

BEHAVIOUR IN SCHOOLS REVIEW CALL FOR EVIDENCE



INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education (DE) is undertaking a review of behaviour in schools across Northern Ireland. This review is being led by an independent expert, Tom Bennett OBE, and aims to develop a clear, evidence-informed understanding of the main behavioural challenges currently facing schools and to identify effective approaches and interventions that support positive behaviour, wellbeing, and learning.

This Call for Evidence invites views, experiences, and data from a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that the review reflects the realities of school communities and that any recommendations are grounded in practical approaches which directly support our frontline education staff to create safe, calm, orderly learning environments for all our children and young people.

PURPOSE OF THE CALL FOR EVIDENCE

The Call for Evidence seeks to:

- Identify the key behaviour challenges impacting pupils, teachers, and school leaders;
- Understand the frequency, severity and nature of these issues across different settings;
- Gather evidence on underlying causes and contributing factors, including societal and digital influences;
- Highlight effective strategies, interventions, and supports currently used in schools;
- Identify where current practice may be inappropriate, inefficient, or lacking an evidence base; and
- Identify gaps in provision and opportunities for improvement at school, system, and policy levels.

SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

The review will consider behaviour across all school sectors (Primary, Post-Primary, Special Schools, EOTAS).

It will consider both:

- Low-level disruptive behaviour; and
- Serious behavioural incidents.

WHO SHOULD RESPOND

Responses are invited from individuals and organisations across the education system and beyond. Respondents will be asked to identify their category to support analysis.

A. School-Based Staff

- Teachers (Primary / Post-Primary / Special)
- School Leaders (Principals, Vice-Principals)
- Classroom Assistants and Support Staff
- Behaviour Support Staff / SEN Coordinators

B. Pupils and Young People

- Primary pupils
- Post-primary pupils
- Pupils in specialist or alternative provision

C. Parents and Carers

D. Education and Support Organisations

- Education Authority (EA)
- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS)
- Controlled Schools' Support Council (CSSC)
- Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education
- Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta
- Middletown Centre for Autism

E. Teacher unions, professional bodies and other representative bodies

F. Other Services

- CAMHS and mental health services
- Youth services
- Community and voluntary organisations

G. Academic and Research Community

KEY THEMES AND QUESTIONS

Respondents are encouraged to provide qualitative and/or quantitative evidence under the following themes.

THEME 1:

Nature and Scale of Behaviour Issues

- What are the main behaviour challenges currently experienced in education settings in Northern Ireland?
- How frequently do these behaviours occur?
- Have you observed any changes or trends in pupil behaviour in recent years?
- Are there particular groups or stages where issues are more pronounced?

THEME 2:

Impact on Teaching and Learning

- How does behaviour affect:
 - o Classroom teaching and learning?
 - o Pupil attainment and engagement?
 - o Staff workload, wellbeing, and retention?
- To what extent does behaviour lead to disruption of lessons?
- How much learning time is lost dealing with behaviour incidents?
 - o For teachers
 - o For the children and young people directly involved in the behaviour incident
 - o For other children and young people in the school environment

THEME 3:

Underlying Causes and Influences

- What factors contribute to behaviour challenges in education settings in Northern Ireland?

THEME 4:

Current Approaches and What Works

- What strategies or interventions are currently used to support positive behaviour?
- Which approaches have been most effective, and why?

THEME 5:

Challenges and Gaps

- What are the key barriers to effectively managing behaviour?
- What strategies are the least efficient? Are there approaches we should be doing less of?

- Where are the gaps in:
 - o Resources;
 - o Training and professional learning;
 - o External support services; and
 - o Policy or guidance?

THEME 6:

Solutions and Future Priorities

- What changes would most improve behaviour in schools?
- Are there examples of good practice that could be scaled or replicated?

EVIDENCE SUBMISSION

Respondents are encouraged to submit:

- Written responses to the themes above;
- Supporting data or research;
- Case studies or examples of practice; and
- Links to relevant publications or evaluations.

All submissions should be evidence-based where possible.

TIMESCALE

The Call for Evidence runs as follows:

- Opening date: 15 September
- Closing date: 6 October

Late submissions may not be considered.

NEXT STEPS

Following the Call for Evidence submissions will be analysed to identify key themes and findings, and these will inform the next phase of the Behaviour Review, including potential policy and support measures.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Responses will be handled in accordance with data protection requirements. Contributions may be used in published analysis but will not be attributed to individuals without consent.