

A Pivotal Report: Staff and Learner Behaviour Surveys

Introduction

When schools start to work with Pivotal Education on behaviour change and improvement, they are asked to complete staff and learner behaviour surveys prior to any work being done in school. This enables the Pivotal team to get a good picture of each school's starting point and also to examine wider trends in behaviour.

Behaviour surveys are conducted anonymously to encourage staff and learners to answer honestly.

Staff surveys are distributed to teaching and support staff.

A brief overview of the characteristics of the surveys are presented below:

- **Staff:** Staff members were asked about their experiences in dealing with behavioural incidents in school as well as whether or not they agree with various sentiments. The survey covered 2900 staff members in over 100 schools.
- **Learners:** Learners were asked about their experiences with behavioural issues in class and how they perceive them across various dimensions, including equity and impact on their learning. The sample covered 2400 primary school learners across 34 schools in years 3 to 6 and 4000 learners in secondary school across 17 schools from year 7 to 11.

All surveys were completed between November 2014 and March 2017.

Teachers approach to problems

Teachers generally feel that they are empowered to act. Over 97% of teachers indicated that the ability to deal with behaviour issues is an important skill, whilst only 11% agreed with the statement that their role is limited to teaching and not behaviour interventions as examples. Asked more directly, 83% of teachers indicated that they feel responsible for the behaviour of their learners, and only 21% indicated that outside-school factors determine learner behaviour. All of this indicates that teachers widely and consistently acknowledge their responsibility in managing behaviour within the classroom.

These findings were closely mirrored when teachers were asked about who could impact behaviour within the classroom. 84% of teachers indicated that they felt they could personally achieve this, with only 33% indicating that outside factors, such as parents, could change classroom behaviour.

When asked how well they managed behavioural issues within the classroom, 90% of teachers said that they feel confident in dealing with behaviour issues and only 27% worry about the way in which they handle situations.

At first glance, this paints a picture of teachers that acknowledge the role they play, feeling empowered to make a difference and feeling that they are doing a good job. However, when other individuals (teacher's colleagues, as well as their learners) were asked about how teachers deal with behavioural issues, the picture changes significantly.



Quality and consistency of application

61% of teachers believe that their colleagues do a good job at managing behaviour. This is 29% lower than percentage of teachers who felt confident in managing learner behaviour. This indicates that teachers have some differences of opinions in how to deal with behaviour issues.

The approach to behaviour management is far from consistent in application. Only 45% of teachers agreed that behaviour in their school is managed in a uniform way, whilst over half (51%) felt that they do not receive any kind of emotional support from their school when dealing with behavioural issues, *despite* over 97% of teachers agreeing that behaviour management is an important skill for teachers.

Prevalence of behavioural issues

Asked about their most recent unpleasant experience with a learner, 45% percent of teacher indicated that this took place in the last week, rising to 65% in the past month. In terms of severity, 28% of teachers indicated that they had to remove a learner from class in the last week, increasing to 43% percent when the last month is considered. Only 18% of teachers indicated that they have never had to remove a learner from class. Overall, this indicates that teachers are engaging with behavioural problems on a frequent basis and removals of learners from classes are common. Teachers themselves acknowledge how detrimental such outcomes are, with 82% of teachers agreeing with the statement that removing a learner may establish order, but has detrimental long-term outcomes.

From the learner's perspective, only 4% of those in years 7 to 11 indicated that their lessons had not been interrupted by behavioural problems in the last week, with almost a third (32%) indicating that they were interrupted more than ten times. In their own personal capacity, 51% of learners indicated that they had been punished in the last week.

Overall, this indicates many teachers are dealing with behavioural issues daily, with just under half having to do it on a weekly basis. It affects up to half of learners in schools *every week* and results in significant disruptions of lessons. Overall, this results in adverse learning outcomes as learners lose valuable learning time.

Implications for equity

51% of learners in years 3 to 6 state that they are able to 'get away with' things that their peers could not. In the same year group, 44% also felt that teachers sometimes ignore bad behaviour depending on the circumstances. These trends become more exasperated with age, where 75% of learners in years 7 to 11 state that they can get away with behaviour that their peers cannot. Furthermore, 78% indicated that teachers sometimes let bad behaviour slide. Learners in years 7 to 11 were also asked directly whether teachers dealt with bad behaviour the same way – with only 35% agreeing that their teachers did so.

A clear gap between the teacher's intentions and the learner's perceptions in the classroom exists.

The need for consistent practice in behaviour is possibly best reflected by the fact that half of teachers indicated that they disagree with the statement that control of behaviour issues is up to individual teachers to manage, indicating a significant desire for a collective approach.

Whilst teachers focus on the learners that exhibit behaviour issues, they seem to be neglecting learners that perform well. Both primary (47%) and secondary (82%) learners indicated that they disagree with the statement that "those that try hard get the most attention, rather than those that disrupt". Teachers seem to agree, with 56% indicating that they feel that their "school focuses on punitive sanctions at the expense of acknowledging the achievements of everyone".



Conclusion

Overall the results point to a situation where learners presenting behaviour challenges are getting all of the attention from teachers. Teachers in turn feel that they are dealing well with the issue, however outsiders, such as their colleagues and, most of all, their learners, do not necessarily share this view. Finally, the severity and frequency of punishments given often leads to undesirable outcomes. All of this points to a system that is ineffective in its approach and ability to deal with behavioural problems, resulting in inequitable and detrimental outcomes.

Appendix.

The appendix section contains statements and overviews in table format of all the results that are statistically significant from the surveys. Not all the statements and results were used in the drafting of the report to keep the length limited. Therefore there are many statements below that are not reflected in the report.

The appendix is structured into three parts. Section A deals with the responses provided by teachers. Section B deals with the responses provided by primary school children. Section C deals with the responses provided by secondary school children.

A final note on statistical significance is important. Due to the large sample sizes (see introduction) of the surveys, the results are robust and the statistics here reflect accurately upon reality. The sample sizes allow for accurate statements to be made from anything ranging from 3% to 97%. In cases where a statistic exceeds these bounds, such as a statistic of 98 or 99%, it is more accurate to say, “Almost all teachers” or “Over 97% of teachers” felt a particular way.

Appendix A: Survey of teachers

Table 1A: Overview of sentiments expressed by teachers		
Statement / Sentiment	% Agree	% Disagree
I am personally responsible for my learner’s behaviour	89%	11%
Punitive sanctions are an effective way to manage poor behaviour	67%	33%
It is essential to follow up with a learner after a behavioural incident, sanctions alone have no impact	97%	3%
Behaviour in the school is largely beyond the control of individual teachers	49%	51%
I feel confident in handling learner behaviour in the classroom	90%	10%
I feel confident handling learner behaviour around the school in general	80%	20%
I handle my emotions well when faced with poor or challenging behaviour	80%	20%
I worry about how I dealt with an incident after the event	27%	73%
My school supports me on an emotional level to deal with behaviour management issues	49%	51%
Behaviour management in my school is managed in accordance with guidelines and in a uniform way	45%	55%
If I intervene in a behavioural incident, I always follow up	91%	9%



I feel let down when I witness colleagues not intervene in behavioural incidents	77%	23%
I will intervene if I know the child, but generally prefer to leave dealing with such incidents to a colleague who is better at dealing with such incidents	35%	65%
My role as a teacher is to teach a subject. Responsibility for behaviour lies with others	11%	89%
I felt stigmatised after I had to request help from my colleagues to deal with a behavioural incident	19%	81%
Removing disruptive learners is a good way to establish order, but has adverse long term effects	82%	18%
I call on help to have a learner removed, but as a last resort	97%	3%
I have colleagues who call for help in situations where I feel equipped to control the situation myself	71%	29%
Behaviour is well managed in my school	69%	31%
Staff in this school deal effectively with behavioural issues around the site	61%	39%
Learners in this school have a clear understanding about rules and expectations	72%	28%
This school focuses on punitive sanctions that impact the few at the expense of recognising the achievements of everyone	56%	44%
Staff accurately record critical incidents in a timely manner	79%	21%
I feel relaxed talking about behaviour management issues with my colleagues	87%	13%
Behaviour management is an important skill for a teacher	98%	2%
My school proactively deals with behaviour management issues	76%	24%

Table 2A: Learner interactions reported by staff

The last time I removed a learner from class was:	Percent	The last time I had an unpleasant incident with a learner was:	Percent
Last week	28%	Lesson	5%
Last month	15%	In the last working day	12%
1-3 Months ago	11%	Few days	14%
3-6 months ago	6%	Week	14%
6-12 months ago	8%	Month	15%
Over a year	14%	Term	19%
Never	18%	Cannot remember	22%

Table 3A: Staff views on responsibility for behaviour in the classroom

Influence	Impact
50% of staff agreed or strongly agreed that senior management has responsibility for the standard of behaviour in a classroom.	47% of staff agreed or strongly agreed that senior management can impact behaviour in the classroom
83% of staff agreed or strongly agreed that teachers have a responsibility for the standard of behaviour in a classroom	84% of staff agreed or strongly agreed that teachers can impact behaviour in the classroom.



40% agreed or strongly agreed that all adults in the school, including non-teaching staff, have a responsibility for the standard of behaviour in a classroom.	35% agreed or strongly agreed that adults in the school, including non-teaching staff can impact behaviour in the classroom.
21% of staff agreed or strongly agreed that parents and other influences outside of the school had a responsibility for behaviour in the classroom.	33% agreed or strongly agreed that parents and other influences outside of the school can impact behaviour in the classroom.

Table 4A: What proportion of staff regularly challenge bad behaviour around the school site

Proportion of staff	<10%	10-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-99%	100%
Percent	4%	12%	20%	31%	30%	3%

Appendix B: Survey of primary school children

Table 1B: Overview of sentiments of primary school children.			
Statement / Sentiment	Agree / Yes	Disagree / No	Sort of / Not sure / Sometimes
I enjoy school	74%	26%	0%
I understand the school rules	77%	20%	3%
Do all teachers deal with bad behaviour?	71%	29%	0%
Do teachers ever ignore bad behaviour?	4%	56%	40%
My teachers set a good example with their behaviour	90%	10%	0%
I behave the same for all teachers	78%	22%	0%
There are things I can get away with that others cannot	51%	49%	0%
Hard workers get the most attention	57%	43%	0%



Table 2B: Overview of interactions with teachers by primary school learners

Sentiment	ALL	ALMOST ALL	MORE THAN HALF	HALF	LESS THAN HALF	ALMOST NONE	NONE
How many teachers do you get along well with and respect?	37%	33%	11%	11%	5%	3%	1%
How many teachers are difficult to get along with?	6%	9%	5%	11%	11%	24%	34%
How many do you think deal well with bad behaviour in the classroom?	50%	23%	10%	8%	3%	3%	3%
How many do you think deal well with bad behaviour around the school?	41%	29%	12%	8%	5%	2%	2%
How many teachers tell you when you have done well?	37%	33%	11%	11%	5%	3%	1%

Table 3B: Frequency of praise and punishment received by primary school children

Frequency	How many times have you been praised in the past week?	How many times have you been punished in the past week?
0 TIMES	12%	24%
1-5 TIMES	38%	22%
6-10 TIMES	25%	18%
11-25 TIMES	12%	12%
26-50 TIMES	6%	21%
50+ TIMES	7%	4%

Table 4B: Lesson experience by primary school children

How long does it take for class to get started?	Percent	What is the teacher usually doing when you walk in?	Percent	What happens when you are late for class?	Percent
STRAIGHT AWAY	10%	PREPARING FOR THE LESSON	26%	YOU ARE NOT ALLOWED INTO THE CLASSROOM	2%
1 MINUTE OR SO	36%	GREETING EVERYONE	26%	YOU RECEIVE A FORM OF PUNISHMENT	3%
2-5 MINUTE OR SO	39%	THEY USUALLY COME IN AFTER YOU SO THEY ARE NOT THERE YET	5%	YOU APOLOGISE AND TAKE YOUR SEAT	48%



MORE THAN 5 MINUTES	16%	JUST WAITING FOR EVERYONE TO SIT DOWN	8%	YOU EXPLAIN OR DISCUSS YOUR REASONS WITH YOUR TEACHER BEFORE TAKING YOUR SEAT	47%
N/A	0%	SOMETHING ELSE	9%	N/A	0%
N/A	0%	NOTHING, YOU JUST SIT DOWN	26%	N/A	0%

Table 5B: How often are your lessons disrupted a week?

Frequency	Percent
0 TIMES	9%
1 TIME	15%
2-4 TIMES	34%
5-7 TIMES	16%
8-10 TIMES	10%
OVER 10	16%

Appendix C: Survey of secondary school children

Table 1C: Sentiments expressed by secondary school learners			
Statement / Sentiment	Agree / Yes	Disagree / No	Unsure / It depends / Sometimes
I enjoy school	57%	43%	0%
I understand the school rules	67%	7%	25%
Teachers deal with bad behaviour the same way	35%	65%	0%
Do teachers ignore bad behaviour they see?	12%	22%	66%
Teachers set a good example with their behaviour	70%	30%	0%
Are there things you can get away with in front of some teachers and not others?	75%	25%	0%
Are there learners that enjoy the attention from bad behaviour?	91%	9%	0%
I adjust my behaviour according to different teachers	41%	59%	0%
People who try hard get the most attention, not those that disrupt	18%	82%	0%



Table 2C: Overview of secondary school learner interactions with teachers

Frequency	ALL	ALMOST ALL	MORE THAN HALF	HALF	LESS THAN HALF	ALMOST NONE	NONE
How many teachers have a positive impact on your life?	7%	19%	20%	21%	19%	9%	5%
How many teachers do you get on well with and respect?	13%	29%	17%	18%	15%	6%	2%
How many teachers are hard to get along with?	3%	9%	14%	16%	22%	26%	10%
How many teachers deal well with bad behaviour in the classroom?	12%	25%	21%	21%	13%	5%	3%
How many teachers deal well with bad behaviour around the school?	11%	24%	23%	23%	13%	4%	3%
How many teachers tell you when you've done well?	8%	20%	15%	16%	20%	15%	6%

Table 3C: Overview of how often secondary school learners received praise and punishment in the last week

Frequency	How many times praised in last week?	How many times have you been warned or punished?
0 TIMES	21%	51%
1-5 TIMES	47%	32%
6-10 TIMES	18%	9%
11-25 TIMES	8%	5%
26-50 TIMES	3%	1%
50+ TIMES	3%	2%

Table 4C: Lesson experience by secondary school learners

How long does the lesson usually take to start?	Percent	What is the teacher doing when you walk in?	Percent	What happens when you are late?	Percent
STRAIGHT AWAY	2%	PREPARING FOR THE LESSON	27%	NOTHING, YOU JUST SIT DOWN	12%
1 MINUTE OR SO	14%	GREETING THE PUPILS	33%	YOU ARE NOT ALLOWED INTO THE CLASSROOM	3%
2-5 MINUTE OR SO	42%	THEY USUALLY COME IN AFTER YOU SO THEY ARE NOT THERE YET	7%	YOU RECEIVE A FORM OF PUNISHMENT	14%
MORE THAN 5 MINUTES	42%	JUST WAITING FOR EVERYONE TO SIT DOWN	21%	YOU APOLOGISE AND TAKE YOUR SEAT	36%



N/A	0%	SOMETHING ELSE	13%	YOU EXPLAIN OR DISCUSS YOUR REASONS WITH YOUR TEACHER BEFORE TAKING YOUR SEAT	35%
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Table 5C: How often are your lessons disrupted a week?

Frequency	Percent
0 TIMES	4%
1 TIME	7%
2-4 TIMES	26%
5-7 TIMES	21%
8-10 TIMES	11%
10+ TIMES	32%

