted to interpret what the discovery of these themes might mean for the teachers themselves and subsequently for the wider education debate, if the perceptions of this group of teachers were widely replicated.

Part of this process was my finding of the issue of teacher resilience in relation to managing challenging behaviour. Resilience was not necessarily one of the themes about which the

teachers spoke, but emerged as part of the process of data analysis, which included ‘critical commonsense understanding’ (Kvale & Brinkman 2009). This led me to be confident that I had portrayed the perceptions of a group of teachers, as accurately as I possibly could. My interpretation of what those perceptions might mean led to the issue of teacher resilience in relation to managing challenging behaviour emerging as a finding of the research,

“The interpretation here goes beyond reformulating the subjects’ self-understanding-about what they themselves experience and mean about a topic-while remaining within the context of a commonsense understanding. The analysis may thus include a wider frame of understanding than that of the subjects themselves...” (Kvale & Brinkman 2009 pg. 215)

As explained earlier in this chapter, I cannot ignore the fact that my own position as a teacher, with considerable experience of managing challenging behaviour, will have influenced my interpretation of the teachers’ meanings. However, even though my voice is evident at times in the analysis and interpretation of data, I believe that I have come close to representing their perspectives, which is one of the things that I set out to do at the commencement of the project.

In this way, my journey through the perils of data analysis had reached a conclusion and slowly I found myself in a position to identify and articulate the findings of the research, which I have done in the second part of this thesis.

## Chapter Five

### Teacher Perceptions on the Challenge of Inclusion

#### 1. Introduction

Chapter five presents data from stage one of the research, looking at the data in relation to teacher perceptions of inclusion, which was gathered from the questionnaires. Some interview data from stage one of the research is also included. The chapter also examines data from stage two of the research, specifically in relation to teacher perceptions that in their experience incidences of challenging behaviour were increasing and that this could be linked to the practical consequences of the policy of inclusion. In chapter five what emerges is that data indicates that the teachers identified an increase in challenging behaviour and that the policy of inclusion was seen (by a significant number of those teachers) not as an entitlement, but as a mechanism for keeping ‘badly behaved’ pupils in school. The respondents also perceived the curriculum to be a significant factor in exclusions.

The principle of inclusion in education in England specifies that all pupils, irrespective of any special educational needs which they may have, should have the opportunity to be included in a mainstream school. This chapter presents data which indicates that the teachers perceive difficulties with definitions of what is a special educational need.

For example, the data indicates that there is an indeterminate ‘grey area’ in terms of SEN, as one of the interviewees, Harriet, explained,

“But what I think we’ve done is we’ve actually got two levels of it, we’ve got those who have such severe learning difficulties that they can’t access any curriculum and then we’ve got everybody else and what’s not been taken into account is there’s a massive grey area in between. And we have got band aid solutions to it, we’ve got statements and things like that.....” (Harriet)

The data suggested that this ‘grey area’ appeared to occur where pupils from the lower socio-economic groups, who, according to writers such as Garner (1999) and Ball (2008) have traditionally been marginalised in education, are described by the respondents as having special educational needs, even though they may not necessarily meet the criteria for formal assessment. The data indicated that teachers perceive them in this way either because they

believed that these pupils had difficulty accessing the curriculum, or because they appeared to lack motivation. The definition of a special educational need is anything which requires the pupil to have something ‘additional or extra’ (Code of Practice 2001) to that provided for all other pupils of the same age, in order to enable them to access the curriculum.

The data indicated that even if an assessment of special educational needs was made and consequently support was then made available to the pupil, the teachers seemed to perceive that the levels of support were generally insufficient. This chapter explores the teachers perceptions of the ‘entitlement curriculum’ and what this means for them with regard to inclusion. The respondents in stage one and stage two of the research described pupils who were either struggling to cope with the demands of the curriculum or who appeared to lack motivation, but who may not necessarily have had a defined special educational need. This chapter also discusses the issue (as perceived by these teachers) of the difficulty of trying to deliver an entitlement curriculum and to include all pupils in this, whilst significant numbers of them appeared either unwilling, or unable to receive it.

## 2. The Principle of Inclusion in Practice

The teachers who were interviewed in both stages of the research appeared to use the term special educational needs to describe any pupil who appeared unable to access the curriculum because of a complex mixture of learning and behavioural difficulties. These pupils were not necessarily on the SEN register (which the teachers did not always have knowledge of or access to) and therefore there would be no mechanism for ensuring that they had extra support in the classroom. Even if the pupils were on the register and did get support, there was still no guarantee that they would be able to access the curriculum. Harriet described a pupil who was not her ‘chosen pupil’ for the stage two interviews, but came up in one of the interesting ‘conversations with a purpose’ (Kvale 1996) described in the previous chapter. The boy had a statement of special educational needs because of his learning difficulties. Harriet said that he also had behavioural difficulties and found it difficult to access the curriculum, even with his learning support assistant sitting next to him. The boy was designated up to nine hours a week in class support, plus other additional support elsewhere, but in spite of this he could not access the curriculum,

“And he has you know, picking fights and doing this and doing that and doing the other so even when his LSA is sitting next to him who he’s got a



really good relationship with and who he personally chose because he's a man and this poor boy doesn't have any men in his life, even when that person is sitting next to him he is starting fights with other students in a classroom. Which will then wreck the whole lesson. Well how is that inclusion? How is that, you know, it's inclusion because it's including everyone in the failing!" (Harriet)

In terms of a 'wider frame of understanding' of the issues raised during the analysis of the data (Kvale & Brinkman 2009) Harriet's final sentence is significant and it is important to consider and to raise questions about the quality of inclusive education. Everyone maybe included and participating in the same lessons, but what is the quality of the learning? Has, as Harriet suggests, inclusion in this form simply led to a situation where we are 'including everyone in the failing'? This was her perception, and this research is concerned with the perception of teachers.

The data indicated that from the perspective of the teachers, the concept of inclusion and an entitlement curriculum meant that many pupils with special educational needs or those of apparent low ability were being forced to follow an inappropriate curriculum with an insufficient level of support. However, in describing pupils who challenged, Angela doubted if they could ever have enough support to enable them to function in mainstream schools as they are currently constituted,

"They just can't function in such large units, I mean this is not a particularly large school at 850 I mean they can't function some of these young people in such large units, I mean the answer is our special schools were shut down and the answer is, our society can't survive without them". (Angela)

The teachers perceived that the need to engage with these pupils, who could not, or would not, access the curriculum, led to conflict and gave rise to the concept of the 'anti-learning culture' and they saw the school environment as being inappropriate for some pupils who could not access the curriculum because of a combination of learning and behavioural difficulties. For example, although some disruptive students were perceived to be so partly because their needs had not been met many disruptive students were seen as not valuing education and as not having any interest in wanting to learn. These two groups of pupils were by no means clearly delineated, making the situation even more complex.

When identifying a pupil whom he found challenging Phillip said that about 50% of the class that the particular boy was in were on the SEN register, but that the boy he identified, despite having a reading age that was two and a half years behind his chronological age, was not one of them. Speaking about the behaviour of this group Phillip said,

“I don’t know whether its circumstances, upbringing, but it’s a definitely different attitude and seeing where they can see the value of the education and want to achieve. And there are a number of pupils, even in the lower ability sets, a number of pupils who might be in the lower ability set because of either learning difficulties or a couple who have language barriers when they first came and are still progressing through and that’s who I feel sorry for and guilty for when I stand in front of the class trying to control the madness around and there’s three or four faces sitting there expectantly waiting to learn and it’s so frustrating not being able to address that, to be able to sit down and say, ‘ what can I teach you’ because some of them really would soak up anything you try to teach them. And I’m not sure if I see the benefits of inclusion for all because of the negative impact on those children’s education”. (Phillip)

Both Harriet and Phillip saw problems with the concept of including all pupils within the same educational system because, although there were some pupils like those described by Phillip above who wanted to learn in spite of their learning difficulties, the teachers reported that not all pupils did. Phillip and Harriet described a significant number who contributed to the ‘anti-learning culture’ by appearing not to want to learn anyway, irrespective of whether they found it difficult to learn or not,

“We live in an idealised World – we see these grades as setting them free...ultimately I don’t know if it does matter to them. By the time they get to 12 or 13 they have outgrown the classroom”. (Harriet)

“The idea of having a goal in the future...these kids don’t aspire to. The kids don’t care. They don’t value their education”. (Phillip)

### 3. The Perceived Increases in Incidences of Challenging Behaviour

In educational terms the desirability of including all pupils within the same classes tends to be a ‘taken for granted’ assumption. The original purpose of the questionnaires which I distributed had been to gather the views of teachers about the policy of inclusion. This was in an attempt to ascertain what working in an inclusive environment meant for them and to try to determine if there was a connection between high levels of exclusion and any failure of

inclusion. My impetus for the research had been a rise in exclusion rates and I had taken a deliberate decision to try and see exclusion as a failure of inclusion rather than a phenomenon in its own right.

The data from the questionnaires distributed in the first stage of the research revealed that, in the majority of cases, even if the respondents accepted the ideal of inclusion, in practice it presented them with challenges. The way in which this emerged from the data was firstly through to the responses given by the teachers when they were asked if, in their experience, incidences of challenging behaviour among pupils were increasing. Their responses to that question are illustrated in Table 5:1 below.

**Table 5:1 Teachers' Perceptions about whether Incidences of Challenging Behaviour are Increasing**

<b><u>Responses Given By Teachers</u></b>	<b><u>Arthur High School</u></b>	<b><u>Sullivan High School</u></b>	<b><u>Both Schools</u></b>
Yes	15	24	39
No (levels of poor behaviour about the same)	4	1	5
No (limited experience)	2	0	2
No (shortage of specialist staff)	1	0	1
No (not increasing)	1	0	1
Can't say 'Yes' or 'No' (due to lack of experience)	1	4	5
<b>Total</b>	24	29	53

This table shows that 74% of the teachers questioned (39 out of 53) answered an unequivocal 'Yes' to the question when asked if, in their experience they thought incidences of challenging behaviour were increasing. Many of them qualified their answers and some of these comments offered reasons which the teachers felt had contributed to the rise in incidences of challenging behaviour. Many of them were very direct and left me in no doubt about how strongly they felt about the issue, for example;

“As more trained teachers leave the profession pressure gets on those few left to handle the situation without any support from the LEA or the Education Department.” (Teacher from Arthur High School with 15 years experience).

“Children more argumentative generally. Occurrence of swearing now happens on regular (daily) basis. I can remember when swearing confined to playgrounds only. Physical attacks on staff now happen quite often.” (Teacher from Arthur High School with 25+ years experience).

“Very definitely. Pupils know exactly that they are held responsible for nothing – that teachers can do nothing to stop them. There are more and more pupils who do not care what you do or what happens to them.” (Teacher from Sullivan School with 13 years experience).

“Yes. All pupils’ requirements aren’t being met.” (Teacher from Sullivan School with 3 years experience).

“Pupils find boundaries difficult to maintain. Limited support from parents.” (Teacher from Sullivan School with 9 years experience).

The percentage of respondents who felt that incidences of challenging behaviour were increasing gave a strong indication that challenging behaviour was an important issue for these teachers. The issue was further illuminated, however, by careful examination of the data provided by the qualifying comments given by the respondents who had answered ‘No’ to the question.

Those who answered ‘No’ were not unequivocal and this was evidenced because, in most cases, they qualified their answers in some way. Theoretically a ‘No’ answer could have indicated that the respondent thought that incidences of challenging behaviour were becoming less frequent, but only one respondent out of fifty three answered in this way. He was the head teacher of one of the two schools and he evidenced his opinion that incidences of challenging behaviour were not increasing by citing a reduction in the number of pupils permanently excluded from his school over the previous three years.

I considered that this data could be interpreted in a number of ways. It could, indeed, indicate a reduction in incidences of challenging behaviour, or could it indicate that staff had developed more effective strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour and were not finding it necessary to exclude because these strategies were effective? Alternatively, could it mean that more challenging behaviour was being tolerated in an effort to reduce exclusions? Reducing exclusion figures was, at that time - and remains into the present - both a local authority and a national government imperative.

These are examples of some of the qualifying comments made by teachers, who answered 'No';

“There is always poor behaviour – parental support at home is important”. (Teacher from Arthur High School with 4 years experience).

“About the same. Perhaps on some levels it at times feels less contained and perhaps this is due in part to the breakdown of familial structures at home. Challenging behaviour has always been an issue. Still feels we are some way off to dealing with it effectively and in the best interests of the child.” (Teacher at Arthur High School with 16 years experience).

“About the same”. (Teacher at Arthur High School with 20 years experience).

“I would say there are no more in the type of inner city schools of my experience than at any other time over the last 24 years”. (Teacher from Sullivan School with 24 years experience).

Five other teachers who did not say that in their experience incidences of challenging behaviour were increasing simply said that they could not comment due to lack of experience. A further two teachers who answered 'No' then qualified this by saying that they had limited experience,

**“No** In my short time teaching I have not observed any change.” (Teacher from Arthur High School with 2 years experience).

**“No** Limited experience. I believe behaviour is as challenging as the teacher allows it to be. Can be managed”. (Teacher from Arthur High School with 2 years experience).

The only answer which was ambiguous (because it was impossible to ascertain with any certainty precisely what the teacher meant) was where the teacher answered 'No' and cited shortage of specialist staff in the qualifying comment. This teacher was not subsequently interviewed and therefore it is difficult to extrapolate the meaning from this answer.

In stage one of the research, after I had distributed the questionnaires I subsequently interviewed six teachers. Three of these teachers had responded to the questionnaire by saying that they thought that challenging behaviour was increasing, two of them had not completed a questionnaire and the sixth teacher, Julian, was an experienced teacher who answered 'No' to this question. However, he qualified his answer by saying that the

behaviour was, “Not really much different”. This answer could be interpreted as meaning that he had experienced high levels of challenging behaviour among pupils throughout his teaching career and Julian indicated in subsequent interviews that this was in fact what he had meant.

He was on the verge of leaving teaching after more than thirty years of working in what he described as challenging schools. His responses indicated that he did not perceive that the pupils were necessarily any more badly behaved now than they had been previously; he cited examples of worse behaviour that he had encountered working in previous schools. However he had concerns about what Johnson (1999) called the ‘critical mass’, which is the number of pupils with challenging behaviour with which a school can successfully cope, before their behaviour becomes the ‘norm’ for the school. From the way Julian responded it appeared that he perceived that Arthur High School was on the ‘wrong side’ of the ‘critical mass’ of these pupils.

Perceptions of challenging behaviour among the teachers appeared to have a number of similarities and there was a high degree of consensus among the respondents. The way in which this question was answered indicated to me that the issue of challenging behaviour was pertinent and relevant to this group of teachers, the majority of whom perceived that incidences of challenging behaviour were increasing. Julian’s response was typical of the ‘No’ answers. Although the respondents who answered ‘No’ did not say that they perceived incidences of challenging behaviour to be increasing, nevertheless they still regarded challenging behaviour as a problem for them.

There was therefore a very strong indication in the data from stage one of the research that the respondents were concerned about challenging behaviour. Even if they did not perceive that it was increasing (which a significant majority of them did) then they still perceived that challenging behaviour among pupils was a reality which they could not avoid and were obliged to confront.

#### 4. The Relationship Between the Policy of Inclusion and Challenging Behaviour

Other data collected from the questionnaires in stage one of the research further illuminated teacher perspectives on inclusion. Teachers were asked what the term inclusion meant to them. I was anxious to portray what inclusion meant for them and as I engaged with the process of data analysis I made particular use of ‘critical commonsense understanding’ (Kvale & Brinkman 2009) to try and synthesise the issues and as a result of this process a number of themes emerged from their responses.

##### **i) Equality of Opportunity**

The first theme to emerge from the answers of the teachers was an attitude to inclusion which seemed to be about access for all and equality of opportunity. This response could be summed up by the same answer that was given by fifteen respondents at Sullivan School. At Sullivan High School there was less variation in the responses than there was at Arthur High School. Fifteen of the respondents at Sullivan High School said, “All children have access to the same education and resources”; (one couldn’t help wondering if they had all recently been on the same course!) Other examples of this perspective included respondents who said, “Education for all”, “Equality of opportunity”, “That no pupil is left out when it comes to education” and “Access for all, lack of exclusion”. These answers are perhaps what one might expect, in view of the current educational imperative towards inclusion and accounted for 60% of the total responses (32 out of 53).

##### **ii) Inclusion for the ‘Deserving’**

The second theme which emerged from the answers to this question seemed to suggest that the meaning of inclusion for some of the respondents was not about it being an issue of equality of opportunity or an inalienable right. Instead, inclusion was something which should be deserved: The ‘deserving’ could be included but the ‘undeserving’ quite simply did not deserve to be. Seen from this perspective inclusion is not perceived to be a right, but a reward,

“Teaching all the children in front of you, deemed worthy to be there by school bodies, equally.”

So the pupils who ‘deserve’ inclusion are included, but what of those who are ‘undeserving’? The teachers felt they were obliged to try with these pupils and avoid them being excluded if they did not conform,

“Doing everything possible to support a pupil and avoid exclusion.”

“As many children in mainstream education as possible.”

“Avoiding exclusion if possible.”

Answers like the last three (illustrated above) related to what some of the teachers perceived as the relationship between challenging behaviour and inclusion, and began to give an insight into the relationship between challenging behaviour and exclusion.

### **iii) Opposition to Exclusion**

The third theme to emerge and a definite step away from the previous perspective was the perception of the teachers who were actively opposed to inclusion. For these teachers inclusion seemed to be a way of keeping badly behaved pupils in school. When asked what inclusion meant to them these teachers answered in the following ways,

“Keeping disruptive students in school”.

“NEGATIVE – keeping pupils in the school regardless of behaviour to disrupt others.”

“NEGATIVE - do not approve of it [inclusion].”

For some of these teachers inclusion was not an ideal. Three of these teachers saw it as the means, by which, they had to retain pupils in their classes who would otherwise have been excluded from the school,

“Controlling the behaviour of pupils within the school environment.”

“A pupil isolated internally (two respondents answered in this way).”



Other teachers appeared to see it as the failure of the education service to provide specialist provision for certain pupils. In this way inclusion was simply a phenomenon which was indicative of the failure of some other system,

“The closing down of specialist schools.”

“An indication of Gov. inability to provide proper support for certain pupils.”

#### **iv) Locational**

Lastly, for some teachers inclusion was purely locational. It was about where children were educated. These teachers answered that for them inclusion meant that children were,

“Kept involved in the school system.”

“Keeping students within the school community.”

“Pupils in School Accessing the NC (three respondents answered in this way).”

“Coping with many different children in mainstream education.”

For respondents who were negative about inclusion, their perspective was that it seemed to represent a mechanism for keeping disruptive students (or those with special educational needs for whom there was deemed to be inadequate provision made) within the mainstream school system. These respondents did not see inclusion as an issue of equality of opportunity. Those whose answers indicated that they were either opposed to inclusion, or who did not see it as an issue of equality and access for all, accounted for 40% of the respondents (21 out of 53).

All of the six teachers that I interviewed in stage one of the research were concerned with a lack of effective provision for pupils with special educational needs who might formerly have been educated in special schools, but who were now routinely included within mainstream classrooms. Their chief concerns about these pupils seemed to fall into two broad categories. Firstly, that a lack of either suitable provision and/or support for these pupils meant that their unmet needs led inexorably to disruptive behaviour in the classroom or, secondly, that pupils whose needs were not met and who were not disruptive continued to have their needs

unmet because of the demands on teacher time made by the disruptive pupils. Either way disruptive behaviour seemed to be the significant feature.

Returning to Julian, who was also interviewed in stage two of the research, his perspective on inclusion could have been described as a cynical one. He praised the help given by support staff but said that it was generally insufficient,

“So of course it’s [help given by support staff] very valuable, well I have been hugely indebted to the one person who’s come in with the year ten group that we’ve discussed many times. I’m hugely indebted to her. Just as the adult support and another sane human being in the room, even if she didn’t do all the good stuff that she’s done with individuals, within that room, it’s very important, yes I’m not decrying them but those who oversee education don’t actually deliver education but oversee it, be it within the school and the borough and higher up, will point to the figures and stuff like this but they don’t know about the reality and they’re not around long enough a lot of them to really care. So, yes, inclusion is really just for me, it is just a policy that I’ve always tried to include all the kids that have ever been in my room and so have all teachers of my philosophy who have come through years back in the 60s and 70s when we went into teaching when it was a different beast to enter, and you entered because you really, really wanted to do it I guess, and it wasn’t about money and it wasn’t about career, and it wasn’t even about what you teach, it was why you wanted to be in there in the first place. And that’s the good will that used to be called professionalism but that’s long gone”.  
(Julian)

The respondents who were interviewed in both stage one and stage two of the research all appeared to believe that special schools were a ‘good’ thing, and that they should continue to work in parallel with mainstream schools. They were all concerned that if the critical mass, (Johnson 1999) of disruptive pupils got too great within the school population as a whole, then this was to the detriment of all the pupils. For example they articulated their fears that if the school could not adequately meet the needs of pupils with learning disabilities then one of two things might happen. Firstly, the pupils in this situation might, through boredom, become disruptive. If this happened, then the education of everyone in the class may be disrupted. Secondly, if the pupils whose needs were unmet became withdrawn, then this would often go unnoticed because so much time and energy would be being expended on the disruptive pupils.

The following comments, from four teachers who were all interviewed at stage one of the research, illustrates the perspectives of some of the respondents on the difficulty of trying to

include pupils with special educational needs (or perceived needs which the teachers felt they could not meet) and the impact which this had on behaviour in their lessons.

Harriet, (a Teach First teacher who had not completed the questionnaire), said there were five pupils in her Year 7 English group who were very disruptive. She described them as, “badly behaved kids who need help”, but she also spoke of a “double edged sword” meaning that there were children in the class who wanted to learn, but who were prevented from doing so by the behaviour of the five. This teacher said, “I wanted to say to the bright kids get yourself to a school where you can flourish”. She went on to say, “We’re an inclusive school but there are some students who are destroying other people’s education without a doubt.

Angela, an experienced Head of Year, who also did not complete the questionnaire, said, “We need smaller schools with all the difficult kids spread out”. She believed that, if there were not so many pupils displaying disruptive behaviour that peer pressure would, “sort it out”. This echoed what Julian had said when speaking about a lower ability Year 10 GCSE English group, when he had referred to Arthur High School as being on the ‘wrong side’ of the critical mass. He had also said, “How can you spread yourself around twenty kids when they all need help?”

Jenny was keen to say how much she enjoyed teaching. She spoke of a pupil in her textiles class who occasionally attempted practical work but became very unwilling to do any written tasks. He had not done any homework for two years. Jenny didn’t know if the boy was on the SEN register or what his literacy skills were like. He was disruptive, but she wasn’t sure whether he was disruptive because he couldn’t do the work or whether it was for some other reason. She explained that when he refused to engage with her lesson then she would ask a senior member of staff to remove him.

Alison said that, in the case of a particular pupil who in her opinion displayed challenging behaviour poor literacy skills and a consequent inability to engage with the curriculum were a major factor, “he’s bored so he kicks off”. This pupil had a statement of special educational needs and was given in-class support, but didn’t respond to it. Alison described two other pupils, one of whom had been re-included into Arthur High School from a PRU (following an exclusion from another mainstream school) who had “good days and bad days”. She said that he had a low reading age and struggled to write. Alison said she was trying to make a

relationship with him but that he brought his problems from the other lessons into her lessons. The consequence of this was that her lessons also became disrupted.

The second boy was in Year 9 boy with a statement of special educational needs who had set trees alight (with a deodorant can made into a make-shift flame thrower) and had been found in possession of pornography. The staff had tried to get him a place in special school but with no success. The special school had been full, so they were grateful that his statement of special educational needs had enabled them to arrange a part-time timetable for him to give them some respite. She added however that this hadn't really helped the pupil and said, "A statement is like ticking boxes". She had hoped that the statement would automatically entitle him to transfer to a special school.

These teachers were all giving examples of students who, in their opinion, were displaying challenging behaviour which was disrupting their classes. When questioned about what they believed constituted disruptive behaviour, all the teachers cited pupils who could not (or would not) work in their lessons. The teachers all seemed to see this partly as a consequence of the policy of inclusion. These teachers appeared to be by and large sympathetic towards the pupils who, although they were disruptive in their lessons, they tended to view almost as 'victims' of the system. As Harriet had put it, "badly behaved kids who need help". However, because of the framework within which the teachers said they were obliged to work, and also because of the constraints of time, money and in some cases the curriculum they had talked about how these children were not getting the help that the teachers perceived was needed within the inclusive framework of a mainstream school.

All these teachers appeared to think, without exception, that these pupils would get more and better help if they transferred to smaller schools. The concept of a 'smaller school' appeared to equate to special school. There seemed to be an emerging link between the policy of inclusion and challenging behaviour. What was it about the policy of inclusion in these schools that may or may not have been contributing to the problem of challenging behaviour?

## 5. The Curriculum and Challenging Behaviour

Having established a strong link emerging from the data concerning teacher perceptions about the relationship between the policy of inclusion and challenging behaviour, it was necessary to try to establish what it was about inclusion that might be contributing towards challenging behaviour. Why did the teachers think that so many pupils appeared not to be able to engage with the learning in their lessons?

The national curriculum is an entitlement curriculum. In the questionnaires teachers were asked if they broadly agreed or disagreed with the premise that the national curriculum has contributed to a rise in exclusions. This premise is based on the original impetus for my research, which was the significant rise in permanent exclusions since the implementation of the 1988 Education Reform Act which introduced the national curriculum. Their responses to this question are illustrated in table 5:2 below.

**Table 5:2 Teacher Perceptions about whether the National Curriculum has Contributed to a Rise in Exclusions**

<b><u>Responses Given By Teachers</u></b>	<b><u>Arthur High School</u></b>	<b><u>Sullivan High School</u></b>	<b><u>Both Schools</u></b>
Agree National Curriculum has contributed to a rise in exclusion	10	16	26
Disagree National Curriculum has not contributed to a rise in exclusion	7	5	12
Neither agree nor disagree/ No Opinion	7	8	15
<b>Total</b>	24	29	53

When asked whether the respondents broadly agreed or disagreed that the national curriculum had contributed to a rise in exclusions, almost half of them (some 49% or 26 out of 53) said that they agreed that the national curriculum had contributed to a rise in exclusions. Although the percentage who agreed with this statement was not as high as the percentage who thought that incidences of challenging behaviour were increasing, it was still sufficiently high to make the level of consensus among the respondents significant. As with the previous question about the perceived increase in incidences of challenging behaviour, it was important to look at the reasons the respondents gave for answering in the way that they

did. Once again, it was not an unequivocal 'Agree' or 'Disagree', it was not 49% who said that the national curriculum had contributed to a rise in exclusions and 51% who said that it had not and this was illuminated by the comments of the respondents.

Of the twenty-six respondents who agreed, when invited to make a qualifying comment, four said that inappropriate content in the national curriculum and a consequent lack of access led to inappropriate behaviour. A further four said that the national curriculum was "inflexible". Two went further and described it as a "straitjacket". One simply said, "more pupils end up excluded". One said, "Areas such as History and Geography reflect Britishness".

Julian also had concerns about what teachers were expected to accomplish with, for example, pupils who would not previously have been expected to sit public examinations. In the face of the entitlement curriculum and the policy of inclusion, Julian said it was difficult, if not impossible, to offer pupils an alternative to examinations. During one interview, when referring to what he saw as the inappropriateness of the curriculum for this group of pupils he said, "Let's stop flogging a dead horse". He also called the national curriculum a "white middle class curriculum", by which Julian explained that he thought it did not meet the needs of a socially and ethnically diverse school community.

Here was an echo of concerns expressed by writers such as Slee (1998), Parsons (1999) and Searle (1996) who suggested that the national curriculum did not meet the needs of those with special needs, or pupils from ethnic minorities, all of whom are disproportionately represented in the exclusion figures (Parsons 1999 & 2005, Hayden 2000 and Lamb 2009).

Of the 23% of the respondents who said they didn't agree that the national curriculum had contributed to a rise in exclusions, some qualified their answers with comments. For example, one said, "The national curriculum is broadening all the time to accommodate under-achievers". This appeared to mean that in the perception of this teacher the national curriculum was, or had been, a problem for some pupils, but that the situation was improving. Another said, "League tables are contributing to a large number of exclusions". One said that whether or not the national curriculum was a factor which contributed to exclusions, "depends on the school".

A further 28% neither agreed nor disagreed with the question or said they had ‘no opinion’. Again, in most cases, the reason cited for giving this answer was ‘lack of experience’. Experience was emerging as an important factor for these teachers in determining their perceptions. Many of the teachers who said they were unable to comment on whether the national curriculum was a factor in contributing to a rise in permanent exclusions, had only ever taught the national curriculum and so had nothing with which to compare it. The data from the questionnaires and interviews was giving a strong indication that challenging behaviour was a significant issue for these teachers and that, in their perception, there was a connection between their perception of increasing incidences of challenging behaviour and the policy inclusion and that in turn, the national curriculum was a factor in this.

## 6. Socio-Economic Factors in Relation to Challenging Behaviour

Of the thirty nine teachers who commented that from their perspective challenging behaviour was increasing, those who made comments made reference to a number of factors which, in their view, were potential causes of the increase in incidences of challenging behaviour. Several referred to social issues beyond the control of the teacher including the influence of reality television shows. Several cited the lack of parental support. One said, “There is a culture of acceptance – society wide”. Some analysis of the possible causes of challenging behaviour is always useful, particularly in terms of finding solutions to the problem; however that in itself does not help anyone to understand what the reality is for teachers who are coping with challenging behaviour on a daily basis in their classrooms. Therefore, what became ever more important to me and to my research was not why there was challenging behaviour, but what dealing with the effects of this behaviour meant for the teachers.

Some of the teachers made a link between the government’s response to social situations, as expressed through legislation, and how they thought this could impact adversely on perceived incidences of challenging behaviour. An example of this would be the perception of a connection between the implementation of the 1988 Education Reform Act and the rise in exclusions. Angela, speaking in 2007 (prior to the recession which began in 2008) spoke of a sense of hopelessness among her pupils and about their perception of the likelihood of their getting employment when they left school. Their perception was that migrant workers would ‘take all the jobs’. Angela did not condone these attitudes, but acknowledged the effect

that these concerns (real or imagined) had on a predominantly white, working class community and the impact that these attitudes had on their behaviour,

“I don’t think they [the government] understand, I don’t think they understand at all. I’m not saying how this society feels is the right way of feeling or behaving or thinking but that is how this society seems to feel and I don’t think the government seems to understand that. I mean I’ve sat down with 13/14 year old boys recently to do exactly what we’ve just talked about, form a relationship, form a bond, spend time, give an hour of my time to one or two individuals, very, very problematic boys in year nine, and listening to them talk and what they see, they say, ‘well I’ll be dead by the time I’m 25, I’ll probably kill myself’ and they’re not, I mean I just think that’s incredibly shocking. I’ve not heard the young people from the estate express such a level of hopelessness before. I think there have always been very low aspirations but I think there’s a greater sense of hopelessness. Not in all of them of course, but in some. Some groups. And yet, balanced on that, I mean the conversations I had came out of us deciding trying to put work experience in as an option in Year 10. And that has genuinely sparked reflection and thought and planning in some of the most problematic boys in year nine for their futures in a way that’s incredibly positive. So I think there are gifted individuals who have time to work with these young people in small groups and have an opportunity to make a profound difference to their ability to achieve and their ability to succeed when they leave school and in society as a whole. The problem is that we don’t have enough time or people to give those young people that small group situation which is all they can function in”. (Angela).

Angela’s concerns are related to the policy of inclusion, because she felt that these youngsters could be helped if they could be worked with in smaller groups, which equated to not being in a mainstream classroom. Tony, however, was concerned that the education system was intended to prepare youngsters for a future which the government dictated we should all want, but which for many was perhaps simply too difficult to achieve. He felt that, in these circumstances, there was no obvious alternative to offer those pupils who were unlikely to achieve regular employment and the prospect of a secure future, so the only option was to try and make them behave, and keep telling them what they should be doing for the sake of good order,

“Well that’s right, if you go down that track of saying well if you don’t work hard at school, out there it’s knowledge and skills.....because actually they see even at the nursery slopes, the gradient is incredibly steep and too much of a challenge for many. And it’s probably easier to give up and do what you want than to sort of be reminded of your failings, I don’t know. And what we’re doing, we’re putting, we’re overlaying, our notion of what they need to be doing and in part, there’s a, ‘of course that’s right, that’s what we should be



doing' and society expects good discipline in schools and that everybody is doing what they ought to be doing. And if everybody did what they ought to be doing we'd be living in a perfect society. But actually we're doing it in part for ourselves because we actually want an environment that is as stress free as possible. As teachers, we want kids to conform or behave or do as they're told because it makes lives a lot easier to....conduct on a day-to-day basis. But from their point of view, if we actually bothered to try and find out, and I 'm not sure we do, I tell them what they ought to be doing rather than finding out the way they view it, but I suspect that how they view the world with lesser experience is that actually what follows on is best to ignore". (Tony)

These concerns, expressed by both Angela and Tony, exemplified the emergence from the data of the perception of a socially excluded 'underclass' (Parsons 1999 and Ball 2008), describing a group within society who could be held responsible for their own failings, "Families and circumstances, and cultures, are to blame..." (Ball 2008 pg. 153). By advocating for 'smaller groups' Angela seemed to be suggesting that the education system was constructed in such a way that by including these pupils within it, instead of making separate provision for them, their 'underclass' status was reinforced, because they were confronted by repeated failure. The views expressed by both Angela and Tony seem to suggest that pupils from the 'underclass' will have little chance of succeeding in an education system which is not designed to meet their needs and aspirations.

The focus of this research is not the pupils, per se, but the teachers' perception of the pupils' behaviour and so this discourse is relevant only in terms of the construct of an 'underclass' who may exhibit oppositional behaviour in the classroom. Therefore, the emergence of the idea of an 'underclass' and concomitant 'anti-learning culture' is only significant in relation to the effect that it may or may not have on the ability of the teachers to do their job. However the 'anti -learning culture' was not perceived as being exclusively associated with less able pupils who the teachers most usually associated with an 'underclass'.

Tony described a very able boy who had been given the opportunity to go to one of the local independent schools but who had refused to go because, as the boy put it, "I don't want to go there it's full of f\*\*\*\*\*g boffs".

Tony's perception was that this particular boy was quite able to do the work but chose not. The boy was part of a Year 10 Technology class which Tony described as a "Nightmare group". He went on to describe a particularly unpleasant incident when the class had been kept back because all the pencils had not been returned. The boy he had formerly described

had responded to this by kicking the door of the classroom off its hinges and becoming both verbally and physically abusive to the teacher.

In terms of this data, which came from an interview which took place in stage one of the research, the concept of an 'anti-learning culture' among the pupils came across very strongly. Here was a boy whose behaviour could not be explained away by the inappropriateness of the curriculum being unable to meet his special educational needs (as with some of the examples described earlier in this chapter). This particular boy simply resented the teacher's authority and saw no reason why he should be made to return school equipment if he chose not to. The boy thought it trivial that the teacher should want all the pencils returned - who was he (the Assistant Head Teacher) to keep him (the boy) behind?

Tony cited the many refugees and asylum seekers within the school who, in his opinion, valued education and were keen to work. He contrasted this with the indigenous population, many of whom, (in his experience) he said, had scant regard for learning. From this contrast emerged some idea of how the aforementioned 'undeserving' in terms of the policy of inclusion might be perceived.

Most of the teachers had so far described young people whom they perceived to have learning or other 'difficulties'. These children may or may not have had identified levels of special educational need, but they were generally regarded quite sympathetically, despite the disruption they caused, albeit that the staff felt that these pupils would be better off in smaller (special) schools. Tony's experience was a departure from this. The boy he described in the stage one interview was actually very able and yet he had no interest in learning. He saw no value in learning and did not respect the authority of the teachers.

All of these teachers articulated their thoughts shaped by their personal experiences; what things meant for them personally and how they had experienced them. They spoke of how they saw an incident. They made no pretence at being objective and I was not seeking objectivity. From a phenomenological point of view I was interested in how they ascribed meaning to their experiences. What was beginning to emerge was a perception that there was a mismatch between the abilities, aspirations and expectations of many of the pupils and the expectations of the school as an institution and the wider education service which it represented. These were the constraints in which the teachers were obliged to operate.

Within this emerging construct there were echoes of the idea of a socially excluded ‘underclass’ who, if they formed the ‘critical mass’ (Johnson 1999) of a school population could make the job of the teacher very difficult. This is because either their learning difficulties or their apparent disregard for the value of learning often led them into acts of oppositional behaviour, which challenged their teachers by disrupting the lessons.

What happened each day at the classroom level was that the individual teachers experienced this mismatch between their imperatives, which were primarily to deliver the curriculum and the disinterest of a significant number of their pupils which often resulted in disruption. The purpose of my research was not to analyse in great depth why this happened, or to apportion blame. My interest was in what these experiences meant for these teachers.

## 7. How would you Change Education?

The final ‘catch all’ question on the questionnaire gave further insight into what teachers perceived to be the connection between inclusion and challenging behaviour. This question asked teachers to cite one thing which they would like to change about education. There were a range of answers, but a considerable number of the answers referred to challenging behaviour or a lack of discipline as being factors which needed to improve in order to improve education as a whole.

A significant number of the responses were about behaviour, and examples of the wide range of responses included: three respondents who said they thought more facilities for pupils with behaviour problems would be an improvement; three others cited better or firmer discipline; one said a willingness to carry out sanctions (by the school); five said that the improvement they wanted was to see bad behaviour dealt with; two referred to wanting recourse to punishments that children feared; two said that an increase in parental responsibility would be an improvement, and one said take out non-interested pupils. In view of the data already discussed with regard to perceptions of inclusion which had emerged so far, what was most significant was that only one out of those fifty-three questionnaire respondents thought that increasing inclusion would improve education.

For these teachers, the principle of inclusion was a concept about which they appeared to have little or no consensus and yet they had considerable consensus about what they

perceived as challenging behaviour. When asked what they would do to improve education, many of their answers referred to ways of ameliorating the effects of what they saw as unacceptable behaviour, but only one respondent thought that an increase in inclusion would improve education. In conclusion the questionnaire data had been very useful in drawing out and highlighting challenging behaviour as an issue for this group of teachers. The subsequent interviews in stage one of the research had confirmed that challenging behaviour was an issue, and that what teachers regarded as challenging behaviour was largely related to disruption to their lessons. The questionnaire data indicated that a significant majority of the respondents thought that challenging behaviour was increasing, and that many of those who didn't, could not comment because they did not have enough experience to make a comparison, or they thought it had always been a problem.

There was also an emerging link between inclusion and challenging behaviour. For many of these teachers the problem of challenging behaviour could be related to the policy of inclusion because, in the view of many of these teachers, inclusion did not mean 'access to education for all' - it meant keeping the 'undeserving' in the education system. This was significant because the policy of inclusion forms an integral part of the framework in which schools must operate. What were the implications for teachers managing challenging behaviour if they perceived that one of the causes of challenging behaviour was actually endemic within the education system?

These findings told me something about what these teachers regarded as challenging behaviour, but they told me little or nothing about what it really meant for these teachers to deal with disruptive or disaffected behaviour on a daily basis. I also needed to find out more about what teachers perceived as challenging behaviour. The data examined in this chapter has revealed that challenging behaviour and subsequent disruption in their lessons is an issue for these teachers.

Chapter six looks at what these teachers mean by disruptive behaviour; how they describe challenging behaviour; how they respond to it, and what does having to respond to it mean for them both as professionals and as people.

## Chapter Six

### Teacher Perceptions of Challenging Behaviour

#### 1. Introduction

In chapter six I have attempted to describe what teachers mean by challenging behaviour. The data indicated that what they meant by challenging behaviour was generally 'low level' disruption to their lessons. Chapter six presents data from the second stage of the research and explores the emerging issue of the perceived link between challenging behaviour and the ability of the pupils. In doing so, it builds on issues discussed in chapter five in relation to the policy of inclusion.

In the initial interview of the second stage of the research, each teacher was asked to think of a pupil whose behaviour they found particularly challenging and to describe the pupil in terms of the behaviour. Subsequently, as the 'conversations with colleagues' described in the methodology chapter developed, the teachers gave other examples of what they regarded as challenging behaviour and overwhelmingly, pupils who disrupted their lessons were perceived as giving them the most problems.

This chapter attempts to develop an understanding about how this group of teachers perceive challenging behaviour and what it means for them in terms of what they perceive causes it and crucially, how they respond to it. The focus of this chapter is, therefore, what these teachers regard as challenging behaviour and how they respond to it. The ability of the pupils is important, in so far as disruptive pupils described in the data are generally described as being of low ability and so have difficulty in accessing the prescribed curriculum.

The chapter concludes by problematising how the teachers perceive that the nature and quality of the relationships, which they have to establish with the pupils, is integral to their success in behaviour management. This is because the teachers hope that through the strength of those relationships, the pupils can be persuaded to conform and become less disruptive.

## 2. What do Teachers Perceive as Challenging Behaviour?

Table 6:1 below lists the teachers interviewed in stage two of the research and describes the characteristics of each of the pupils chosen by each teacher. The pupils are also described in terms of their challenging behaviours using summaries in the words of the teachers. This explains what it is about the behaviour of each of these pupils that each teacher finds challenging.

**Table 6:1 Teacher Perceptions of Challenging Behaviour**

<b><u>TEACHER</u></b>	<b><u>PUPIL YEAR GROUP, GENDER AND TEACHER'S PERCEPTION OF ABILITY</u></b>	<b><u>REASONS WHY THE TEACHER SELECTED THAT PARTICULAR PUPIL TEACHERS PERCEPTION OF CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR</u></b>
<b>Phillip</b>	<b>Year 8 and Male</b> “He’s not a high flyer, it’s set 5 out of 6 so they are not a high flying year and I think over half the classroom is special needs register”. This pupil is not on the register but has a reading age of 9.6 and a chronological age of 12	“...almost constantly involved in some kind of disturbance in the classroom, a lot of it is very low level disruption- constant chitter chattering” Doesn’t pay attention, lack of focus. “...occasionally he will be very attentive for a lesson, actually come with the idea that ‘I’m going to work well in this lesson’ but it’s rare for that to last longer than a single lesson”.
<b>Harriet</b>	<b>Year 11 and Male</b> Average ability. Capable of getting a C at GCSE English but lacks motivation	“...year 11 student who behaviour wise is late to lessons and then makes a performance out of coming into the room, will then take any opportunity to talk to his friend who is also in the class...” “He will also refuse to take any responsibility for his behaviour whatsoever to the extent of even when you have got him bang to right for something, will then go ‘ya, but you didn’t do anything to so and so who did that the other day’ ...” Argumentative, confrontation, “Won’t take instruction”.
<b>*Tony</b>	<b>Year 10 and Male</b> Very limited ability	Tony does not teach this boy but as a member of the SLT came across him out of lessons and when he was challenged, the boy reacted very aggressively, “I think what it is, you have somebody here who is like a sort of spark, could make him erupt. I think he’s like a gas cylinder, reasonably sort of safe and secure but you actually know that there’s always that potential for it to go off if it’s mistreated or under adverse conditions and you just sort of think that’s probably as good an analogy as I can consider that if it’s possible to control that energy or that pressure that is there he can be coaxed but all it takes is a set or combination of particular combination of events and he can just blow up. And there is that sort of feeling because of his, partly his size because he is an exceptionally big boy and I think probably exceptionally powerful when he’s angry. He’s not somebody, and I think there’s that underlying anxiety that staff probably have. I would say generally, he’s not a gentle giant”.
<b>*Julian</b>	<b>Year 10 and Male</b> “very weak, barely literate and I suspect that even if he worked honestly he would struggle to attain grade F in English which in our currency	“...he’s a difficult child in a constructed group of the worst achievers and often with that comes the worst behaviours; the two are very much linked.” Persistently late to lessons, “I mean significantly late, it could be up to 15 minutes and he’s never been there on time...” “...what he will do is he will come in and he will open his book at random.... he graffs all the way

	of 3 years ago would have been G so we are talking about somebody at a very low level.”	through, it’s not something that I encourage obviously, he doesn’t know how to use a book”.
<b>Angela</b>	Angela did not talk about a specific pupil that she taught, as a Deputy Head she said that in her perception, in the limited number of groups that she taught her relationships with the pupils were so good that she did not experience challenging behaviour. She had the view that the biggest challenge to the staff was the disruption in lessons. Her perception was that there is a correlation between ability, and disruption in lessons.	“...these children can’t cope. They just can’t cope. You know, you get them in a small group situation and you see a whole different set of skills. And they need time, and they need emotional investment in a way that other children who are more proficient in social skills and who are perhaps more proficient academically [don’t]. I had a boy sit in my room and say, ‘well the problem is I can’t read or write can I? I can’t do it really’ and what I ask myself is, how as we as intelligent adults, if you or I came across a skill that we just couldn’t manage, we tried and we tried and we tried but we could not do it. As sensible adults we would say to ourselves, this is not for us, I’ll do something different. And yet, we expect these children who have tried and tried and tried since primary school to keep trying. And to not give up. And not to be disillusioned. And that’s the right thing for them to do but as adults we’d never do that.”

\*Without realising it, Tony and Julian had selected the same pupil, so the behaviour of this particular pupil was seen from the perspectives of two teachers, one from the point of view of his behaviour in a lesson and the other from the point of view of behaviour outside the classroom.

Axup and Gersch (2008) say that teacher stress and challenging behaviour are not definitive terms, but depend upon context, expectations and perceptions. The perception of the group of teachers I interviewed was that the greatest challenge came from pupils who would not (or could not) engage with the curriculum and who disrupted their lessons because of this. This included pupils who were persistently late for lessons or failed to engage with the work set in the lessons. This disruption was regular and persistent, not an occasional problem, but something which was an integral part of almost every lesson.

The teachers I interviewed overwhelmingly perceived challenging behaviour in terms of disruption to their lessons. What emerged from the information in the table illustrated in 6:1 was that disruption to the learning process was what the teachers found most challenging because it diverted the teachers from being able to carry out their role. Quite simply their perception was that they were sometimes prevented from doing their job. This disruption was created in a variety of ways, but the two most common were firstly, pupils arriving late for and then disturbing the lesson, and secondly (and arguably more importantly) pupils refusing to work in the lessons and alternatively indulging in distracting behaviours such as talking or throwing pieces of screwed up paper across the room.

### i) Punctuality and Disruption

The teachers that I interviewed were all concerned about punctuality when describing the pupils who challenged them which these comments from Harriet and Tony typify,

“... late to lessons and then makes a performance about coming into the room”. (Harriet)

“So for example, I see him on a Friday morning invariably when I’m on gate duty seeing latecomers in, I find him out of class on a fairly regular basis and there’s always some plausible excuse as to why he isn’t where he ought to be”. (Tony)

What is often called ‘low level disruption’ is frequently cited as the most common kind of challenging behaviour (Rogers 2004). ‘Low level disruption’ manifests itself as the failure of the pupil to engage in the classroom, including problems with punctuality and lack of motivation in lessons. It is generally referred to as ‘low level disruption’ to distinguish it from the more serious outbursts of violence that can occur in schools and would more accurately be described as serious or high level disruption. Two of the teachers interviewed described challenging behaviour that could occasionally involve abuse or the threat of violence. However only one pupil came into this category and it later transpired that both Julian and Tony were describing the same pupil,

“...he could be dangerous...physically dangerous”. (Julian)

“And bearing in mind his size, I actually thought at one point he’s going to hit me. He didn’t and in all my years I have only ever been struck once and that is from a lad who had been on cannabis. But I actually got a bit worried, not because of me, because I’m perfectly capable of defending myself but I don’t particularly want to undertake extensive dental treatment.” (Tony)

References to violent behaviour were rare in the data. Generally, the data showed that the teachers, including Tony and Julian regarded a refusal to work in lessons and other forms of ‘low level disruption’ as a much more pressing problem than violence.



## ii) Refusal to Work in Lessons

The teachers described situations where sometimes disaffection, often characterised by lateness and/or by poor attendance in lessons and a lack of motivation combined to prevent pupils completing their work, as in the situation that Julian describes below,

“...presented with lateness with no reason whatsoever, no equipment and for two successive lessons a complete refusal to even attempt to continue the good work he had been doing, the page of writing he actually was writing about a film analysing how directors create suspense in films. He had done a whole page of writing and I praised him for it and he seemed really quite pleased and a very low level of skills, but it made sense, but for the next lesson he went missing for one lesson then came back later and took two successive lessons and refused to do any work what so ever just could not be cajoled to. So in that respect and he has been absent in the last three and I suspect that this might be the way it’s shaping up that even when there was something to build on the overall picture is looking a bit bleak for him and he probably realises this”. (Julian)

The pupil Harriet described was in what she called her ‘target C group’, which meant that he was considered capable of gaining a grade C at English GCSE. Harriet considered that he was capable of getting a C, but the boy showed no motivation to succeed and was not prepared to put in the necessary effort,

“His potential is a C; he would have to work hard to get that C, and if he was just lazy he probably won’t get the C either but the fact that he is both lazy and badly behaved is massively going to put that C in jeopardy”. (Harriet)

For Phillip the disruption was more to do with what he perceived as attention seeking behaviour,

“The challenge is the constant need for attention, drawing attention to one specific place and there are a lot of pupils in the class that do draw attention but it’s the repeated focusing of attention on that one pupil that draws away from being able to address the whole class or address other issues that may be going on in the class and I find most draining the constant arguing back, some pupils you can catch doing something and they will hold their hand up to it and say ‘this is what I did wrong’ but it’s the constant back chat about it, kind of begins to draw you in a bit more than just getting someone to focus back”. (Phillip)

In discussions with Phillip it became apparent that, in the face of constant disruption to his lessons, he had concluded that education was something that some of his pupils simply did not want,

“I think as it stands, yeah, compulsory education up until 16 doesn’t work because you have a lot of the kids that you’re forcing into it that don’t want it and really see it as a chore. They are here because the law says they have to be here, their parents are being fined for not being here. But their presence is sometimes all those kids will offer. ‘I’m here aren’t I’ according to the letter of the law so they have to be in school, nothing more”. (Phillip)

This disaffection was in itself disruptive because the data indicated that in the experience of the teachers, in the vacuum created by a pupil not doing any work, space was created in which a bored pupil could become disruptive. In this way the refusal to work was a ‘double whammy’; firstly the work was not completed, which was in itself a problem in an environment where attainment is very important. Secondly, there was the additional disruption created by a student seeking amusement and diversion to fill the time, which should have been filled by completing the work.

### 3. The Issue of Taking Responsibility for One’s Own Behaviour and the Relevance of Foucault

The teachers I interviewed perceived a struggle between themselves and the pupils, trying to make them conform to the requirements of the school, the goals of which included arriving on time for lessons, remaining in the lesson and working to the best of their ability for the duration of the lesson. A refusal on the part of the pupils to take responsibility for their own actions was seen as an integral part of this struggle. In describing her ‘target C’ pupil Harriet said of him,

“[He] will refuse to take any responsibility for his behaviour whatsoever.” (Harriet).

Taking responsibility for anything implies tacit agreement. People are rightly reluctant to take responsibility for anything over which they have no control; therefore expecting a pupil to take responsibility for their behaviour requires two major assumptions. Firstly, that they are in control of their behaviour (and they may not be) and secondly, that they value the

enterprise in which they are engaged (in this case education). Why would anyone want to take responsibility for something in which they see little or no value or importance? Is it possible that presenting with disruptive behaviour is how the pupils take responsibility, by showing their contempt for something, which has no relevance for them?

Harriet's frustration that (as she saw it) the Year 11 boy refused to take responsibility is understandable as his refusal would have an impact on her performance as a teacher. As Harriet saw it, his refusal 'to take responsibility' meant that he was not working to his potential and by doing so probably not getting the all-important grade C at GCSE. However, the boy showed no inclination to do this, despite Harriet's estimation that he had the ability. Her frustration becomes more understandable when seen in the light of her imperative,

“Must get the Cs to make the school statistics work.” (Harriet)

As discussed in chapter three, Foucault (the French philosopher) gives us an interesting perspective on 'taking responsibility'. Children and particularly children in school, are constantly told to 'take responsibility' for their behaviour. I have often heard children with challenging behaviour referred to by teachers as being 'powerful', when to all intents and purposes they are powerless. After all they are children, sometimes, (although not always) from marginalised sections of society where they would not normally expect or be expected to be powerful. However, by choosing to challenge the authority of adults they become powerful in the classroom, by virtue of their ability to disrupt the lesson. Mills (2006) explains that Foucault has an interesting perspective on power and power struggles,

“Power is often conceptualised as the capacity of powerful agents to realise their will over the will of powerless people, and the ability to force them to do things which they do not wish to do. Power is often seen as a possession – something which is held onto by those in power and which those who are powerless try to wrest from their control. Foucault criticises this view arguing....that power is something which is performed, something more like a strategy than a possession. Power should be seen as a verb rather than a noun, something that does something, rather than something which is or which can be held onto...There are several important points to note here: first that power is conceptualised as a chain or a net, that it is a system of relations between the oppressed and the oppressor. And, second individuals should not be seen simply as the recipients of power, but as the 'place' where power is enacted and the place where it is resisted”. (Mills 2006 pg. 34/35)

A child who conforms by, for example, ‘taking responsibility for their actions’ (in other words by owning up to the behaviour which is perceived as ‘bad’ by the teachers and trying to modify it) is not powerful in the same way as the child who refuses to conform. To illustrate, Harriet appeared to be engaged in a struggle with the Year 11 pupil, which she described in various ways,

“Yes and no, he’s consistently badly behaved but it can be very, very low level stuff and it can be, I would not say he’s the worst behaved child I have ever taught, I’ve been really lucky this year because I got some nice classes, because this is the only class giving me problems and he is the one in this class that I just don’t know how to handle. I have not found what works yet.” (Harriet)

As I struggled to determine what this might mean for Harriet, it became clear that this process or power struggle affected her in different ways at different times; she was either able to consider it rationally, as shown by the response above, or her response was more emotional, as illustrated by what she says below,

“So what I mean is, huh I hate them hate them; they drive me round the bend. But the problem is because there are so many of them, do you see what I mean, out of a class of (I wonder how many are in, I’ve got the class list) out of a class of about 24, there’s probably about 10 who are consistent problems and you’ll squash one and two others and they all rotate it round as to who is being a problem, if you see what I mean”. (Harriet)

According to Axup and Gersch (2008), teachers can interpret challenging behaviour in terms of ‘power and attention seeking’ There are echoes here of Foucault’s theory of the power struggle, which depends upon the role played by those who resist and the role played by those who are placed in authority over them and that one cannot exist without the other.

In problematising what this might mean for this group of teachers what emerged was that the teachers might be obliged to offer an educational experience, which not all of the pupils appeared to want. However, education is not an optional offering, in England education is not a question of ‘take it or leave it’ more than that, the national curriculum is an ‘entitlement’. Therefore, what further emerged was the idea of a possible struggle for power between the teachers who must deliver the curriculum and ensure that everyone gets their entitlement, and a significant number of pupils for whom it was an apparent irrelevance. Could it be that, as Foucault says, the disruptive pupils are the ‘place’ where power is resisted

and the teachers the 'place' where it is enacted? If this is the case then this 'power relationship' manifests itself in the disruption in the classroom and in the relationships that the teachers form in order to try and control the disruption.

Phillip was a Science teacher in the first year of the Teach First programme. He said that one of his concerns was that in the perception of a large number of the pupils (of whom he saw the Year 8 boy he had selected as a fairly typical example) they realised that they had to come to school, because their physical presence was necessary, but beyond that they saw no responsibility to conform to the expectations of the teacher, either in terms of their behaviour or their learning. Phillip tried to persuade the boy's mother to help him to make the boy conform, but found that (although she appeared to agree with Phillip on the telephone) his perception was that she either had little or no control over the boy's behaviour, or that she too saw little relevance in the educational experience,

“After each occasion I have called home, I spoke to his mother, all the right answers are said on the phone but there are not many results coming out of that.”(Phillip)

The teachers perceived a real problem with the pupils' refusal to 'take responsibility' for their behaviour. If they had 'taken responsibility' would the power relationship have changed, from one where the teachers felt they had a responsibility to impose discipline to one where the pupil accepted that they must, to a certain extent, discipline themselves? In terms of Foucault, of course this adds another dimension. In terms of sanctions, Foucault thought punishment was more severe for those who had transgressed, knowingly, than for those who really do not care because, according to Foucault it is a worse punishment to know that you have brought the sanction upon yourself, by your own failure. According to Foucault this is the 'stifling anguish' of responsibility.

However, the data suggested that the pupils did not necessarily transform themselves in this way but that 'good' behaviour with disruptive pupils was achieved by the teachers who were able to form what they considered to be 'good' relationships with the pupils in their lessons. For example Angela, said that she knew all the children that she taught so well and had such good relationships with them that they did not display challenging behaviour in her lessons, but that these pupils did not necessarily behave well for other teachers or in other lessons.

She did however agree to be interviewed on the subject of the importance of teacher/pupil relationships.

Did this mean that successful relationships were based on respect and did the pupils conform for teachers for whom they had respect? Foucault said that power is the effect of social discourse on our being. If that is so then was the successful pupil-teacher relationship merely evidence of a shift in power in the power relationship in favour of the teacher?

#### 4. What do Teachers Perceive to be the Causes of Challenging Behaviour?

In trying to explain why the pupils behaved as they did the group of teachers I interviewed cited a range of contributory factors, which (from their perspective) influenced whether a pupil presented them with challenging behaviours. For example, socio-economic factors (the school was in an area of high social deprivation), lack of parental support or special educational needs. All of these factors were present in the ‘conversations with a purpose’ (Kvale 1996) that I had with the interviewees. However, what the data showed was that generally the teachers were not recounting distinct, individual causes of challenging behaviour. In the perceptions of the teachers the reasons for the challenging behaviours were often seen as a complex interface between the attitudes and aspirations of the students and the requirements of the school. This requires some unpicking and the first ‘strand’ in this interface was the curriculum.

##### **i) The Curriculum**

What is meant in this context by curriculum is the curriculum in its broadest sense. This is not just the subjects on the timetable, it is the whole culture and ethos of teaching and learning by which the school is organised. This is influenced significantly by the imperative to raise attainment within an inclusive framework. For example, Julian was concerned that there was little or no alternative to public examinations for some of those less able pupils who struggled with written work. Speaking of his low-ability Year 10 English GCSE group Julian said,

“In the old days they would not have been countenanced for a public exam”.  
(Julian)

Julian’s perception was that the curriculum the boy was being offered was not designed with him in mind. As Julian saw it, the boy was being forced to follow a curriculum, which was firstly, not relevant to him or his experiences and secondly, was being presented in a way that made it inaccessible to him because of his lack of basic literacy skills. Julian had spoken of the boy’s interest in film and that his only acceptable piece of written work had been a film critique. Unfortunately, that alone was not enough to secure the all-important GCSE.

Julian had taught English in inner city schools for over thirty years. The estate, which the school served, is populated mainly with white working-class people. Julian feared that the curriculum was fundamentally a middle class curriculum and levelled this criticism at it, “Middle class white curriculum – alien to the illiterate”. (Julian). The boy described by Julian was white but could not be described as middle class. In fact, as a white working class boy he fell statistically into a category that, in educational terms, has been extensively documented in terms of being disadvantaged (Parsons 1999 and Thacker, Strudwick and Babbedge 2002). Similar criticisms, for example, that the national curriculum is Eurocentric, have also been used, albeit for different reasons and from different perspectives, by those writing about the disproportionate levels of black or Afro-Caribbean children, particularly boys, represented in the exclusion figures (Searle 1996).

The idea of the ‘entitlement curriculum’ (Clarke 1999) is fundamental to the policy of inclusion. Harriet’s perception of the policy of inclusion, first referred to in the previous chapter, was that it was not a success: she said, “we are all included in the failing”. In the light of Julian’s description of the Year 10 boy struggling with the requirements of GCSE English, the perceptions of these teachers raise important questions about the benefits of the policy of inclusion when all pupils have to follow the same curriculum. If pupils cannot attain their GCSE at grade C or above and therefore the school cannot improve to the required level, there is no option but to fall back on the choice of either, the model of the deficit teacher, who cannot differentiate the curriculum or manage the behaviour, or of the deficit pupil who must be demonised (Parsons 1999 and 2005) or possibly both?

This deficit model leads people to conclude that either the teachers haven’t tried hard enough or that the pupils are at fault. It is interesting to note that even when describing some very

difficult situations in their classrooms and potentially very unpleasant interactions with pupils the teachers (with the possible exception of Harriet) tended not to blame the pupils and even Harriet could talk sympathetically about pupils who she thought needed help but who didn't get it. My analysis of the data in relation to what these experiences meant for these teachers, led me to gain the impression that the pupils and teachers were locked in a kind of struggle, with the teachers trying to implement something that was either not going to work or was going to require considerable effort to make it work. When asked if the national curriculum was a factor in challenging behaviour, one of the original questionnaire respondents replied,

“Absolutely, less of a ‘straitjacket’ than it was but still a ‘straitjacket’”.  
(Anonymous questionnaire respondent)

## ii) Levels of Ability

From the perspective of the teachers another important factor in whether or not pupils displayed challenging behaviour was related to their ability and in this context ability was interlinked with the curriculum and with how pupils respond if they cannot access the curriculum. The teachers talked about their experiences whereby some pupils could become withdrawn, but many became disruptive. The reason that the curriculum was considered inappropriate for many of the pupils was because of their low level of ability, Angela, the deputy head, spoke of her sympathy for children, who were sent to her room because of their refusal to comply in lessons. Her example from table 6:1 is repeated below,

“And they need time, and they need emotional investment in a way that other children who are more proficient in social skills and who are perhaps more proficient academically don't. I had a boy sit in my room say, ‘well the problem is I can't read or write can I?’ ‘I can't do it really?’ and what I ask myself is, how as we as intelligent adults, if you or I, we came across a skill that we just couldn't manage, we tried and we tried and we tried but we could not do it. As sensible adults we would say to ourselves, this is not for us, I'll do something different. And yet, we expect these children who have tried and tried and tried since primary school to keep trying. And to not give up. And not to be disillusioned. And that's the right thing for them to do but as adults we'd never do that?” (Angela)

A paradox emerged at this point in terms of how the teachers perceived the students and their behaviours. Firstly, the teachers appeared, at times, to be very frustrated about the situations, which the disruptive behaviour created for them in their lessons. They also



appeared very negative about the attitudes and aspirations of the students, who they generally perceived to be disinclined to both school and learning. However, they also tended to perceive the pupils with challenging behaviour almost as ‘victims’ of a system, the targets of which were dictated by the wider requirements of the education service as a whole (namely to raise standards within an inclusive educational framework) and that these targets could be at odds with the interests and aspirations of the students. The premise upon which the teachers appeared to come to this regrettable conclusion was that in certain circumstances they perceived that the system itself was at fault and there was apparent sympathy for the predicament of the students who were unable to access the curriculum and whose behaviour could become challenging because of this.

In some cases the lack of ability was related to recognised special educational needs. Sometimes it was not. From the perspective of this group of teachers the problem of challenging behaviour was not a relatively simple matter that could be solved by providing more support for those pupils who appeared not to be able to access the curriculum. Harriet was certainly not convinced that even with support some pupils would ever be able to access the curriculum. Angela was convinced that many of the pupils about whom she had concerns would have been better served in a special school.

### **iii) The problem of ‘Critical Mass’**

The problems identified by the teachers of having large numbers of pupils with low ability trying to access a curriculum that the teachers felt had not been designed with them or their needs in mind, was heightened because of the sheer number of these pupils. They were not one or two pupils in each year, or even in each class. Pupils with this level of difficulty represented a significant number of the pupils, the ‘critical mass’ referred to previously by Johnson (1999) and the problems were not solely with the ability of the pupils but in some cases with their attitude as well. Harriet believed that her pupil was quite capable of getting a grade C at GCSE, but saw no reason to,

“He hasn’t made the connection between working in class & getting a good grade...he thinks it’s me not giving him a good grade, not he doesn’t deserve it”. (Harriet)

The perception of the teachers was not of an isolated or occasional case of a child who disliked school, but more a situation of a culture, which the child came from where the model of schooling (which the teachers were obliged to present) was neither valued nor really understood. Tony was concerned that society and technology were changing very quickly and that perhaps the education service was not adapting to these changing needs,

“Things I thought I knew I don’t know at all.....a relentless push to raise standards and yet we are walking into a world where change is exponential”.  
(Tony)

The teachers expressed a number of perceptions about what caused this mismatch between the expectations of the staff and the expectations and aspirations of the students. These were both social and educational, but the underlying implication was that the education service was out of step with the society it serves, or, at least, with certain sections of that society. The lack of a shared sense of what is reasonable was seen as springing from a complex cocktail of social influences, at which the teachers only hinted. They mentioned reality television and the consumer society as being partly responsible for attitudes among the young who thought, for example, that they could ‘get rich quick’ without needing to work in school or make any effort with their studies.

The school serves an estate of social housing where there are high levels of social deprivation, but in that it is not untypical of many urban secondary schools in England. Angela gave her opinion that the society from which the majority of the pupils were drawn felt, ‘under pressure’,

“...society is white working class and isolated. And it is very isolated here. It’s white working class societies under extreme pressures. And it’s aware of the pressures that exist upon it”. (Angela)

This may go some way towards explaining the variance in aspirations between the young people who displayed challenging behaviour and their teachers. It was not the remit of this research to undertake an in-depth social study of the underlying causes of challenging behaviour. Poverty and deprivation have long been associated with challenging behaviour.

Historically education has generally been seen as a way of alleviating poverty and increasing opportunities for social mobility. While Gordon Brown was Prime Minister, Alan Milburn

was appointed specifically to look at increasing opportunities for social mobility and his analysis was that the way to do this was through education,

“While it is not in the gift of the state to ‘create’ social mobility, it is its job to ensure that Britain’s schools allow the able, no matter their social background, to flourish”. (The Daily Telegraph 21<sup>st</sup> June 2009)

The teachers I interviewed were very willing to offer an educational opportunity to all comers, but became frustrated by those who appeared not to want to take advantage of it. More than that, in not taking advantage of what was on offer to them, the teachers perceived that these pupils disrupted the lessons and therefore jeopardised the educational opportunities of those pupils who did want to take advantage of the opportunities offered. One could argue that this further entrenched the disadvantage. Statistically the school was considered an ‘improving school’ which meant it was increasing its percentage of pupils getting five or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C year on year.

Challenging behaviour in schools is of course not a new phenomenon. Children have always behaved in ways that challenge the authority of adults. However, the way in which the authority of these particular adults was being challenged was somewhat different. These pupils were challenging the teachers by showing little or no interest in the work set for them. An inclusive framework dictates that children must be taught together and offered the same curriculum, so the teachers cannot alter what is to be taught in order to stimulate the interest of the pupils by offering an alternative.

Groups who were formerly marginalised in society have been brought into the current mainstream education system because of the policy of inclusion, however, arguably, the system has not changed or adapted in order to accommodate them. Such changes are explicit in inclusive practice, which does not demand that pupils should ‘fit into’ what is already on offer. The system continues to offer what writers have described as a “Eurocentric” (Searle 1996) and Julian described as a “white middle class” curriculum to pupils who may not relate to or be able to conform to these social groupings. Teachers talked of the added pressure to raise standards, so that participation alone is not sufficient, that participation must be successful and the success must be measured, graded and targets set so that it can be improved upon. This research tries to illuminate what this might mean for teachers who are trying to do this in very difficult or unfavourable circumstances.

## 5. Rising to the Challenge – Building Relationships

One of the ways in which the teachers responded to the challenge of the pupils disrupting their lessons was to attempt to build personal relationships with them. This was perceived as necessary for a number of reasons. One of the problems inherent in the disruptive behaviour was that the head teacher was reluctant to exclude pupils. Therefore, even pupils who had been persistently disruptive and may have failed to respond to other sanctions would be unlikely to be permanently excluded from the school.

Faced with the inevitable prospect of having to work with difficult and disruptive pupils, making relationships with them was a constructive way of approaching this problem. From the perspective of the teachers, this meant that they had to continue to deal with the disruption to their lessons, and this was perceived as being easier to do if they had an established relationship with the pupils. Harriet described what it felt like from her perspective, for the school to have a reputation for being very inclusive and excluding very few pupils,

“I mean it’s all very well saying if you push the boundaries we’ll exclude you, but the boundaries aren’t being set at home so they’re used to it, there was a great sentence said in the staff room yesterday and I thought was b\*\*\*\*\*y amazing ‘our rubber ceiling is getting bouncier’. And I was like, what the hell; I’ve never heard that one before. We don’t have a glass ceiling here we have a rubber ceiling and the kids bounce up and hit it and they don’t break it and get kicked out, they bounce back down again and they bounce up and then bounce back down, and when they’re having a good time they’re at the bottom but when they’re really p\*\*\*\*\*g about they bounce up and hit the roof. But what happens is the roof stretches and goes with them so they never actually get expelled”. (Harriet)

The teachers saw forging good relationships with the parents of the pupils as being as important, if not more important than forging good relationships with the pupils themselves. The teachers all spoke of their efforts to involve the parents of these pupils in the hope that this would enable them to educate their children more successfully. The perception of the teachers was that parental control over the behaviour of the pupils diminished as they went through the school. For example the teachers perceived that a ‘phone call to the parent of a Year 7 or 8 pupil would yield more than a ‘phone call to a Year 11 parent, although this was

not always the case, as Phillip had discovered, but generally it was important to build and maintain relationships from an early stage.

Working to get the parents and children to co-operate with the school was seen as a vital element of success, but this was a process that took years and had to be worked at by the teachers. Harriet spoke about a member of staff who had made repeated home visits to a particular student and her family. She went on to describe the process of building relationships with the families and why it was important,

“That’s how our school works is that teachers do that and they go that extra mile and they work with parents and they’re half teachers and half social workers and half something else and it’s not just a relationship with the students, it’s a relationship with the family. Because there are students at this school that you will not win over unless through relationships. And there are, to be honest, those are the ones that we lose. It’s not because they don’t follow the rules because a number of students at this school don’t follow the rules, the ones we lose we just never manage to grasp hold of somehow, we never manage to get that secret word that will have them trust us.” (Harriet).

The teachers perceived that trust was an important element of these relationships. It was almost as if the children who did not value school had to be won over by trust so that at least if they were in an environment that they did not value there were people there they could trust. One reason why these relationships were considered so important linked with a theme, which was common to all the interviews, namely the perception that there was a total absence of a shared idea between teachers and pupils of what was reasonable in terms of behaviour. Therefore the adults could not rely on a shared idea of what was acceptable in terms of behaviour and they had to negotiate.

Teachers spoke of the constant need to negotiate with pupils because they perceived that there was no common acceptance of what was reasonable. A relationship firstly makes that negotiation easier, secondly, it fosters a feeling that people will start to co-operate because of the strength of personal feeling, although Angela stressed that it was definitely not about being matey with the pupils.

In view of the fact that pupils with challenging behaviour were unlikely to be removed from the school, the teachers felt that they had to develop their own strategies for dealing with the behaviour. One important way was by building relationships with the pupils and their

families. The teachers perceived themselves to be in the ‘front line’ and they had to ‘sink or swim’, in other words succeed by their own efforts or not at all. This involved them in a personal struggle with the pupils. Although senior staff could be called in to ‘remove’ disruptive children from individual lessons, this was not regarded as a long-term solution. This feeling was summed up by Julian, who said,

“I don’t look elsewhere for support for behaviours. No one is going to help me; no one in this building is going to help me with the teaching of English for four hours a week with [name of pupil]. The only people who can help me are [name of pupil] and me”. (Julian)

Julian was quick to point out that he was not being critical of his colleagues and that the problem was not necessarily one of lack of support. None of the staff placed any degree of reliance on school behaviour policies to help them maintain discipline. This was not, generally, because the policies were deemed to be particularly ineffective. It was rather that the behaviours were seen as arising from a complex set of circumstances, social, emotional, educational and in some senses political. As we have seen, the context in which these staff were working, including their perception of the lack of a shared sense of what is reasonable, frequently resulted in situations, which would not be resolved easily by a conventional sanctions policy.

For example, Phillip described how he set detentions for the Year 8 pupil who did not work in his lessons, but the boy failed to come to the detentions. Philip then had the option of resetting the detention, or passing it on to a senior colleague to deal with. Phillip said he disliked doing this and he also resented having to chase the boy to make him do the detention,

“Then I have been a bit stuck whether it’s worth my effort , putting in, making another round of phone calls, arrange another detention, I have to go and find him from another class, if I try and pass it on whether that is actually going to have an effect or not. The cases it’s happened I ended up dropping it because I don’t see it’s worth my time, worry and effort.” (Phillip).

Phillip’s perception was that the detention was ultimately going to have little or no long term effect anyway,

“I don’t think keeping him in detention or trying to make him realise his mistakes or putting him in isolation or putting him on report has a lot of effect because some of his worst instances of behaviour have happened when he was on report. Whether he doesn’t think about or just doesn’t care about it or he just doesn’t see any real higher consequences, I don’t think any of the kids do see any higher consequences. They know you have to do something serious to get kicked out of school or to get into serious trouble because there’s a lot of stuff that goes on. And the other thing is that they are not really that bothered. They don’t care if you suspend them from school for a day or put them in isolation, they don’t value their education at the moment, they are not saying ‘oh no, I’m missing out on learning, that’s going to have an effect on my life’, they are very much minute, they are not even day by day, they are very much minute by minute.” (Phillip).

Angela’s attitude was that in situations like the one described by Phillip a teacher must be persistent. When I approached her at stage two of the research and asked her to describe a pupil that she taught in terms of their challenging behaviour she said that she was unable to do so. She was, by now, one of the deputy heads and because of this only taught one group. She said that she knew all the children in that group so well and had such good relationships with them that they did not display challenging behaviour in her lessons. She did, however, agree to be interviewed on the subject of the importance of teacher/pupil relationships.

What she said in this interview helped to coalesce the perceptions that I had found were shared by the other staff I interviewed, about the importance of their personal interactions with the pupils in maintaining order in their lessons. Implicitly, however, and given that Angela was a deputy head, what she said also gave an insight into what the expectations of the management of the school were in terms of what teachers could and should be prepared to commit,

“It comes down to time and investment. I would have to do that because otherwise I’d never be able to actually sort of like, you know, moderate that child’s behaviour in future instances. I mean that’s happened quite recently, you know, just because you’re a deputy head doesn’t mean to say all the children in the school know exactly who you are and don’t all exactly know what your job is. And even though they know the deputy head doesn’t mean to say they’re going to do exactly what you asked them to do, just because you’ve got this badge, doesn’t automatically in this society mean anything, and mean that you’re going to get respect and obedience. So I mean I have to do that as well. And so do other teachers. It’s whether you’re prepared to put in that time”. (Angela)

Clearly teachers were expected to put in the time to build relationships with the pupils, without which they would find it difficult to operate. Phillip said that, as a Teach First teacher in his first year, all the classes he taught (he had no Year 7 groups) had been in the school longer than he had, and that, as such they did not have as much respect for him as he thought they would have if he was a more established teacher,

“I think my setting of consequences and actions is looked on as inconsequential by a lot of the kids compared to more established members of staff who have been here for a number of years.” (Phillip).

Julian recognised the importance of relationships and spoke very sensitively about his relationship with the Year 10 boy that he had chosen. He had been chosen because of the level of challenge which the boy presented to him and Julian explained what he was trying to achieve with him and for him,

“Having a quiet word with the kid can make a difference...surviving on that, Find a human level, I’m not his parents or the Police and there is nothing to fear and no points to win. I’m into reasonable behaviour and an honest effort. Use of humour [he] responds in the short term....no hatred on either side...showing him a mirror of himself...want him to be better.” (Julian)

In spite of this, Julian felt that there was ultimately no chance of success, and that he had had enough. It was his last year of teaching and he was leaving the profession. In the perception of the teachers, if they could build relationships with the pupils then they were often able to function appropriately and get their work done. Building the relationship meant communicating with the pupil on a personal level. In reality, this meant getting the work done based on a personal unwritten agreement, which apparently worked on the basis of, ‘I will do this because I like you’ or was it perhaps ‘I will do this because I trust you’?.

For these teachers success appeared to depend on building on years of experience, which was Phillip’s point. He perceived that he lacked the necessary experience to command respect. He differed from Harriet in that she was also relatively inexperienced but also tenaciously determined to succeed. For Harriet it was straightforward, “It’s **all** about relationships” and she was prepared to be persistent in building those relationships.



Phillip wanted to teach and was beginning to resent that he was frequently prevented from doing this. Young teachers were perceived as needing to ‘prove’ themselves able to cope. Angela spoke about the adjustments that young teachers had to make,

“I think that when you’re young and inexperienced which you are still very much at 22/23 you tend to have a vision of the world, relationships with teachers I think tend to be modelled upon relationships you had with teachers yourself. And as a very intellectual person, your relationships or what you required in a relationship with a teacher is likely to have been quite different, probably very much less than what is required in a relationship with pupils in a school like this. So I think they have to go through a significant period of adjustment which they understand that the types of relationships they might need to build with pupils are radically different to the types of relationships they probably had with teachers themselves and that probably takes some time to I think consolidate in their minds”.(Angela)

In conclusion, this thesis is about the perspectives of a group of teachers on challenging behaviour, what it meant for them, how they responded to it and ultimately how it affected them. The experience of these teachers has been shaped by their perceptions of their reality and what that means for them. Therefore, what becomes important to them is making it work for them, on a daily basis. This includes making the children work (and producing work of the required standard) and by so doing, fulfilling the expectations of the senior management of the school. The need to build relationships with the pupils was perceived as fundamental to this success.

If we assume that teachers can do this successfully for how long will they be prepared to continue? This is likely to depend on a whole range of personal factors, but for Phillip it was perhaps just two years, for Julian it had been thirty years. The process of building relationships with the pupils requires a degree of persistence. This is explored in chapter seven, which looks at how persistent the teachers had to be in order to be successful and discusses what this means for them, in terms of their resilience.

## Chapter Seven

### The Issue of Teacher Resilience in Relation to Managing Challenging Behaviour

#### 1. Introduction

What has emerged in chapters five and six of this thesis is that the teachers who were interviewed for this research perceived that creating and maintaining an inclusive educational environment presented them with considerable difficulties in relation to managing pupils with what they regarded as challenging behaviour. The perception of a significant majority of these teachers, including the wider sample of teachers who responded to the questionnaires, but who were not subsequently interviewed, was that incidences of challenging behaviour were increasing.

Chapter seven discusses the emerging issues associated with this perceived increase in incidences of challenging behaviour. From a phenomenological perspective this research has been concerned with how these teachers attribute meaning to their experiences. Within a research design which has been influenced by phenomenology, it has not only been important to try to understand how these participants constructed their reality, but also how they attributed meaning to this reality. This research is concerned with the perceptions of a group of teachers who perceived that incidences of challenging behaviour were increasing. It is therefore important to explore their perceptions of what they believed to be the consequences for them of managing challenging behaviour. What does challenging behaviour mean and what does it mean for them?

The data indicated that low-level disruption of their lessons was endemic in that the disruption did not happen as a few isolated incidences or only in a few classes. The data revealed that these teachers regarded tackling the disruption to their classes as an integral part of what the job of teaching was about for them. This chapter illustrates how, in exploring their perceptions about the struggle that managing challenging behaviour meant for this group of teachers, teacher resilience in relation to managing challenging behaviour emerged as an issue. In their paper, 'A Study of Teacher Resilience in Urban Schools' Patterson, et al (2004) quote one of the teachers in their research sample as saying, "Resilience is a key factor in how a teacher will hold up and perform in an urban school". (pg.3).

Tackling the disruption required the teachers in my sample to be very persistent. All the teachers I interviewed accepted that persistence was an important factor in controlling the disruptive behaviour because they had to be persistent in confronting the behaviour and in trying to build relationships with the pupils. In this chapter, I explore the relationship between their persistence and their resilience and I have constructed a model to illustrate this.

## 2. What Characterises Teacher Resilience? Identifying the ‘Bounce Back Factor’

In terms of teacher resilience, it is important to be able to describe resilient behaviour. Kyriacou (1998), Gu & Day (2007) and Sammons et al (2007) have all identified what I have called ‘the bounce back factor’. In the case of the group of teachers I interviewed, what emerged was that they perceived that they were all required to be persistent in dealing with those pupils with challenging behaviour and that this persistence was related to resilience.

In this context, persistence means that a teacher continues to try to work with a child until they are able to manage the challenging behaviour successfully and so minimise the disruption. For example, building a good working relationship with a child, which enabled trust to be developed, was considered vital by all these teachers, because they saw the securing of that relationship as key to managing the challenging behaviour. The act of being persistent required the teachers to return repeatedly to those situations and circumstances where they had not been able to be successful, or where they feared that they might fail.

Failure can engender feelings of despondency; people in this situation can feel discouraged and less enthusiastic about returning to a task, which they have previously failed to accomplish successfully. However, the point at which the teachers stopped persisting is what determined their resilience. This is the point at which the ‘bounce-back factor’ becomes important. The concept of ‘bounce-back’ carries with it the notion of someone returning to a task with renewed vigour despite previous failures. Even though they may have failed in the past, a person who ‘bounces back’ has somehow mustered the energy and enthusiasm to try again, in a way that is fresh and may even bring renewed vigour to the task, perhaps by returning to same task using different strategies, or perhaps by refocusing and redirecting their energies to a different task.

This 'bounce back' factor characterises people who respond well to stressful situations. How successful a person is in responding well (or 'bouncing back') from the negative emotional aspects of stressful situations, Kyriacou (1998) and Sammons et al (2007) both argue, will determine how resilient they are. Sammons et al (2007) explores this idea in relation to the work of teachers,

“Also, resilience, defined as the capacity to continue to ‘bounce back’, to recover strengths or spirit quickly and efficiently in the face of adversity, is strongly allied to a strong sense of vocation, self-efficacy and motivation to teach which are fundamental to a concern for promoting achievement in all aspects of pupils’ lives”. (Sammons et al pg. 694)

The notion of a resilient person 'bouncing back' with renewed vigour implies, as previously suggested, that they may have the resource of a range of strategies that they use and that if they fail with one, they are prepared to try different approaches in the hope that these may be more successful. Patterson, Collins & Abbott (2004) identified nine separate strategies employed by teachers whom they identified as resilient,

- “1. Resilient teachers have a set of personal values that guides their decision-making
  2. Resilient teachers place a high premium on professional development and find ways to get it.
  3. Resilient teachers provide mentoring to others.
  4. Resilient teachers are not victims—they take charge and solve problems.
  5. Resilient teachers stay focussed on the children and their learning.
  6. Resilient teachers do whatever it takes to help children be successful.
  7. Resilient teachers have friends and colleagues who support their work emotionally and intellectually.
  8. Resilient teachers are not wedded to one best way of teaching and are interested in exploring new ideas.
  9. Resilient teachers know when to get involved and when to let go”.
- (Patterson, Collins & Abbott 2004 pg. 5/6)

These strategies acknowledge the need to explore new ideas, for example, 'if this has failed let's try something else', but Patterson, Collins & Abbott (2004) also indicates that, in some cases, there may be a need to accept that there are some problems which cannot be solved and that it is sometimes necessary to 'let go' of them. Reinhold Niebuhr may not have had resilience in mind when he wrote the following words, but they do describe what I have identified from my data as a resilient approach to problems,

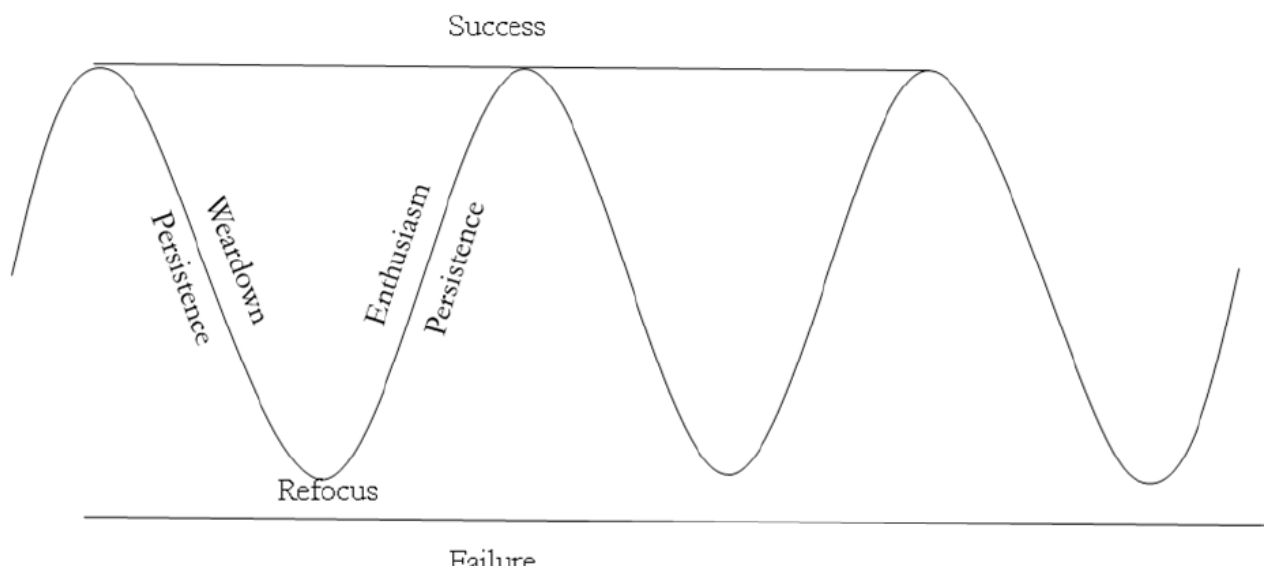
“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference”.  
(Niebuhr 1892-1971)

There are indications in the data that resilient teachers are those who accept that there are some situations that cannot be changed and for this reason, it is possible to suggest these teachers never actually fail, as such. They may not succeed - but they do not necessarily see this as a failure; it becomes more of a strategic withdrawal and instead of being despondent, their resilience allows them to redirect their energies to other tasks, where they may well be extremely successful. This in turn will reinforce their resilience, because in times of difficulty they can reflect on past successes. Harriet was a good example of a teacher who knew when she could not be successful. Towards the end of the interview cycle Harriet acknowledged that she had ‘given up’ on the Year 11 student,

“Different from when we first met, we don’t come up against each other like we used to. It’s like we’ve both given up. Not pressing my buttons, but perhaps that’s because I’ve stopped challenging him”. (Harriet)

Paradoxically this ‘giving up’ proved to be a characteristic of Harriet’s resilience and a component of what I identified as the ‘bounce-back factor’. Illustrated below in fig 7:1 is a model of teacher resilience in response to challenging behaviour as I have identified it through my research. This model illustrates what the ‘bounce-back factor’ might look like.

**Fig 7:1 A Model of Teacher Resilience, Showing the ‘Bounce-Back Factor’**



A teacher who is very persistent, but who feels that their persistence is not achieving the desired result, will begin to feel 'worn-down' by the effort. They may, like Harriet get angry,

"...behaviour wise is late to lessons and then makes a performance out of coming into the room, will then take any opportunity to talk to his friend who is also in the class, the pair of them are separated like clear across two corners of the classroom, but will still randomly get up and wander and go 'ah, I was just putting this in the bin' and then stop and have a little chat with each other. He will also refuse to take any responsibility for his behaviour whatsoever, to the extent of even when you have got him bang to rights for something, will then go 'ya, but you didn't do anything to so and so who did that the other day', if you see what I mean and will wriggle out of any situation that he's been in to like ludicrous extents, to the point of swearing black is white and I personally get so annoyed that he has got it so wrong, that I find myself being drawn into it and saying 'No, you're wrong because' and then you like 'ooh I'm the adult in this situation, I need to stop talking now'." (Harriet)

Harriet was very persistent but the behaviour of the boy in question had worn her down. Therefore, despite her previous persistence, there was also an acknowledgement of becoming tired and of slowly accepting imminent failure with this particular pupil, even as she continues to persist in trying to succeed with him.

What makes Harriet resilient is the crucial 'bounce back factor', which comes at the bottom of the curve on the model and where she decides to refocus and direct her energies elsewhere. This is the point at which imminent failure with a pupil is acknowledged. In resilient teachers diversionary action is taken before failure actually occurs, so that the bounce back is not a reaction to failure, but a re-focus or the employment of a different strategy. In terms of resilience, this results in a situation where a lack of success has been acknowledged, rather than a feeling of experiencing failure. Giving up has become a strategic decision, not an enforced withdrawal. Therefore, in 'letting go' of the Year 11 student, rather than failing, Harriet was in fact demonstrating a characteristic of her resilience.

What happens at this stage is critical in terms of resilience. A resilient teacher such as Harriet decides at this point that it is time to 'let go' and their resilience increases as they take on new challenges, this is represented by the upward stoke of each curve. In doing this, they are able to leave behind what has not worked and to move on. Patterson, Collins & Abbott (2004) say that resilient teachers are able, in an emotional sense, to 'leave behind' these 'failures' because

resilient teachers are able to accept that they have tried and failed and can then move on. This theory is borne out by the experience of Harriet with the example of the Year 11 pupil.

There are a number of important factors, which need to be considered when applying this model. These factors relate to a number of things, including the personality of the teacher; the circumstances in which they teach, the different kinds of children that they encounter and whether or not their resilience is nurtured by the environment in which they work. Firstly, I will consider Harriet whose pattern of resilience inspired the model in Figure 7:1. I will then discuss the other teachers I interviewed and explain whether I think that their behaviour matches this model of resilience or not.

### 3. Are There Different Types of Resilience?

Harriet provides a good example of a teacher who exhibits what Kyriacou (1998) and Sammons et al (2007) describe as ‘bouncing back’ when confronted with stressful or difficult situations. Harriet recognised the need for persistence and she appeared to relish being persistent. She openly acknowledged that she was looking for a ‘challenge’ when she said, I could never have done a job that was easy and she perceived herself as resilient. She saw the need to be persistent in building relationships with pupils and to persevere with particular students in order to get a successful outcome.

According to Patterson, Collins & Abbott (2004), a strategy employed by resilient teachers is recognising when to stop persisting and be able to ‘let go’. In ‘letting go’ of the Year 11 student, Harriet did not simply ‘give up’, she was making a rational decision and choosing not to persevere. She had acknowledged that, in her perception, building relationships with pupils was critical. It was Harriet who had said, It’s all about relationships. She felt that one of the problems with the Year 11 group and with that one boy in particular, was that she had not been able to build the right kind of relationships with them when she had first come to the school two years previously, and that this had been partly due to her lack of experience.

Harriet said that it would have been necessary to have good relationships with the members of this group in order for her to be able to succeed with them at that time. She admitted she was, “counting the days ‘til they [Y11] go”, but she wasn’t giving up per se. She was recognising that because she had not been able to put in the initial requisite groundwork in

building relationships with this group, that, however persistent she was now, it was not going to make any subsequent difference.

Harriet's resilience dictated that instead of persisting with a situation where she could not win, it was better to withdraw. It seemed that her resilience was about recognising and accepting the importance of persistence, but it also seemed to be about being able to recognise and instinctively know which of the students she felt it worth persevering with (because there was a good chance of success) and which students she believed could not be won over, however persistent she was prepared to be. In the case of this particular pupil, Harriet seemed to believe it easier to 'let go' because the pupil was leaving the school anyway.

Phillip had a different kind of resilience from Harriet's. As previously explained, this group of teachers saw building relationships with pupils as central to managing challenging behaviour. Even if they did not want to do this building themselves, as in the case of Phillip, they still accepted that it was the familiarity with particular teachers that was an important factor in enabling those teachers to successfully manage the challenging behaviour of pupils with whom they had established good relationships.

Building successful relationships with pupils who are perceived as exhibiting challenging behaviour (and who are reluctant to engage) requires high levels of persistence. Phillip wanted to teach, and had only been doing so for a year, but he resented the time that, in his perception, a teacher needed to commit (in addition to time spent teaching, preparing lessons or marking) in order to get the pupils to behave. Persistence is time consuming and the pupils were not always receptive to those efforts. Phillip said that, in terms of persistence, he was happy to spend extra time teaching pupils who wanted to learn, but that he resented pursuing pupils who, for example had not come to their detention. He saw this as a futile activity, which he resented, because he did not think that it should be part of a teacher's role.

Although Phillip recognised that building relationships with the pupils was important, he did not personally feel able to commit the extra time required to do this. Phillip's perception was that it was not just that he had to work harder to gain the respect of the pupils, but that they would simply disregard his authority until they considered that he was sufficiently established as a teacher. He explained that this process took longer for some teachers than for others and that they therefore had to be very persistent. He felt that not all teachers were looking for that



kind of challenge, especially not on a daily basis and he certainly wasn't. However, Harriet openly admitted that she was and this was an important difference between them.

Patterson, Collins & Abbott (2004) make the point that resilient teachers will do 'whatever it takes' to help children be successful. Phillip was not prepared to do 'whatever it takes', which in the case of his chosen student would have required chasing him around the school to ensure that he had done his detentions, which had been given as a consequence of not engaging and distracting other pupils in Phillip's lessons,

“Well it's usually chatting, kind of drawing away the pupils around him into a conversation or starting a kind of tit for tat argument with someone. They may not even be right next to him but a few seats away. It could be as simple as looking at another pupil repeatedly which some of these pupils don't appreciate and rubs them up the wrong way and gets them angry.” (Phillip)

Doing 'whatever it takes' is a form of persistence and is reflected in the idea of 'bounce-back' as the resilient teacher tries again, after having thought of a different strategy. The whole notion of 'bouncing back' acknowledges that one is prepared to keep trying. Phillip was not prepared to keep trying.

Harriet had tried to make the Year 11 student engage and had only given up when she judged that her strategies were not working and decided that perhaps her energies could be better spent elsewhere. Phillip's experience was different in that he did not acknowledge the necessity for the persistence from the beginning. Phillip did not talk in terms of building relationships with the pupils either. He recognised that this was an important activity and he acknowledged that teachers who were more likely to be successful were those who had established relationships with the pupils. However, his view was that the pupils should be prepared to engage with the curriculum and that his job was to help the students to learn through good teaching and by being prepared to spend extra time, if necessary, explaining the work to them. He was much less willing to spend extra time cajoling the disaffected pupils to engage,

“Then I have been a bit stuck whether it's worth my effort, putting in, making another round of phone calls, arrange another detention, I have to go and find him from another class, if I try and pass it on [to a senior member of staff] whether that is actually going to have an effect or not. The cases it's

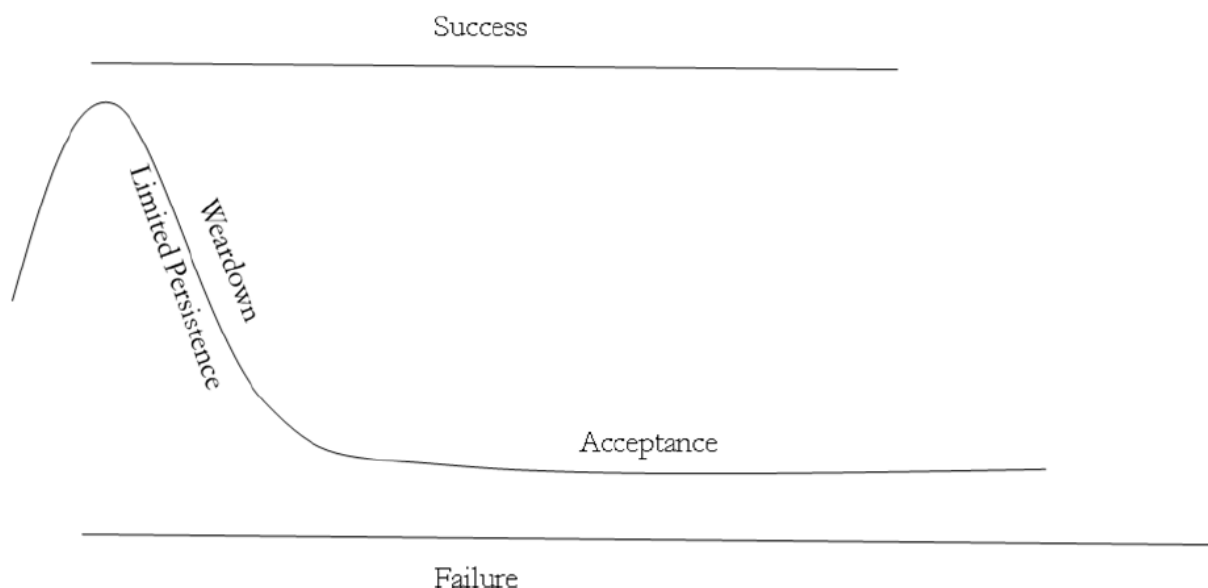
happened I ended up dropping it because I don't see it's worth my time, worry and effort". (Phillip)

Sammons et al (2007) found that 84% of teachers in the most disadvantaged schools were classified as resilient and their research acknowledges that this may be because in order to, "survive in these challenging circumstances" (pg 695) it is necessary to be resilient. Sammons et al (2007) also acknowledge that less resilient teachers may go to work in other schools or leave the profession, which may account for a high number of resilient teachers being found in schools in disadvantaged areas. It is possible that this interpretation by Sammons et al (2007) characterises Phillip's resilience in terms of his attitude towards managing challenging behaviour. Phillip described how he was feeling about teaching at what was a very early stage in his career,

"Yes, just over half way through my 1<sup>st</sup> year, no, I do not see it as a long term thing at all. I don't think I can put up with the abuse really, obviously the 1<sup>st</sup> year is much harder cramming everything, you are doing everything the first time it's going to be much harder. The 2<sup>nd</sup> year would be easier in those terms, but then trying to correct what did not go well for the 1<sup>st</sup> time in your planning and blueprint, delivering the lesson I can see it getting easier but I don't see that the overall attitude, the attitudes that you are dealing with will get any more tolerable or respectful or anything like that, I don't think it's worth it." (Phillip)

The diagram illustrated below (Figure 7:2) is a model showing Phillip's pattern of resilience, which did not depend on the 'bounce-back factor', but relied instead on an acceptance and a 'letting go'. Instead of refocusing or 'bouncing back' to try again with a challenging pupil, this pattern of resilience is different - it appears to insulate Phillip from further stress by dictating that persistence at this stage is a pointless activity and so instead of 'bouncing back' at this point and refocusing elsewhere, Phillip is accepting of the situation. He sees that he is unlikely to succeed with his Year 8 pupil and resents the time and energy, which would need to be expended on him to achieve that success. This removes the constant risk of failure because Phillip simply stops trying. This can be seen as a form of self-protection.

**Fig 7:2 A Model of Resilience Based on Acceptance and Without the ‘Bounce-Back Factor’**



This begs a question about whether there are different ways of looking at teacher resilience. Is it a simple case, that teachers who are resilient will cope or that if they are not resilient, they ‘burn-out’? Alternatively, can it be more complex? Dworkin (2009) says, job stress is a central precondition of burn-out (pg. 505) and that Burnout does involve the removal of positive effect and energy from teaching (pg. 507). This view suggests that burn-out is something that comes at the end of a process, so that, at the point where resilient teachers ‘bounce-back’, those who are destined to burn out continue on a decline until they fail (with the consequence that they lose their energy and effectiveness).

I had no sense with Phillip that he had lost either energy or effectiveness. There was nothing to suggest that he was not a competent and effective teacher, he was not ‘burnt –out’. In my interviews with him, he was talking about making a choice and that choice was based on what view of the teaching profession he was prepared to accept. It was about whether the job of a teacher is to teach, prepare lessons and mark work, or whether he wanted to accept the view of the teaching profession which dictates that one must be prepared to do whatever it takes (Patterson, Collins & Abbott 2004) to enable pupils with challenging behaviour to access the curriculum.

All the teachers I interviewed had made choices. Harriet chose both when to persist with challenging pupils and when to give up with them. Phillip chose not to persist and in so doing he, too, ‘gave up’ and it could be argued that like Harriet, Phillip was also making a strategic

withdrawal. In Fig. 7:2, we see that Phillip did not ‘bounce-back’ like Harriet because the ability to do this implies that a person accepts the need for continued persistence, even if that persistence is now redirected. Phillip could see that if he wanted to be successful with the pupils he had to be persistent. He could accept this as a reality but he chose not to. In making this choice, he was accepting that poor behaviour was a reality and that the options available to him were to either endure it or leave the profession.

Phillip was resilient, but not in relation to managing challenging behaviour. Phillip’s resilience was in recognising his own position, accepting that he was in a situation where if he wanted to be successful he would be required to behave in a certain way and deciding that this was not what he wanted to do. The alternatives for Phillip were to go and teach elsewhere in a less challenging school, or leave the profession altogether.

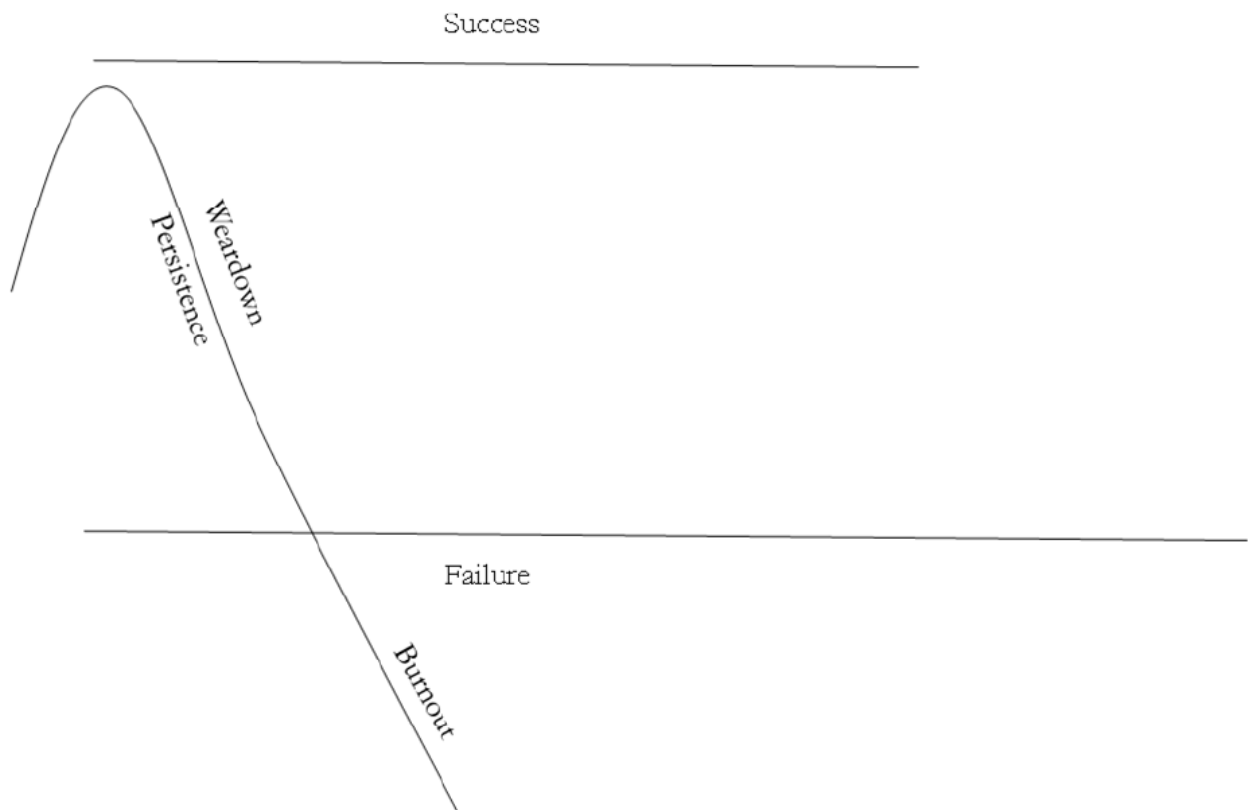
I have proposed three models of teacher resilience. Firstly, there is the model exemplified by Harriet, (Fig 7:1) which incorporates the ‘bounce-back factor’. This model illustrates what happens when a teacher is committed to changing the behaviour of a pupil, is prepared to persist, and where the teacher is pragmatic enough to realise that they may not have the resources to ‘save’ every child and so are able to withdraw (without personal detriment) from situations where they feel they cannot succeed. This is the point at which they ‘bounce-back’, either by trying alternative strategies or finally by re-focusing on other students.

In the second model, as exemplified by Phillip (Fig. 7:2) the teacher may be personally resilient, in that they do not burn out, but at the point at which they decide that they cannot succeed with a difficult pupil they do not re-focus. Instead, they decide that the effort and energy that they will have to expend to do this is not justified. These teachers characteristically accept levels of poor behaviour and insulate themselves from the effects of it or move to work in less challenging schools. Lastly, there is the model of teacher resilience as exemplified by Fig 7:3. A teacher in this situation continues to persist but does not experience success. They refuse to give up but they continue to fail. There is no ‘bounce back’, but there is no ‘acceptance’ either and eventually they may ‘burn-out’.

In Figs, 7:1 and 7:2 neither Harriet nor Phillip actually fail. They both come close to it, but Harriet refocuses and ‘bounces back’ before the point of failure is reached. This may appear like failure but it is Harriet’s perception, which is important. She perceived it as lack of

success in a situation where there was no hope of success and acknowledged that this is not failure. It is recognition that one's energies can be better employed elsewhere. Phillip did not fail either. He simply accepted that in order to succeed he would need to commit resources that he was not prepared to commit. He therefore did not fail - but neither did he 'bounce back'. He made a strategic withdrawal and decided to accept the situation as it was and consider his options (which were to remain and endure or leave). A simple analogy that can be used here is that Harriet ultimately wanted to 'win the war' and was therefore prepared to lose a battle. For Philip, it was a challenge that he chose not to accept, and a battle that he was not interested in winning, which is where he differed from Harriet. Phillip didn't want to fight, but what he had experienced did not look like teacher burnout. None of the teachers I interviewed appeared to be in this category, although teacher burnout is well documented by, for example, Chan (2003) and Carlyle & Woods (2002). In terms of teacher resilience, teacher burn-out is what can happen when the 'bounce-back' factor is missing and the teacher is not prepared to accept the levels of challenging behaviour, which disrupts their lessons. These teachers go on trying but, when they come across a situation where they cannot win, they are unable to 'let go' (either by re-focusing or by acceptance) they continue to persist and because they cannot succeed, they ultimately burn-out. A suggested model of this behaviour is illustrated in Fig 7:3 below.

**Fig. 7:3 An Illustration of Teacher ‘Burn-Out’ in Teachers who are not Resilient and do not ‘Bounce Back’ or Develop Acceptance**



Julian had taught for thirty years and saw himself as having been a resilient teacher. He now appeared to be losing his resilience, but he had not reached the point of burnout. Julian had been teaching for thirty years and appeared tired - he did not want to continue in the teaching profession. He was leaving teaching at the end of the academic year in which I interviewed him. Predictably enough, I found his reasons for leaving to be complex. He openly acknowledged that it was a prerequisite for a teacher to be resilient and saw himself as such, as well as being a role model for less experienced teachers,

“Yes, I haven’t set out with any programme for teaching resilience all you can do is to put yourself up as an example of it and be willing to talk, you know about how you perceive the job very honestly and don’t pretend that you don’t confront problems and don’t pretend that you do everything right but I think it does help just to be that role model, to be around, to be seen to be resilient, not just you know, I think that’s the key thing”. (Julian)

Julian exhibited a number of the characteristics of resilient teachers as described by Patterson, Collins & Abbott (2004) including placing importance on the support of his colleagues. His experience was also an example of how difficult it is to be continually

required to ‘bounce back’ from challenging and demanding situations in order to do one’s job. Speaking of the GCSE English group from which he had selected his pupil, he said this,

“Part of my frustration and feeling of failure is there is no chance of success and we have to play this game four times a week. It’s not easy and it’s not teaching, I don’t know what it is, it’s some kind of bizarre thing that we do here together, but it ain’t teaching”. (Julian)

Having followed the model of resilience exhibited in Fig. 7:1 for most of his career, Julian had now reached the point where his model of resilience more closely mirrored that illustrated in Fig. 7:2. However, Julian differed from Phillip in that, in his earlier career, he had accepted the need to ‘do whatever it takes’ (Patterson, Collins & Abbot 2004) but now, after thirty years he was tired,

“Well I was going to say, I’ve always said that if you’re going to take a job in a school such as this then don’t expect the kids to be well-behaved. End of story. And if you’re going to whinge about that then maybe you should have thought about that before taking the job. So there’s no point in pursuing that because you’re dealing with children from troubled backgrounds, and you can’t do everything because the damage has been done and all you do is just to try and smooth off some sharp edges, that’s all you can do. No it’s not that but then again, I am tired, bored of you know, contemporary youth behaviour, it’s so tiresome, so wearisome and because there’s such a huge proportion in schools like this, there’s so many of them, you know, you can’t talk about a minority because that’s not one’s perception, it is numerically a minority but it’s too many to be called ‘a minority’.....” (Julian)

In terms of his resilience, he gave an insight into what might be happening on the pinnacle of the diagram in Fig. 7:1. Just as the bottom of the curve represents the point of ‘bouncing back’, so the pinnacle of each curve represents success and the point at which the strategies have worked and there is a positive result. Julian was a good example of a teacher at the end of his career, who could reflect on past successes at times when he had had more energy and enthusiasm. Julian acknowledged that he had been successful during his career and that knowing this also promoted his resilience,

“That’s what gives you the resilience – past successes”. (Julian)

Tony’s tenacity gave a clue to his resilience; having identified his Year 10 pupil causing problems in the corridor, he decided to follow the boy’s progress around the school. Tony was not asked to do this, but he decided that the boy needed to know that someone was

monitoring his behaviour and so took him on as a kind of ‘project’. Tony explained that he ‘didn’t like to lose’. He was prepared to continue to pursue the boy until he got the result he wanted. As a senior member of staff, he was able to look in on the boy in his lessons and check up on his progress. Tony was a resilient teacher who recognised the importance of persistence and he described one of the ways in which this approach could have a positive outcome,

“My individual, despite the fact he’s a tough nut, he’s still actually appreciating the fact that somebody thinks he’s worth it, even though he knows I’m coming in to see him, at least he thinks well, I might have the resilience to be doing that, I’ve got the care or concern, even though he might think it’s misplaced I don’t know, but somebody is concerned enough to be chasing him up and making sure he’s doing what he ought to be doing. He doesn’t like it at the time but part of your brain tells you, ‘oh well perhaps somebody is bothered. I’ve not kicked off or whatever but, they’re checking up’”. (Tony)

Tony was a member of the Senior Leadership Team of the school, so he was someone who, in the perceptions of Harriet and Phillip, carried the authority, which the children respected. From their perspective, this gave him an advantage in terms of managing challenging behaviour, but his attitude to managing challenging behaviour had also been also influenced by his personal decision to ‘do whatever it takes’ (Patterson, Collins & Abbott 2004) in order to succeed with the Year 10 boy.

#### 4. Can all Teachers be Expected to be Equally Resilient?

Angela was a deputy head and her attitude and perspective on challenging behaviour gave an insight into the expectations of the Senior Leadership Team of the school and into what the school expected from their staff in terms of managing challenging behaviour. Based on what she said, it was clear that they expected the teachers at Arthur High School to be resilient in managing challenging behaviour. Angela described the importance of building good relationships with pupils from the beginning and acknowledged that it required a degree of persistence. However, even though Angela had high expectations of what the teachers should be prepared to do in order to enable the demotivated pupils to engage with the learning process, she was prepared to concede that it was not easy and acknowledged that it drew on the personal reserves of the teachers and that it required them to be resilient,



“[It’s] not easy to set up a situation where they [the pupils] can be genuinely successful”.

“Personal resilience is important”. (Angela)

Angela spoke about the expectations she had of the younger teachers in terms of what she expected that they must accomplish in addition to their role of delivering the curriculum,

“I think there are some teachers, young teachers that are like that and I think we’ve had one or two here and demonstrably, they’re not able to be successful. It’s not possible in a school like this to come in with the attitude this is, I’m just here to do this particular job delivering this particular content, set of skills, body of understanding and I’m not going to take that beyond that very limited teacher and pupil role. It just isn’t sufficient”. (Angela)

On the subject of the importance of persistence in building relationships Angela said,

“Later on, so all those potential conflicts that could have occurred can be quite simply defused because of our personal relationship. If you’ve never bothered to invest the time to build the personal relationship you’re going to have all those potential conflicts that are going to arise at particular points in the future. So I think overall in terms of time, and also in terms of helping a young person be successful at school and avoid those damaging conflicts, then it’s time well spent.” (Angela)

Angela was clear that being a good teacher was about persistence. She actually referred to, ‘going the extra mile’ and she was unequivocal that this attitude was a necessary prerequisite for successful teaching,

“Somebody who is able to find what it is that enables learning to take place with that individual pupil. In all schools there are going to be barriers to learning and what makes a very good teacher different from those that are merely adequate is that ability to go the extra mile, that desire to go the extra mile, to actually find what it is that’s going to bring about successful learning for an individual” . (Angela)

If, as Angela assumed, resilience is a necessary prerequisite for teaching, then the issue has important implications for teachers, which may be explained using the following analogy. In 2006, a group of people were trained by two Olympic athletes (Sally Gunnell and Steve Cram) to run the London Marathon. All these people had in common at the start of the experiment was their apparent unsuitability to run twenty-six point two miles. Some were grossly overweight, one was blind, several were fighting serious illness and none of them had

any previous experience of running. To expect this group of people to run the London Marathon could be described as unrealistic.

However, they underwent a gruelling training programme. One of the original group of thirteen dropped out very early on in the training programme, but all the others subsequently went on to complete the marathon. All, without exception, described it as the most difficult thing they had ever done, all experienced a tremendous sense of personal elation when they successfully crossed the finishing line. The crucial point about the example of the London Marathon runners is that the task appeared unrealistic because of the physical condition of the participants, but they had volunteered to attempt the task and had chosen to do something, which they knew would be challenging precisely because they all wanted to be challenged. They were all seeking a sense of achievement in their lives by overcoming seemingly impossible odds. It is realistic to assume that many of us will want to experience a sense of achievement by overcoming impossible odds at some time in our lives, perhaps by climbing mountains or undertaking research degrees. Sammons et al (2007) suggest that there are a group of resilient teachers who choose to be challenged, by their pupils, on a daily basis.

Another important factor to consider is that the marathon was a one-off experiment from which the participants could withdraw, without penalty, at any time. It is difficult to withdraw from paid employment without some kind of penalty; there are financial and perhaps social implications for most people. Therefore, we can draw a parallel between nurturing the resilience of the marathon runners and nurturing the resilience of teachers.

Imagine the prospective marathon runners in the same competition, but having decided to enter for different reasons and not seeking an extremely taxing personal challenge. Imagine them unable to withdraw without penalty and in addition to this, supposing they were provided with inadequate levels of training and support. Would the task then be back in the realms of not just difficult, but unrealistic? Would their chances of success have been as high and more crucially, would they have experienced more positive or more negative emotions?

This is intended to be an illustration of the difference between unrealistic and difficult. Can something which appears unrealistic be transformed into merely being difficult (and therefore viable) by creating the right circumstances for success? The similarities with managing challenging behaviour in schools are these; is it difficult to manage challenging

behaviour, in which case teachers can be trained to do it, or can the demands of managing challenging behaviour which are placed on teachers actually not just be difficult but unrealistic?

I think parallels may be drawn here with the school improvement movement and the notion that the conditions necessary to replicate school improvement can be created anywhere, irrespective of the culture or context (Reynolds 2001). The notion that it is possible to transform school improvement from being unrealistic to being merely difficult and therefore achievable, given the right motivation. The idea that a task maybe difficult, but none-the-less achievable given the right motivation, has fuelled the 'blame culture' in schools. This culture assumes that if good results can be achieved in some schools, they can be achieved in all, as explained by Parsons (1999). If this does not happen then we must seek someone to blame.

Dworkin (2009) says that the standards movement in education is based on two assumptions: firstly, "low student achievement is a product of incompetence and the lack of proper motivation on the part of teachers..." (pg. 494) and secondly that, "The cause of low student achievement is simply poor teaching..." (pg.494). Harriet felt that teachers needed more training in behaviour management, but also that they needed to be more honest about how difficult the job of teaching was,

"I think after you've been told what you need to teach for your subject area, which can pretty much be done in a bang, bang, bang kind of way, two weeks later, after that you've just got to go and watch and you've just got to see how it works and go and see people make mistakes which is why to a certain extent I wish teachers were more honest". (Harriet)

This begs a question about but how easy it is to be honest in the context of a 'blame culture'?

If, for example, by a combination of training and support something that is perceived as unrealistic can be transformed into something that is merely 'difficult' then it becomes more achievable. However, it remains difficult and my research data indicates that the teachers at Arthur High School needed to be resilient in order to succeed. This is the point at which the issue of teacher resilience in relation to managing challenging behaviour becomes critical for the education service. Harriet also recognised that teachers are under constant scrutiny from their pupils, so it was not simply a question of whether they succeeded or failed with a pupil, but whether they were perceived to have succeeded or failed by the pupils themselves.

Harriet said of her pupils that they were, very quick to judge me and how I deal with each of them.

In the case of these teachers, it is possible to see different reactions to the challenging behaviour and the consequent need for persistence in both managing the behaviour on a day-to-day basis and in building relationships with the pupils, but there are important similarities too. All the teachers I interviewed accepted the need to build relationships with the pupils, but in terms of resilience there is a difference. Harriet, Tony and Angela all appeared to relish this challenge and would probably be among the 84% of teachers found in schools in deprived areas who could be described as being resilient and had chosen to be there (Sammons et al 2007).

Julian may well have felt like this at some stage in his career, but he was now very cynical about the profession as a whole. Overall, his reasons for leaving the profession appeared to have more to do with cynicism regarding the shape and direction of the education service and the 'standards agenda' (Ainscow, Booth & Dyson 2006) in particular, than about managing the behaviour of the pupils. For Julian, it was a complicated interface between managing the behaviour of the pupils within a system that did not appear to make allowances for the ability of some of the pupils and did not appear to acknowledge or respect Julian's considerable experience. During a conversation when he was asked about his reasons for leaving, he said,

"It was a combination of factors, first of all what made me withdraw was just, totally bored with policies, policies, right wing policies from government. The direction of education can't stand OFSTED and what they stand for and I was in a situation where I was forced to have to speak to them during various inspections and I didn't want to have any more discourse with them. It's perfectly plain when I think about, when I think of the whole system. I'm not one to play games, too many people say oh forget that, who cares about that, they do everything down to all these idiot documents that they produce which they don't even look at which is the joke, but it was partly the political side of education and the more and more business centred, business jargon you know, coming into schools. Right wing American jargon entering the education system. The internet merely exacerbated the end of individuality and the set schemes of work and programmes of study for all type thing. When everything, everything, everything comes from the top down. It's always from the top down as if you know, people who have been in teaching don't have any ideas themselves, set their own agenda, and then they wonder why things are done poorly, half heartedly, not done, done cynically, it's because they have no ownership of it. You know, as soon as they've finished

one initiative and another two or three land and they're always from above".  
(Julian)

Angela appeared to be confident about the profession. She was sure that persistence was necessary and whilst acknowledging that it could be difficult, she was not emotive, for her it was unequivocally part of the job. She was a personally resilient teacher who had risen to a position of authority within the school and this poses important questions for the profession. If, as my research indicates, developing resilience is a personal response to stressful situations, does making personal resilience a pre-requisite to successful teaching immediately eliminate all teachers without the 'bounce-back factor' from working with pupils with challenging behaviour? What are the implications of this for the profession? For example, Phillip acknowledged what needed to be done in order to be successful in managing challenging behaviour, but was possibly coming to the conclusion that he didn't want to do it.

The normal instinct of human beings is to avoid difficult or dangerous situations and remain safe, both in terms of physical harm and in terms of one's emotional well being. However, it is likely that other factors come into play, which creates a tension with the instinct to protect oneself from unpleasant situations. This could be the need to be challenged, as with Harriet and in the way that some people climb mountains or run marathons, others willingly engage with groups of reluctant learners each day (whose behaviour they perceive to be challenging) and set themselves the task of not only creating order, but also of fostering learning.

One of the other factors recognised by Sammons et al (2007) is commitment. In their research, they found that resilient teachers working in schools in socially deprived areas usually have high levels of commitment. Sammons et al (2007) say that teachers, who are committed, are defined as having an enduring belief that they can make a difference to the learning lives and achievements of students (pg, 696).

The difficulty is that this commitment refers to making a difference to their 'learning lives'. What happens to the resilience of these committed teachers if, in their perception, the behaviour of the pupils prevents these pupils from learning? A level of commitment towards those who one perceives as less fortunate or disadvantaged is likely to result in a degree of self-sacrifice among certain groups of people. In other words, the resilience becomes necessary in order to achieve a goal which one acknowledges from the outset will be difficult, but where the value of the outcome outweighs the possible difficulties or dangers.

This may explain why, for example, aid workers place themselves in dangerous situations and put themselves at risk in order to help other people. Even if teachers are committed to enhancing the ‘learning lives’ of their students, they may not be prepared or able to tackle other issues which impinge negatively on these ‘learning lives’, the chief among these being the behaviour of the students and the degree to which this behaviour disrupts the learning process of these students or their peer group. Phillip came into this category.

Some individuals may be inherently more resilient than others; For example, Harriet, Tony, Julian and Angela. Some, like Phillip, may be less resilient in terms of managing challenging behaviour. Did these teachers perceive ways in which their resilience could be promoted? Some of the arguments about resilience point to the individual pathology of the teacher, but in professional terms it will be more useful to look at the issues raised by this in terms of what kinds of support teachers could access in order to nurture, develop and promote their resilience.

## 5. Nurturing Resilience

Gilligan (2004) argues that reliance should not be seen as something that is allocated ‘randomly’ within some people. He believes that resilience is developed when people are repeatedly exposed to favourable ‘interactions’ between them and positive features in their lives. In their research into the variations in teachers’ lives and their effects on pupils, Sammons et al (2007) recognised that teacher resilience could be affected by a range of factors, including pupil behaviour,

“Thus, teachers’ capacities to be resilient will be influenced—positively or negatively—by key influencing factors such as professional life phases and teacher identities and mediating factors (personal, situated and professional). Where teachers experience relatively mild fluctuations (positive, stable personal life, few problems at school in teaching and learning and with pupil relationships or behaviour, few threats to their sense of self as professional), the less they need to call upon their resilience. The support of the organisation is crucial in this respect both in terms of its structures and cultures”. (P. Sammons et al 2007 pg 695)

Patterson, Collins & Abbott (2004) examined resilience among teachers in urban schools in the United States. Their research agenda looked at what drives those resilient teachers who

maintain their tenure in urban environments, i.e. why do successful teachers stay in the schools facing the toughest challenges? Sammons et al (2007) also found that teacher resilience could be related to the stages of their career, with teachers in early and middle life phase more likely to retain their resilience. This perspective could perhaps explain the position of Julian. However, the question remains whether there is anything that can be done to promote teacher resilience?

Julian, Harriet and Phillip spoke of an individual struggle with the children to make them engage with the curriculum, which drew on their personal reserves. Julian described some situations as, “utterly dispiriting”. Phillip spoke about how the job wore him out,

“The amount it wears me out at the moment I don’t know how people could deal with a family, to be able to spend time with at home. I don’t know how people could come into the career and think; I’ve got another 40 years of this.” (Phillip)

Even though Harriet was very resilient, she, too, was concerned about being ‘worn down’. She was concerned that the pressures of having to deal with challenging behaviour might alter her personality because she was constantly called upon to be a disciplinarian, with varying degrees of success. She said, I don’t want to become a teacher who has been so worn down by this that you’re not a nice person. Tony spoke of a strategy that he used in what he, too, saw as a struggle with the pupils to try to persuade them to conform, but he reinforced his resilience by emphasising that he did not like to lose, “Establishing a fair code of expectations – something they can all understand” and “I don’t like to lose”. (Tony).

In terms of whether resilience can be nurtured in schools, Tony said that Arthur High School had a robust induction programme, which he perceived would help to support teachers in managing challenging behaviour. However, when asked a direct question about how he thought teachers developed strategies for managing challenging behaviour he said,

“God knows! There is no such thing as a good teacher. You’ve never actually cracked it because you’re dealing with people” and “Teachers are born not made”. (Tony)

What emerges from this is that teacher resilience is a significant issue in relation to managing challenging behaviour but can teachers be trained in managing that challenging behaviour?

There are apparently many strategies that can be used to ameliorate successfully the consequences of challenging behaviour (Rogers 2004) however, the situation described in this chapter is of a more complex nature and it centres upon choice and expectation. It centres upon the teachers' choice to teach in challenging circumstances or not and the expectations of the educational establishments and the wider society about what it is realistic for education to achieve.

If resilient people choose to work in challenging circumstances they are likely to be successful, but the question is whether personal resilience needs to be stipulated as a requirement to work in certain schools and in certain situations? By requiring teachers to be resilient, without being honest about why they need to be resilient, we are possibly avoiding the important debate which needs to take place regarding the tension that exists in some of our schools between the policy of inclusion (which requires schools to include pupils irrespective of any learning or behavioural difficulties which they may have) and the standards agenda (Ainscow, Booth & Dyson 2006), which requires schools to constantly raise the bar when it comes to pupil attainment.

If teachers do need to be resilient, it is essential to ask the fundamental question, why? Pupils can experience social and emotional difficulties that are outside the control of the school or the individual teachers and indeed this has always been the case. This is not new and it is also widely accepted that these difficulties can lead to behavioural problems. Again, this is not new. However, the issue of teacher resilience in relation to managing these difficulties is relatively new and there is a growing recognition that in certain circumstances teacher resilience may be a necessary pre-requisite for teaching,

“What is required by all concerned with enhancing quality standards in schools, therefore, is a better understanding of the factors that enable the majority of teachers to sustain their motivation, commitment and effectiveness in the profession. It is therefore, likely to be fruitful to examine why and how generally teachers maintain a continued positive contribution despite the range of experiences they encounter in their work environments which challenge their commitment”. (Gu & Day 2007 pg. 1311)

Teachers cannot control the external influences which have an impact on the lives and behaviour of their pupils and since the implementation of the 1988 Education Reform Act, they have had less and less control over either what they can offer their pupils in terms of



curriculum or the concomitant higher and higher expectations of what the pupils can achieve. The issue of teacher resilience may have emerged as a consequence of this dichotomy.

## Chapter Eight

### Conclusions of the Research

#### 1. Introduction

This research is about the phenomenon of challenging behaviour in secondary schools. The research contextualises challenging behaviour in the years following the implementation of the 1988 Education Reform Act. The impetus for this research was the significant rise in exclusions from schools in England and Wales in the decade following the implementation of this Act (Parsons 1999).

As the research has progressed, I have sought to answer my research questions by describing and defining challenging behaviour in the context of the experiences of a group of secondary school teachers. Through the adoption of a methodological approach, which used phenomenology as part of an interpretive paradigm, the research came to be primarily concerned with what the challenging behaviour of their pupils meant for this group of teachers. The research sought to illuminate what working with pupils with what these teachers described as ‘challenging behaviour’ meant for them.

This chapter returns to the research questions and examines the principle findings of the research in terms of these questions;

- 1) What do teachers regard as challenging behaviour and how do they manage it?
- 2) What factors do teachers believe:
  - i) To be significant in contributing to challenging behaviour among the pupils they teach?
  - ii) Affect their ability to manage challenging behaviour?

This concluding chapter discusses how the data from the research addresses these questions. It also looks at the wider implications of the research findings for teacher agency and examines the strengths and limitations of the model of teacher resilience, which was developed in chapter seven.

## 2. What do Teachers Regard as Challenging Behaviour and how do they Manage it?

In the second stage of my research, I asked the teachers that I intended to interview to choose a pupil whose behaviour they found challenging and to then describe that behaviour. What the teachers predominantly described would, in educational terminology, generally be categorised as ‘low level disruption’, things like talking in lessons, being late for lessons and answering back.

These behaviours in themselves, if taken individually, do not sound particularly challenging if compared to, for example, violent or aggressive behaviour. However, the consequence of this behaviour for the teachers was constant disruption to their lessons. In turn, that disruption to their lessons meant that they needed to be more than usually persistent in engaging with the pupils in order to try to build positive relationships.

These relationships were seen as the key to making the pupils conform and behave in a way that was less disruptive and more conducive to learning. The pupils did not automatically respect the authority of the adults but respect could be fostered between individual teachers and pupils. However, this process required the teachers to be very persistent and an issue that emerged in relation to this was the need for teacher resilience in relation to managing challenging behaviour.

For this group of teachers challenging behaviour had a meaning in the context of the classroom, which was disruption to the learning process and in turn, that disruption resulted in a struggle with the pupils in order to get them to conform to classroom expectations. This is not to say that violent or aggressive behaviour was not a problem for these teachers. However, only one of the teachers interviewed, Tony, referred to aggressive behaviour when he spoke about the pupil he had chosen. In speaking about the pupil and the fear that he could be aggressive, Tony stressed the importance of having a good relationship with the boy, which in his perception could help to defuse a potentially violent incident,

“But here we’ve got somebody else for whatever reason has got the stature and the strength but is unpredictable in my view. And that’s where the fear

comes in or the anxiety because you know that probably you're not too far away from that individual blowing up. Certainly that would be my experience. I would certainly be in the future very guarded about how I approach him. I feel as though I've actually developed some kind of, I've developed a positive relationship with him but the question would be how durable is that under negative circumstances? And I think, always think with youngsters, you develop relationships with them and you hope that you've got sufficient money in the bank so that if you need to take a major cash withdrawal, the bank isn't going to close". (Tony)

It terms of the data from the research it is significant that Tony was a member of the Senior Leadership Team at Arthur High School and that he had encountered the boy in the context of this role (while patrolling the corridor) and not in the classroom. All the other teachers including Angela, the deputy head, spoke about their experience of challenging behaviour in the classroom and said that it was in the classroom that disruption was a significant issue for them. They spoke at length about the struggle to get pupils to behave, in lessons, in a way that was not disruptive either to their own learning or to the learning of others.

A possible explanation for the fact that, apart from Tony, none of the teachers voiced particular concerns about violence may be that violent or aggressive behaviour is rarer. However, all the teachers spoke and at length, about the difficulties caused by lack of engagement with the learning process and disruptive behaviour in lessons. Paradoxically, for these teachers, in the context of an inclusive environment, disruption appeared to be more of a problem. Is this because disruptive behaviour was something that the teachers were expected to work with and had a responsibility to ameliorate? In January 2009 Christine Gilbert, the Chief Inspector of Schools made the link between low-level disruption and poor teaching,

"People divorce teaching from behaviour. I think they are really, really linked and I think students behave much better if the teaching is good, they are engaged in what they are doing and it's appropriate to them. Then they've not got five minutes into the lesson and started mucking around. Behaviour in our schools is generally good. But there's what I would describe as low-level disruption where children are bored and not motivated, so they start to use their abilities for other ends. That then can lead to other children being distracted in lessons and so on". Christine Gilbert (Chief Inspector of Schools)

There is evidence in the data, in what Angela said, that the Senior Leadership Team at Arthur High School had expectations that staff could and would manage challenging behaviour.

Respondents like Harriet and Tony both spoke in terms of wanting to 'win' and of seeing themselves engaged in a struggle with the pupils that they could and should win. We can therefore ask the question, is violent and aggressive behaviour (because it is generally regarded as an unacceptable consequence of challenging behaviour and usually results in immediate action in the form of an exclusion) something with which teachers are not necessarily expected to work? Whereas disruption as a consequence of challenging behaviour is something that teachers are expected to ameliorate. If this is the case then this research seeks to illuminate what that means for a group of secondary school teachers.

What does Challenging Behaviour mean? – It means **DISRUPTION** to lessons

What does Challenging Behaviour mean to the teachers? – It means an emotional engagement and a **STRUGGLE** with the pupils which requires **RESILIENCE**

Answering the first part of this research question was more straightforward than answering the second part, which proved more complex. My data strongly indicated that what these teachers regarded as challenging behaviour was disruption to their lessons. The teachers regarded challenging behaviour as disruptive behaviour. How they responded to it was more complex because, generally, it did not involve resorting to school policies or procedures for managing challenging behaviour. How these teachers managed the challenging behaviour involved a response, which drew on their personal reserves and essentially meant that the kind of personalities they had (and importantly how resilient they were) could have a direct bearing on how successful they were in the classroom.

The research showed that the teachers generally did not feel that they could rely on the discipline structures of the school in order to make the pupils behave. There was a strong theme running through all the interviews that this was a personal struggle, between the teacher and the taught. This is where the issue of teacher resilience with regard to managing challenging behaviour became a critical factor.

The teachers stressed the importance of building what they regarded as 'good' relationships with the pupils and also that the success of their discipline in the classroom (and consequently the success of their teaching) would frequently rest on the quality of these relationships. The pupils with whom they ultimately felt that they failed and who were

sometimes excluded from the school, were not necessarily those who displayed the most challenging behaviour. They were those with whom, for whatever reason, the necessary relationships had not been forged.

My research showed that teacher resilience amongst this group of teachers was characterised by the 'bounce-back factor' (Kyriacou 1998, Gu & Day 2007 and Sammons et al 2007). This was a characteristic, which enabled teachers to re-focus when they came to the conclusion that they were not achieving their desired outcome with a particular pupil. Building up positive relationships with the pupils (which were required if the teachers were going to be able to deal successfully with the challenging behaviour and thereby end the disruption) required the teachers to be persistent, because the pupils were not immediately willing to trust them or to co-operate with them. If the teachers were unable to get the child or children to co-operate then they needed to be resilient and develop the capacity to 'bounce-back' and re-focus, so that they could continue with their teaching.

The research illustrated that the 'bounce-back factor' is closely related to knowing 'when to let go' (Patterson, Collins & Abbott 2004). In this way, the 'bounce-back' factor can be understood as a person 'giving up' in one particular situation or with one particularly intransigent pupil, but refocusing and redirecting their efforts in another direction or on another pupil where there may be a greater chance of success. Patterson, Collins and Abbott (2004) describe resilience as, using energy productively to achieve school goals in the face of adverse conditions (pg.3). Using energy productively implies that there must be a point at which lack of success is acknowledged and that energy is refocused in a direction where it can be more productive.

Harriet was a good example of a teacher with this characteristic. Due to her inexperience in her first year of teaching, she had been unable to form a successful relationship with the particular Year 11 pupil she chose as her subject for the inter views. In her perception this meant that she was often not able to get him to co-operate. However, she could get co-operation and could work with the pupils with whom she had built a positive relationship. Harriet had 'let go' in an emotional sense when she was able to justify to herself why she perceived that this pupil was not deserving of her persistence. Harriet appeared to understand when it was worthwhile to persist and when it was better to 'let go' and accept

that one could not achieve the desired outcome. This was a characteristic of her personal resilience.

### 3. What Factors do Teachers Believe:

- i) To be significant in contributing to challenging behaviour among the pupils they teach?
- ii) Affect their ability to manage challenging behaviour?

From the perspective of the teachers, there were a number of factors that contributed to challenging behaviour among their pupils, but the most significant was the perceived mismatch between the ability and aspirations of the pupils and the content and structure of the curriculum. Angela, as a deputy head at Arthur High School, was concerned with the low academic ability of many of the pupils and interestingly, she spoke in terms of pupil resilience in the face of their persistent failure with the curriculum,

“But we expect them to be so resilient to come into school, fail, come the next day, fail. Come in the next day, fail. Fail and keep going and trying and trying. And they do. And they actually do, do that. Which is what really is the miracle. That these kids do keep coming to school and trying their best and failing and, you know, that’s when you actually look at it from that angle, and I think that’s what I actually try and encourage young people to do is to look at it from that angle, as an intelligent person you’d have given up long ago yet you expect them to keep trying and failing and coming and trying again!”  
(Angela)

Angela saw this failure as being partly attributable to a significant number of the pupils, being what she considered to be of low or lower than average ability. She also thought that the failure was due in large part to the inappropriateness of the way in which the school was required to track and measure progress.

The data showed that a significant proportion of the teachers who responded to the questionnaires cited the curriculum as a factor in increasing incidences of challenging behaviour, but said that it was not simply that the curriculum was inappropriate, or that some of the pupils were of low ability. They said that, for some pupils the experience of school itself appeared to be an irrelevance and the target grades (that were so important to the teachers) were not at all important to some of those pupils.

The teachers also highlighted social factors which they thought contributed to challenging behaviour, but which were largely outside of their control. On the whole, the teachers saw themselves as having to deliver an entitlement curriculum to all of the pupils, significant numbers of whom were either unable or unwilling to receive it. The pupils' response to this was often to become disruptive in their lessons. The teachers, charged with the job of getting the required results, had to be resilient in order to manage successfully the circumstances, which these situations created.

Therefore, what affected the ability of the teachers to manage challenging behaviour appeared to depend upon both external and internal factors. Firstly, although the pupils often arrived at school uninterested in learning the teachers were still required to deliver an entitlement curriculum. They saw the curriculum as having little relevance for their most disruptive pupils, but they had little or no control over it. Secondly, because they had no choice in the matter of what to deliver (and Harriet with her 'target C group' is a good example of this), they were required to manage the behaviour of the pupils and to try to ameliorate it so that learning could take place. This drew on the personal reserves of the teachers.

Much has been written and documented about equality of opportunity and the rights of all pupils to access education on the same terms and as previously discussed the desirability of inclusion as a concept is a 'taken for granted assumption'. A difficulty with this is that the premise of school inclusion assumes that steps will be taken to make the educational institutions accessible to all. Up until very recently, with changes in the 14-19 curriculum and latterly to the primary curriculum, this has not extended to offering a separate or different curriculum. Therefore, schools have only been able to adapt to being inclusive up to a point, after that it is the pupils who must adapt. Ball (2008) writes about how in terms of Foucault, the Blair government employed dividing practices (pg. 178) whereby certain sections of society are identified as socially and politically irresponsible (pg. 178) and therefore in need of interventions. In this way, working class families are expected to adapt to the largely middle class values promulgated by the education system.

Challenging behaviour may be a manifestation of the failure of some pupils to adapt to what is on offer in schools. This has significant implications for teacher resilience, particularly if



they have little or no control over what they are required to teach. Angela saw this quality of persisting in the face of adversity as resilience on the part of the pupils, but she also acknowledged that the teachers needed to be resilient. She called teacher resilience an “enormous issue”.

The research was influenced by phenomenology and so it looked at what challenging behaviour meant for teachers. What, however, does the issue of teacher resilience in terms of managing challenging behaviour mean for the teaching profession and in particular for the concept of teacher agency?

#### 4. Implications of the Research for Teacher Agency

If resilience is a quality that can be nurtured, then it must follow logically that, if the conditions do not exist for nurturing resilience, a person may become less resilient. How resilient a person is will determine the levels of stress to which they can respond effectively, without suffering detriment. There are serious implications in this for teachers working in stressful environments and also for the concept of teacher agency.

Beyond choosing a school in which to work, teachers generally do not have a choice about which pupils they teach and of all the professionals engaged with children and young people teachers are the only ones who are not allowed to ‘close the case’. This means that they must persevere with difficult pupils. Exclusion could be seen as a way in which education ‘closes the case’ on a pupil. However, the child who is excluded is still entitled to full time education from day six of the permanent exclusion. This pupil may no longer be the responsibility of the teachers who have excluded him, but he remains the responsibility of the education service. Many schools, Arthur High School included, admit pupils that other schools have excluded, often for what is described as ‘persistent disruptive behaviour’. In some areas they are directed to do this by the local authority. For example, Julian was not sure how the Year 10 pupil he had identified had come to be in the school, but the pupil had joined midway through his secondary school career. This could have been as the result of an exclusion,

“ ...joined the school last July, and I think he came as a result of a school closure but he certainly left his other school. Side issue about behaviour is that sharing info of any nature about pupils is very hit and miss here and is not part of policy as it has been in other schools I have worked at - as in when

anyone is new there' s a staff meeting, relevant staff meet and things are shared from that child's file so we know exactly who we are taking on and where they might have needs and be prepared for the sort of person we are getting, good, bad or somewhere in between. The reasons for it here I don't know, I can only guess at - a fresh start, not to have things prejudicial for a child making a fresh start if they have messed up at their previous school..." (Julian)

Children may benefit from the services of a social worker, but if there are no grounds for a Child Protection referral and the family do not engage, then social services will frequently close the case and take no further action. Young people who need the services of CAMHS (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service) but who frequently miss appointments or are unable to engage proactively with the service will find that the case is closed. However, pupils who truant from school do not find that their case is closed, in fact quite the opposite. In these circumstances schools are required to pursue both the child and the parents via the Education Welfare Service.

The teaching professional cannot close the case in the way that other professionals working with children and young people can, even if the 'case' is not engaging or responding. The implications of this, for teachers, are that they are required to continue to engage with pupils who may not appear to want to be in receipt of education.

A key finding of this research was the importance of resilience. Its significance lay mainly in the 'bounce-back factor', which determined the willingness of teachers to re-engage repeatedly with pupils with challenging behaviour in order to achieve successful learning outcomes for them. It was also important in relation to teacher morale and whether teachers chose to remain in the profession if, for example like Phillip, they did not see that this persistent re-engagement should be part of their role.

Harriet was resilient and she spoke candidly about seeking a challenge and not wanting to do a job that was 'boring'. Her willingness to keeping engaging with challenging pupils defined her resilience. She perceived that she was a successful teacher, not because she had a high degree of specialist subject knowledge, but because she could 'manage the kids',

"...my subject knowledge, my degree is in History of Art and I teach English and I have English GCSE and A-level but I'm dyslexic, I can't spell, I did modules at university in English which I failed, and couldn't understand. I

teach media and I've never been trained to teach media and I have no idea what I'm doing, I'm regularly Googling stuff half an hour before the lesson and pulling it off and going right ok, and I think I've got skills in being able to take the information and understand it. I mean someone can say, like Julian [one of the other interviewees] and, I go to him and say Julian s\*\*\* I need something for this and he'll talk like, that's 2 hours of lessons and I can go away and do that and turn it back onto the kids and get them into it and get them to understand it, but my subject specialism is rubbish. Absolutely rubbish but I can get the results from these kids because I can teach them enough so that they can get an A in their GCSE and I can manage them..." (Harriet)

Harriet was clear that the imperative to keep pupils engaged and achieving meant that her ability to 'manage the kids' was more important in that context than her subject knowledge. This was in contrast to Phillip, who had good subject knowledge and was teaching the subject in which he had his degree, but was struggling to 'manage the kids', indeed he was even questioning why that was considered such an important part of his role.

The key findings of the thesis highlight a number of implications for teacher preparation and development, not least the need to recognise the importance of resilience. The Teach First programme, of which Harriet and Phillip were participants, places considerable emphasis on entrants having good degrees and concomitantly a thorough knowledge of their subject. As a Teach First teacher, Harriet had been recruited because she had a good degree and yet Harriet was not teaching the subject in which she had gained her degree. The data suggested that her resilience in the face of challenging behaviour was of more use to the school than her degree in the History of Art. In contrast, Philip was a Science graduate who was teaching his subject but was struggling with his classes and considering leaving the profession. Phillip's resilience did not have the vital 'bounce-back' factor that appeared to sustain Harriet.

The findings of the thesis suggest that resilience is a key factor in the success of teachers within schools where more challenging behaviour is evident. As such, it is important to consider how teacher resilience could be promoted. Is it a question of recruiting resilient teachers or could teachers be trained in such a way that their resilience could be developed? If so, how could their resilience be developed? Perhaps by increased levels of teacher agency. Once developed, can resilience continue to be promoted through support and training? One of the characteristics of Harriet's resilience was that she sought support, for example from Julian, while Phillip did not actively seek the support of his colleagues. The findings of the thesis suggest that one way of ensuring that resilience is nurtured would be to make more

widespread use of peer mentoring and support for teachers, so that they do not have to rely so heavily on the need for the ‘bounce-back’ factor. In this way they could be supported to succeed rather than relying on their own resilience in order to have successful outcomes for pupils with challenging behaviour. This last point was illustrated most clearly through the case studies. As Julian said, “I don’t look elsewhere for support for behaviours. No one is going to help me; no one in this building is going to help me with the teaching of English for four hours a week with [name of pupil]. The only people who can help me are [name of pupil] and me”.

There are currently many routes into the teaching profession, of which Teach First is one. The good graduates on the Teach First programme are intended to enrich teaching and learning in deprived areas and then, if they don’t remain in the profession, to take the skills they have learned in schools into industry and commerce,

“As a result of a rigorous recruitment process and their time in the classroom, Teach First participants demonstrate strong communication skills, as well as planning, organisation and creativity. In addition, they have all excelled academically. The results show that they are making a significant impact in challenged schools. What could they achieve in your business?”  
([www.teachfirst.org.uk](http://www.teachfirst.org.uk).)

These graduates have transferred from university into the classroom with a six-week summer induction in between. Many modern routes into teaching for graduates are school-based, effectively ‘on the job’ training. The school-based element of training (what used to be called teaching practice) is an important aspect of teacher training, but traditionally after a period of teaching practice trainee teachers could return to their training institutions and have the opportunity to discuss and debate aspects of that experience, including behaviour management. What are the prospects of developing an effective pedagogy, which nurtures resilience, if trainee teachers have limited opportunity to debate these issues objectively with the support of tutors, away from the schools where they are working? Gutherson, et al (2006) found that, among other things, trainee teachers need to be empowered to successfully manage behaviour and that one of the ways in which this could be done is through the development of a more reflective pedagogy,

“Training providers need to consider trainees’ perceptions that there are factors, which impact upon their confidence to manage behaviour and pastoral practice, over which they believe they have no control – ‘external’

factors such as their age, subject specialism etc. Training providers need to be able to empower trainees to focus on the factors over which they do have direct control and to help them overcome under-confidence by challenging their attitudes and beliefs through reflective practice”. (Gutherson, et al 2006)

Paris (1993) writes about teacher agency and curriculum making in classrooms in the United States. She argues that the removal of any influence over the curriculum had not only reduced teacher agency, but also deprived teachers of the opportunity to engage intellectually with the process of curriculum design and delivery. Thirty years ago, a large part of teacher training in England was concerned with the design and implementation of the curriculum. The removal of that imperative with the passing of the 1988 Education Reform Act introduced the concept of the prescribed National Curriculum. This fundamentally influenced teacher training and development. Training came to be about how to deliver the curriculum, not how to design it,

“The relationship of teachers to curriculum was reduced to the receiving and implementing of curricula by teachers without their having engaged intellectually in their creation or critique” (Paris 1993 pg. 7)

The thesis showed that respondents had significant concerns about the appropriateness of the curriculum, particularly for some of the more challenging pupils. If, as part of their training, teachers had more opportunity, for example, to debate the relationship between learning and behaviour could this promote their resilience by encouraging them to be more proactive? For example, when confronted with high levels of challenging behaviour would more teachers engage more creatively with alternative programmes in Key Stage Four as an alternative to exclusion?

An opportunity for all teachers, as part of their training, to engage in a prolonged intellectual debate about the relationship between what is taught and how children behave, might help to establish a more reflective pedagogy. It follows that logically teachers need a better developed understanding of challenging behaviour and the relationship between behaviour and learning which does not leave them relying too much on their personal resilience in order to ‘manage the kids’,

“Regardless of the differences between the training routes, the factors trainees consider to have the greatest impact on pastoral practice and their ability to engage with young people and build relationships with them are

predominantly personal characteristics. The findings of the report suggest that current ITT devotes little time to the development of engagement or relationship building skills". (Gutherson, et al 2006)

A more reflective pedagogy might lead to a more developed understanding of the relationship between learning and behaviour in the classroom. This, in turn, might empower teachers and develop their resilience. Moreover, if that empowerment gave them more choices (for example in looking more creatively at alternative programmes in Key Stage Four) that success might promote their resilience. Of course, it would be nice to think that perhaps there might be a circumstance, in which teachers could go beyond that and actually be able to determine what they teach,

"The assumption that a curriculum is a mutual and evolving creation of teacher and learners in a specific context, and that teachers are central participants in its creation and critique, invites consideration of very different conceptions of empowerment and professionalization than we are permitted when unexamined assumptions about teachers and curriculum limit our vision." (Paris 1993 pg. 15)

A frequent theme emerging from the interviews was that the pupils did not appear to value their education and did not want to be in school. As a consequence of this, they displayed challenging behaviour when they were forced to come to school and to engage with something in which they saw limited value or importance.

This research is about meaning and specifically about what challenging behaviour means for teachers. It showed that, for this group of teachers, managing challenging behaviour meant a struggle with individual pupils that required differing levels of resilience. Smylie (1999) says that stress is largely phenomenological. As phenomenology is concerned with meaning, it is clear that what constitutes a stressful situation for one person will not necessarily be stressful to another. Further to this, even if two people both perceive a situation to be stressful, their response to it may not be the same and importantly, in terms of this research, how they respond to it will relate to how resilient they are. As what is a very stressful situation for one person is not necessarily stressful for another, it follows that levels of stress can have different effects on different people,

"One could argue, for example, that the same condition of role ambiguity that spurs creativity and growth and satisfies the need for personal autonomy for one person could lead to conservatism, isomorphism and a loss of meaning and agency for another." (Smylie 1999 pg.65).

The nature and degree of this emotional response will be determined by the level of resilience incumbent within each individual. If challenging behaviour contributes significantly to creating a 'gap' between what teachers want to achieve (or are required to achieve) and what they are able to achieve, then how challenging behaviour is perceived both inside and outside schools is vitally important in terms of both teacher resilience and teacher agency.

For example, if responding to challenging behaviour is seen as an essential part of the role of the teacher, then teachers who fail to respond appropriately are not likely to be viewed sympathetically. Generally, people are expected to be able to do the jobs for which they have been trained and if managing challenging behaviour is seen as part of the job of teaching, then it will be seen as a pre-requisite for the role. In which case, I would argue that teachers need far more training in how to respond to it. Particularly as in recent Government initiatives to reduce exclusions, the idea is again reinforced that responsibility for poor behaviour lies with the teachers because they have not provided a sufficiently interesting learning experience,

“Consistent high quality teaching is the single most important factor in raising standards. (McKinsey report 2007) For children with behaviour problems or other learning needs it is particularly important that their classroom experience is rigorous, but personalised. Much poor behaviour has its origins in the inability of the child to access learning, rather than as a result of an unchangeable character defect.” (DCSF 2009)

There is evidence to suggest that, increasingly, teachers are expected to manage or ameliorate challenging behaviour as an integral part of their role. A recent example of this appeared on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2009 in the Guardian newspaper, which reported on, 'Ofsted's new mission – to get rid of boring teachers' and Christine Gilbert, the Chief Inspector of Schools was reported as saying that the reason that pupil behaviour was deteriorating was because the lessons were boring. Sir Alan Steer (2009) published his review into Behaviour in Schools in February 2009 and he placed considerable emphasis on the role of the teacher in ameliorating poor behaviour. He made a number of recommendations and based upon these, in September 2009 the government published the 'Behaviour Challenge', which appears as Appendix Three. This challenge is based on the premise that in Ofsted terms all schools should be judged at least 'good' for behaviour, because in Ofsted terms satisfactory is apparently not

satisfactory. The challenge puts considerable emphasis on the role of the teacher in improving behaviour.

My research looked at whether there is a gap between what teachers are expected to achieve (in terms of learning outcomes in an inclusive environment) and what, in fact, they can realistically achieve (because of the level of disruptive behaviour in their lessons). It then explored whether this gap is created by the behaviour of pupils in particular schools where the ‘critical mass’ of pupils with behavioural difficulties is significant. In addition to this, the research looked at whether this behaviour manifests itself in response to an educational offering that is perceived as inappropriate. All these things have significant implications for teachers in these environments and for teacher agency overall.

The data from my research indicates that the teacher respondents perceived that they were often expected to meet unrealistic goals, which were set for them by others and over which they had little or no control,

“And don’t get me wrong, it’s not that I don’t have high expectations of all pupils, I do, but we’re all the time categorising something that actually might be a considerable success; if you move from 3C to any type of 4, as a failure...between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3, you’re going to be on a list that says that child has failed to make the expected level of improvement”.  
(Angela)

The teachers perceived that these unrealistic goals contributed to challenging behaviour and teacher resilience became a key issue in how they responded to this challenge and crucially, as in the case of Phillip, whether they were even able to accept this view of the teaching profession. Teacher stress is fairly well documented, whereas very little has been written about teacher resilience, particularly in relation to challenging behaviour. Paradoxically, more has been written about pupil resilience.

Dworkin (2001), Patterson, Collins & Abbott (2004) and Sammons et al (2007) all illustrate the notion of teacher-burnout and the need for resilience, but usually it is resilience in relation to new policies and initiatives (Dworkin 2001) rather than specifically in relation to managing challenging behaviour. Patterson, Patterson & Collins (2002) write about resilient schools in the United States. They apply many of the characteristics of resilient teachers, which are described by Patterson, Collins & Abbott (2004) to whole institutions. Patterson,



Patterson & Collins (2002) place emphasis on the importance of defining what they mean by the term resilience and they suggest that, for schools, there could be three 'target levels' for resilience: (i) 'just getting by', (ii) 'getting back to the status quo after experiencing adversity' or (iii) 'getting ahead through consistent improvement or consistently high performance' (pg.6). In individuals could the 'just getting by' level of resilience refer to Phillip's model of resilience through acceptance whereas the 'getting ahead through consistent improvement or consistently high performance' relate to the model of resilience incorporating the 'bounce back factor'?

Green, Oswald and Spears (2007) write about how teachers perceive resilience in their pupils, "...86% [of teacher respondents] stated that resilience was concerned with coping, bouncing back or moving on despite perceived adversities". (pg. 137) The view of resilience taken by Patterson, Patterson & Collins (2002) could be about simply surviving, or it could be about improving one's performance. In terms of teacher agency and the 'blame culture', both of these definitions are important. The 1988 Education Reform Act ushered in an era of accountability for teachers whilst at the same time removing any control that they had previously had over the curriculum. This was justified by notions of the untrustworthiness of teachers (Ball 2008). A consequence of this has been the loss of professional autonomy, which Parsons (1999) cites as a contributory factor in the rise in exclusions. This is the wider context in which teacher resilience has emerged as an issue.

Resilience has often been seen as a quality, possessed by certain individuals, but if it is a pre-requisite for successful teaching then it is more useful to think of it in terms something which can be nurtured (Gilligan 2004) to enable teachers to adapt in the face of adversity. As far as the findings from this research are concerned, it is important to look at the implications of the gap between what the teachers are trying to achieve in their lessons and the reality of what is happening in the disrupted classrooms.

The teachers perceived that they had to deliver the curriculum and raise standards with pupils, of whom significant numbers were perceived by the teachers as not wanting to learn. The premise for all of this is that the education service as it is constituted is considered to be effective and because it can work successfully in some contexts, it can work successfully in all. Here in lies the basis of the 'blame culture' in education where there is either the model of a deficit pupil (who must be demonised because of their behaviour) or a deficit teacher (who

cannot do their job). There is more emphasis in the literature on pupil resilience, Howard and Johnson (2000) look at resilient outcomes for children at risk in Australia, although interestingly they also explore the role of teachers in promoting resilience in children and cite the importance of achievement for children in promoting their resilience,

“It is interesting that none of the teachers talked about school achievement as a resilience promoting factor despite the fact that learning is supposed to be the core business of schools. Unlike the students, teachers perhaps may view failure to achieve as a *result* of it children experiencing a ‘tough life’ rather than a possible *cause* of it”. (Howard & Johnson 2000 pg. 332)

What part has the ‘blame culture’ in education played in the emphasis on resilience as more of an issue for children in education than for teachers? Teacher resilience tends only to be seen in terms of its effect on pupils (Sammons et al 2007).

A negative attitude on the part of the pupils contributes to the gap between what the teachers need to accomplish and their ability to accomplish it. This has implications for teacher agency because it places teachers in a situation where they are accountable but have no control, which not only undermines professional autonomy but also creates stressful situations. Kyriacou (1984) concludes that the term teacher stress should refer to the negative emotional aspects engendered by a teacher’s work. (pg.4). How resilient a person is will determine the levels of stress to which they can respond effectively, without suffering detriment. Chan (2003) says that stress may be described as being created by our emotional response to confronting the gap between what we need to accomplish and our ability to accomplish it,

“Nonetheless, these initial burnout symptoms could be partly attributable to the serious challenges posed by stressors in the teaching environment, and partly to student teachers’ perception of a significant gap between expectations of successful professional performance and a dissatisfied reality”. (Chan 2003 pg. 394)

Carlyle and Woods (2002) refer to the considerable amount of time that has been spent researching teacher stress in recent years in a number of different countries. They conclude that the majority of this research has failed to adopt a holistic approach to the causes of teacher stress, seeing it as primarily located within the teacher. This fails to recognise that even if an individual has good and possibly effective strategies for responding to challenging situations, teachers have little or no control over the causes of their work related stress at a national or institutional level,

“Seeking out some of the major research omissions, we argue that, due to an emphasis on teacher-based causes and solutions, the underlying structural factors of stress are poorly understood and inadequately dealt with, and that a consideration of social processes surrounding individual and collective emotion is fundamental to understanding teacher stress”. (Carlyle & Woods 2002 pg.xvii)

Dworkin (2009) sees teacher burn-out as a direct consequence of school reform in the United States and sees it as a response to job stress and related to a sense of meaninglessness and powerlessness (pg.76). Research which sees resilience in terms of initiatives in education, for example, Patterson, Collins & Abbott (2004) recognise that resilient teachers sometimes have to work creatively with school reforms which they do not see as enhancing the learning opportunities of their pupils,

“Resilient teachers are not victims. They solve problems that are barriers to student learning, including creative solutions to school district bureaucracy”. (Patterson, Collins & Abbott 2004 pg.9)

All of us experience stress to some degree every day, at work, in traffic jams, during personal difficulties and sometimes because we fail to achieve our personal goals. One of the tenets of good stress management is to set realistic goals. My research showed that teachers working with pupils who display challenging behaviour and who disrupt their lessons have little or no control over either what they teach or which pupils are in their lessons. These teachers have to meet unrealistic goals which are set for them by others and over which we have little or no control. If unrealistic demands are being made what are the implications for the nurturing of resilience? Gilligan (2004) says that how much resilience a person has will depend upon whether the context in which they are operating has elements which nurture that resilience. In spite of Tony’s earlier reference to a robust induction programme I did not find much evidence in the data that within the organisation of Arthur High School there were many of these elements, although the support that teacher colleagues undoubtedly drew from one another was certainly one element, which appeared to nurture their resilience. This was evidenced by comments made by Harriet about support she got from Julian.

Earlier in this section, I have stressed the importance of a more intellectual and somewhat less practical approach to teacher training. There are a plethora of teacher training courses, which are available, and of course, it is possible that many of them give trainee teachers an

opportunity to develop a reflective pedagogy. However, the evidence in this thesis of the effect of the Teach First programme is in itself significant. There is a clear assumption, which underlies the programme, that standards of attainment will be raised in challenging schools if pupils have the opportunity to be taught by people who are very knowledgeable in their subject. However, my research indicates the importance of resilience for teachers working in these environments, rather than subject knowledge. Resilience was more important for Harriet than subject knowledge, to the extent that she believed that she was not making any use of the latter.

Can teachers be trained to be resilient? Can they be supported to be resilient? Perhaps if they have a chance to develop a more reflective pedagogy, if they work in a supportive environment, if they have robust inductions and access to continuing professional development then their resilience can be nurtured? However, none of these mechanisms will be in place unless there is an acknowledgement that, if we are to have an inclusive education service, there needs to be a recognition and an understanding that what teachers do in challenging schools is actually challenging and requires teachers to be resilient.

Teaching is something which requires an intellectual engagement with pedagogy and support from the school to nurture the resilience of teachers working in challenging circumstances. As the thesis clearly illustrates, if those two things happen in tandem, perhaps teachers will have their resilience developed and nurtured, so that they do not feel that their success or failure depends on their personal engagement with each pupil.

## 5. The Current Educational Policy Context on Challenging Behaviour

The new 'Behaviour Challenge' based on Sir Alan Steer's report (DCSF 2009), which appears as Appendix Three does not really offer anything new in terms of addressing the problem of challenging behaviour. Firstly, in point one, teachers are required to be good teachers and deliver an interesting learning experience because the assumption is that if pupils are bored they will misbehave. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with this assumption and I suspect that most teachers would agree, but it is a huge over simplification of a very complex problem. There is no excuse for poor teaching, but to assume that, in all cases, challenging behaviour occurs because the quality of the teaching is poor is naive in the extreme and says

nothing either about the appropriateness of the entitlement curriculum or the ability of the pupils, both of which were issues that were highlighted in my research.

In point two, teachers are exhorted to emulate good practice (which is a good thing, but hardly new) with reference to the ten principles of good practice first identified in 2005. If the ten principles identified in 2005 were so effective, what evidence is there that they have made an impact on behaviour in schools in the intervening four to five years?

Point three encourages teachers to talk to parents. All the teachers interviewed for this research emphasised the importance of communicating with parents and that, indeed, good relationships with them were as important, if not more important, than good relationships with the pupils. In other words, many teachers are already doing this and their pupils still misbehave. Few of them would argue that it is not important to work with parents, but what happens when the parents have also lost control and are seeking support from the school?

Point four encourages schools to share expertise and work in partnership. Arthur High School was actively involved in a number of school partnerships aimed at improving behaviour and reducing exclusion at the time of the research. These partnerships were aimed at reducing exclusions and schools within these partnerships often admit pupils excluded from other schools within that partnership.

Lastly, point five encourages schools to use their legal powers to discipline pupils, which could ultimately include their right to exclude. The depressing thing about this last point is that having exhorted teachers to 'go the extra mile' to work with disruptive pupils the implication in the last point is that ultimately it is OK to exclude. This makes all decisions about what constitutes poor pupil behaviour that is worthy of exclusion subjective. In some schools, like Arthur High School where there was an imperative not to exclude and large numbers of pupils with challenging behaviour teachers were required to be particularly resilient in carrying out these requirements. In other schools, where there may be fewer numbers of pupils with challenging behaviour, teachers are not likely to be required to be so resilient in order to carry out the requirements.

A significant aspect of these findings is that resilience is a quality that is personal to individuals. Some people will be more resilient than others will and some of those individuals

will be teachers. Their resilience may have nothing to do with, for example their subject knowledge, as illustrated earlier by Harriet's example, "I can get the results from these kids because I can teach them enough so that they can get an A in their GCSE and I can manage them..." (Harriet)

In light of these findings, is there an argument for requiring resilience as a characteristic of teachers in urban schools when recruiting? If this were to be acknowledged what would it say about these schools? Would policy makers be prepared to take any responsibility for the need for resilience in teachers working in these environments? Is it appropriate to acknowledge the need for resilient teachers and recruit them, or is it more appropriate to ask at a national level why this resilience may be necessary? Conversely, if schools acknowledge that they need to nurture the resilience of their teachers they are also acknowledging the need for resilient teachers. In a highly competitive educational market will heads be prepared to concede that their staff need to be resilient? This implies that the school has pupils with challenging behaviour, something that head teachers may be reluctant to admit when Ofsted now requires that behaviour in all schools be judged at least 'good'.

## 6. Strengths & Limitations of the Model Used to Illustrate Teacher Resilience and the 'Bounce-Back' Factor

The model uses words, the meanings of which cannot be separated from the context in which they are used and in this case, the context is this particular piece of research. It is important, therefore to explore the meaning of the words as they are used in the model. The meaning of words like 'persistence' and in particular 'wear down', 'success' and 'acceptance' are not universal and need to be problematised in order to clarify and strengthen understanding of what the model represents.

The word persistence is important, and can mean two different things... one is 'unrelenting' as in 'determined' or even 'pushy'. The other means 'lasting', as in 'remaining' or 'permanent'. There are two ways in which the word persistence is used in the model, but they both relate to the definition of the word in terms of it meaning unrelenting, rather than being lasting. The kind of persistence used in the model is not to do with lasting or permanence because the teachers perceived that their struggle began anew with each new class.

In the model, persistence is used in conjunction with both ‘wear down’ and ‘enthusiasm’. The word wear down is actually a composite of two words, ‘wear down’ but they have a combined meaning, which is to ‘gradually weaken or erode’. In the model these words relate to emotions likely to be experienced by the teacher. The emotions experienced during the process of wear down are likely to be negative. These emotions will depend on whether the teacher perceives that their persistence is helping to bring about a change in the attitude or behaviour of the pupil (a change that would enable the teacher to manage the challenging behaviour in a way that minimises disruption and means they can teach the class without significant interruption) and achieve the desired learning outcomes. Remembering that generally, the teacher has not been able to select what they consider appropriate learning outcomes, in most cases, the learning outcomes are prescribed (for example, a grade C or above at GCSE) as in the case of Harriet’s pupil. This is important because, in the model, persistence is shown as a necessary pre-requisite of achieving a goal, although in most cases the teacher has not been able to determine the goal.

In terms of resilience, to achieve something difficult, which one acknowledges is difficult, but also believes to be achievable - requires resilience in the face of adversity. To achieve something that is difficult - and about the outcome of which one might conceivably have doubts - requires greater resilience.

In the model, the kind of persistence that is characterised by ‘wear down’ is accompanied by a feeling of encroaching failure. The teacher is persisting, but is being emotionally worn down by the effort of being persistent when they are unable to achieve the desired result. The model is constructed on the basis that it is accepted that pupils with challenging behaviour will not immediately respond to the efforts of the teacher to form a positive working relationship with them. This relationship has to be a professional one through which the teacher has to earn the trust of the pupil,

“Because there are students at this school that you will not win over unless through relationships. And they are, to be honest; those are the ones that we lose. It’s not because they don’t follow the rules because a number of students at this school don’t follow the rules, the ones we lose we just never manage to grasp hold of somehow, we never manage to get that secret word that will have them trust us”. (Harriet)

The model illustrates that a resilient teacher may decide how long they are able to persist in trying to foster this relationship; how long they continue to persist and the point at which they stop persisting are critical factors in determining their level and type of resilience. The resilient teacher is worn down by the act of persisting with an intransigent individual, but they refocus before they reach crisis point. Crisis point could be extreme anger or the point at which the teacher feels that an individual is simply not worth the effort. Harriet described the consequence of not being able to make a positive relationship with the Year 11 pupil, who she chose as her subject,

“It’s not and I mean I think that’s perhaps because he’s no different to any of the others. And if you look at that class, there are some that I know and get on with very well and I know exactly what’s going on in their lives because they tell me so I’ll know that their boyfriend’s just been sent to prison and that’s why they’re in a foul mood because they’ve told me that. But because he and I have never had that dialogue and I guess that’s why it’s not there and I guess the person who’s boyfriend had been sent to prison will be in a foul mood but won’t inflict it on me and won’t inflict it on the class and I will leave her alone for a lesson while she cheers up and next lesson we’ll get on with it. Whereas with him, I feel like, she’s got these problems going on in her life, and he’s got these problems going on in his life, I’m sure you have as well but they’re not misbehaving in this manner so I’m not going to cut you any slack for it. I’m not going to go there with you because they’re getting on with this so why can’t you?” (Harriet)

A resilient teacher decides at what point they will ‘bounce-back’ and make a conscious decision to refocus their efforts and energies. Patterson, Patterson & Collins (2002) in writing about what they call resilient schools in the USA say, “Resilient schools know they will take risks and have failures, and they also know they will live to see another day...” (pg. 89). This could equally well be said about resilient teachers.

When persistence is used in conjunction with enthusiasm, it characterises the way in which the teacher re-focuses or ‘bounces back’ and continues to be persistent generally, but in another direction and in a way that they perceive will be more successful. They are therefore enthusiastic about the new challenge because they see it as achievable, whereas wear down comes when it becomes increasingly obvious that the goal is not achievable. Resilience enables teachers to persist in the face of adversity, but it also enables them to decide when to re-focus.



Resilient teachers are not victims (Patterson, Collins & Abbott 2004), because re-focusing happens when they judge that their efforts could be better directed elsewhere, rather than persisting in a process, which is causing them to become worn-down and which they perceive as not achieving the desired outcome. Persistence accompanied by wear down followed by re-focusing and persistence accompanied by enthusiasm are therefore part of a process of teacher resilience as depicted in the model. This process may fluctuate over time as teachers become more skilled or experienced in dealing with challenging behaviour.

The model also shows a type of teacher resilience which is different to this and which is probably less sustainable. There is limited persistence in this version of the model and when persistence ends (instead of refocusing with renewed persistence characterised by enthusiasm) there is acceptance. There are two main definitions of acceptance and the one that is associated with the model is about recognition. Teachers whose model of resilience involves acceptance are acquiescent about pupil behaviour, seeing an inevitability regarding working with challenging behaviour and its consequences. These teachers realise that huge levels of persistence are required in order to build relationships with pupils with challenging behaviour and sometimes they make limited efforts to persist with this, as in the case of Phillip. However they resent the amount of time that this persistence requires and eventually they accept levels of challenging behaviour in their lessons,

“I will deal with them in Year 11 as well, they’ve had it for the last four years and they do what they want, they get their hair straighteners out in class and try do their hair, refuse to pick up a pen, point blank refuse to do any work despite the fact that their GCSE’s are coming up in 6-8 weeks and they don’t have a care in the world, they’d much rather sit there with their phones out, sing songs and chat about what they did last night and that’s it”. (Phillip)

This version of the model is less sustainable, because these teachers are more likely to leave the profession. Phillip said that he could not see himself remaining in teaching for longer than a couple of years. On the other hand, resilient teachers like Harriet and Angela used their persistence as a vehicle for developing skills, which over time, makes the job of forging the all-important relationships much easier. Returning to Patterson, Patterson & Collins (2002) and their three ‘target levels’ of resilience discussed earlier in this chapter, does the model which illustrates acceptance as part of resilience equate to the just getting by kind of resilience described by Paterson, Patterson & Collins (2002)? Following on then, is the kind of resilience illustrated in the ‘bouncing back’ and refocusing model about getting ahead

through consistent improvement (Patterson, Patterson & Collins 2002 pg.6)? There is a need for further research into this model to try to address some of these questions.

## 7. The Next Steps?

The research project has illuminated a perspective and opened a window into what challenging behaviour means for teachers working with large numbers of pupils with challenging behaviour and has identified teacher resilience in relation to managing challenging behaviour and developed a model, which illustrates what this might look like. The model is based on the all-important 'bounce-back factor', and also draws on literature. Kyriacou (1998), Gu & Day (2007) and Sammons et al (2007) have all identified the 'bounce-back factor' in terms of resilience.

What I have tried to do is develop this idea in terms of how teachers 'bounce-back' and re-focus when dealing with pupils with challenging behaviour. However, my model also illustrates that there may be more than one kind of resilience, or different levels of resistance, as illustrated by Patterson, Patterson & Collins (2002). This had made me question is it one model or several?

It could be one model, which appears differently at specific points in a person's career. For example, is Figure 7:2 showing the acceptance of poor behaviour, something that has happened to Julian at the end of his career? Julian had a history of tackling poor behaviour but was growing weary after thirty years in the profession working in what he described as 'challenging schools'. Alternatively, is the model only representative of Phillip, who is at the beginning of his career and whose personal resilience has led him to a weary acceptance of poor behaviour because this protects him from having to confront it when he resents the additional time and energy needed to do this?

Acceptance therefore becomes a conscious choice and is not associated with failure, (which implies that one tried to begin with) but rather an acceptance that success is not possible. Phillip has no history of successfully managing challenging behaviour; he is in the first year of his teaching career. Unlike Julian, Phillip does not see poor behaviour as an inevitable factor that a teacher must work within certain types of school, or as something that he wishes to be

concerned with for the rest of his career. Has he therefore reached the target level of resilience (Patterson, Patterson & Collins 2002)?

For Harriet, acceptance of any kind of poor behaviour is not an option. Is that because she is a highly resilient individual or is it because she is at the beginning of her career or is it a little of both? Will she be in the same place as Julian in thirty years' time? What are the implications of this for teacher agency and how teachers see themselves and how they are perceived by others?

The model has not been tested and further research would be useful. This would need to test the model in a number of ways. Firstly to establish whether it is a model of teacher resilience, which illustrates different target levels of resilience (Patterson, Patterson & Collins 2002)?

Alternatively, to establish whether it is a model of teacher resilience at different times in their teaching careers? Also, whether the model fluctuates over time as resilient teachers develop skills for managing challenging behaviour, so that, for example the 'bounce-back' happens much quicker, or does the point at which teachers 'bounce-back' and re-focus depend upon their personalities?

This research has highlighted the issue of teacher resilience in relation to managing challenging behaviour. This is an important issue, which requires further research and investigation.

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### **Websites Used**

[www.dcsf.gov.uk/lambinquiry/downloads/8553-lamb-inquiry.pdf](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/lambinquiry/downloads/8553-lamb-inquiry.pdf).

[www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/jan/05/ofsted-boring-teachers](http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/jan/05/ofsted-boring-teachers)

## Appendix One

### Questionnaire - Teaching Staff

#### 1) Information about you

Age 21-26 27-32 33-38 39-43 44-49 50-55 56-61 61-66  
(Please Circle)

Male/Female For how many years have you been teaching? \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please Circle)

What is your role within the school? \_\_\_\_\_

What subjects do you teach? \_\_\_\_\_

How were you trained? PGCE B.Ed  
(Please Circle) BA with QTS GTP  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

In what year did you complete your initial training? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever taught in a special school? YES/NO  
(Please Circle) If Yes, what type \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever taught in a PRU? YES/NO  
(Please Circle)

For what age group were you trained? EY KS1 KS2 KS3 KS4 FE  
(Please Circle)

If you have ever had any training in behaviour management, please comment on the type of training and its usefulness.

When did this training take place? \_\_\_\_\_

#### 2) Views on inclusion

What does the term inclusion mean to you?

Please list the main factors which, in your opinion influence the success of inclusion

Do all the children that you teach represent the same challenges in relation to inclusion?

It has sometimes been argued that the national curriculum has contributed to a rise in exclusion. Would you broadly agree or disagree with this statement? \_\_\_\_\_

*Please comment on your answer*

In your experience do you find that incidences of challenging behaviour among pupils are increasing? YES/NO

*Please comment on your answer*

Do you feel confident about teaching or working with pupils with challenging behaviour? (This may of course vary depending on the circumstances) YES/NO

*Please comment on/clarify your answer.*

Some schools operate a non-exclusion policy which means that, for example, children may be offered other provision(s) and kept on the school roll. What are your views on this?

If there was one thing you could change to improve education today, what would it be?

*Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire*

*I would like to talk to some people in more detail. If you are willing to be contacted please could you give me your contact details i.e. Name and e-mail or telephone number.*

*Name:*

*Telephone:*

*E-mail:*

## Appendix Two

### Research Project Arthur High School

Thank you very much for agreeing to help me with my Research Project. Below is a brief summary of what I am proposing to do and the way in which the research will be conducted. Please read this and if you are in agreement please sign the form and return it to me in the envelope provided. A second copy is enclosed for your records.

My Research Project is about challenging behaviour in secondary schools. In the first phase of my research I distributed questionnaires to the staff and the perception of the majority of teachers who responded to this initial questionnaire was that in their experience incidences of challenging behaviour are increasing. Through my follow-up interviews with staff I identified teacher resilience as an issue that I wished to investigate further. I am now developing this research and I have approached the teachers whom I interviewed previously and asked each one if they are if they are willing to help me again and if so could they identify a pupil whom they find particularly challenging in the classroom. It is then my intention to visit these teachers at intervals, over a period of two terms to interview them, for a period of approximately half an hour, about their experiences with this pupil. The anonymity of the pupil will be protected. The interviews will be semi-structured and will focus on how this pupil has behaved since the last meeting and how the member of staff has responded to the behaviour. It is important to me to gain insight into the perspectives of the teachers.

- I have read and understood the above information about the Project
- I am willing to help with the research and understand that although I have agreed to help I can withdraw at any time.
- I am happy to be interviewed at intervals of approximately four weeks over the next two terms, at a time convenient to me.
- I am willing for the interview to be tape-recorded.
- I understand that the child will not be identified and that my confidentiality will be respected at all times.
- I understand that the finding of the research will be published and used, but everything within the published findings will be anonymised.
- I am happy for my colleagues to know that I am taking part in this research YES/NO
- Please give me your preferred method of contact, for example you may prefer e-mail to the 'phone, or the other way around.

Preferred Contact Details \_\_\_\_\_

Please sign below to signify that you agree with all of the above. If you have any queries about any aspect of the Project my mobile number is [REDACTED].

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix Three

### The Behaviour Challenge: Launched by the Secretary of State for Education on 30th September 2009 and Based on the Recommendations of Sir Alan Steer's Report Published in April 2009

Make sure that consistent; excellent teaching practice underpins your plans to improve behaviour. Good behaviour is vital for teaching and for learning; and excellent teaching and learning underpins good behaviour. To help schools to build consistent, excellent teaching and learning practice, the Behaviour Challenge indicates the importance of developing clear teaching and learning policies as a fundamental basis for improving behaviour and raising achievement. The DCSF will be issuing advice shortly, drawn from schools' own best practice.

Base your strategies on the 'what works' principle. In 2005, a group of expert practitioners identified ten principles. These principles draw together proven best practice and are set out in the publication 'What works in schools'.

Keep talking to parents and pupils about improving behaviour. Consult on your behaviour policies and communicate them clearly and regularly - on your website, in school and through regular contact. The DCSF has published 'Working together for good behaviour in schools: Information for parents and carers'.

Work with other schools to share your expertise. Get closer support from the police and local agencies in a Safer School Partnership. Safer School Partnerships between schools and the police help to engage young people, keep schools safe and reduce antisocial behaviour in the wider community. They also foster a better relationship between young people and the police. Evaluations show that they are proving effective in improving behaviour and attendance. Changes to the law currently before Parliament will mean that every secondary school, pupil referral unit and academy will be required to be in a behaviour and attendance partnership. These enable schools to share best practice and work together in dealing with the most challenging pupils. Guidance for school partnerships to improve behaviour and persistent absence is already available and will be updated shortly.

Make sure that teachers and other staff in your school know the full extent of their legal powers to discipline, and can use them confidently. Guidance is available to help schools understand their overall legal powers and duties as regards establishing a school behaviour policy and disciplining pupils, along with practical advice on how to promote good behaviour and on the range of sanctions available to schools.

[info@dczf.gov.uk](mailto:info@dczf.gov.uk) [[dczf-info@comms.dcsf.gov.uk](mailto:dczf-info@comms.dcsf.gov.uk)].