

## SUPPORTING OUR MOST CHALLENGING PUPILS WITH OUR LOWEST STATUS STAFF: CAN ADDITIONAL STAFF IN SCOTTISH SCHOOLS OFFER A DISTINCTIVE KIND OF HELP?

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### ABSTRACT

There is increasing use of additional staff (teaching assistants, learning support assistants, behaviour support assistants, special educational needs auxiliaries, classroom assistants) to promote positive discipline and support pupils with behavioural difficulties in school in Scotland. This paper explores some findings from a Scottish Executive funded research project (Munn *et al*, 2004a), presenting some views of additional staff, pupils, parents and teaching staff on the diverse roles, professional and personal attributes and effectiveness of additional staff. We then discuss the implications of the findings for current policy and practice in relation to additional staff and their place in our classrooms and schools, arguing that they fulfil an important role. Indeed the work of additional staff was argued to play a critical role in maintaining some pupils in mainstream education. However the many different job titles and overlapping remits of these staff may hinder comprehensive understandings of their effectiveness. The marginality of many staff continues to be indicated by short-term contracts, low paid posts, limited access to formal training and 'low status' in the hierarchy of the school. Nevertheless this very marginality may contribute to their often successful relationship with those parents and pupils who most often have hostile and negative interactions with educational professionals.

### INTRODUCTION

The national *Discipline Task Group* (DTG) that reported in June 2001 was set up by the then Education Minister, now First Minister, Jack McConnell, in response to a range of expressed concerns by school staff and teacher trade unions over discipline in Scottish schools. The Group's recommendations in the form of the Report *Better Behaviour Better Learning* (Scottish Executive, 2001b) were accepted by the Executive and significant additional resources made available to local authorities to enable many of the recommendations to be implemented. Concerns expressed by those consulted included the cumulative effect on teaching and learning of the 'drip, drip' of low level disruptiveness and the more serious but less frequent major disruption of violent and aggressive actions of a more problematic minority of pupils (Munn *et al*, 1998; 2004b). The Task Group therefore recommended strategies to promote positive discipline, improve classroom management and also to support those pupils identified with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD). This research was commissioned to explore the use and effectiveness of classroom assistants who were additionally funded as a result of the Report.

### THE CONTEXT FOR THE RESEARCH

The report of the Discipline Task Group recognised that there is a wide range of factors both within and outside schools that affect the behaviour of pupils. The report recognised the complexity of the causes of 'indiscipline', acknowledging the interaction of individual, personal and social factors with school influences such as classroom management styles, curriculum and structures of pastoral care. Scottish research supports the assertion that low level behaviour challenges such as

talking out of turn and work avoidance were most prevalent, while concerns were also expressed about those children whose behaviour is most difficult to manage (Munn *et al*, 2004b). HMIE reporting subsequent to BBBL found that 'very good' behaviour was observed in 50% of secondary schools and 70% of primary schools, but that there was serious and sustained 'misbehaviour' in 1 in 12 secondary schools and 1 in 30 primary schools. There was a concern that sometimes the behaviour of the 'most challenging' pupils was not effectively managed. Recent annual surveys of disciplinary exclusion from school (2004-5 and 2005-6) - despite the funded interventions deriving from the DTG and BBBL - indicate a continued rise in short term exclusions (Scottish Executive, 2006; 2007). This, however, partly results from the withdrawal in 2003 (by the Education Minister) of the target to reduce school exclusions. The Minister expressed this in terms of supporting schools to deal with the disruption to the education of the majority. Reasons for exclusion are dominated by general indiscipline rather than extreme violence -30% for general or persistent disobedience, 25% for verbal abuse of staff, 15% for insolence or offensive behaviour (Scottish Executive, 2006; 2007), although these were followed by physical assault with no weapon and fighting, indicating the minority but still significant status of such issues. These percentages have remained relatively stable 2004/5, 2005/6, while exclusion figures for pupils who have all three risk factors (free school meals, pupils with additional support needs and pupils looked after by the local authority) have increased from over four times that of the overall school population (Scottish Executive, 2006) to that of 15 times that of pupils with none of these risk factors (Scottish Executive, 2007). These figures demonstrate a continuing relationship between disciplinary exclusion and social disadvantage. Other grounds cited included threats of violence abuse to other pupils and substance abuse.

The recommendations of BBBL attempted to address both the low level and the more serious issues and therefore focussed both on ways that schools can improve their overall disciplinary strategies thereby reducing low level disruptiveness, and also by providing more effective support and intervention for pupils whose actions were seen to relate to difficulties in their families and communities that may require more specialist intervention than that provided by the classroom teacher alone. The latter was seen to include those pupils identified with Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD). The report advocated the development of a national strategy to manage the implementation of its recommendations and specified responsibilities at school, local authority and national level.

This report followed a number of other specific initiatives from the Scottish Office Education Department, and its successor body, also designed to promote positive discipline and develop alternatives to exclusion from schools. The *Alternatives to Exclusion* initiative provided funding for a range of in and out of school developments designed to reduce the level of disciplinary exclusion from school. This initiative emphasised multidisciplinary working and funded a range of projects including in and out of school support bases and behaviour support programmes. There was also a range of initiatives aimed at promoting positive discipline, including a staff development CD-ROM distributed to all schools on preventing classroom disruption (Munn *et al*, 2000). The piloting and most recently the roll out of new community schools, loosely based on the full service school in the USA, also has considerable relevance to the process of developing more inclusive schooling (Sammons *et al*, 2002).

The current education policy context emphasises social justice and inclusion. The Standards in Scotland's Schools (etc) (Scotland) Act 2000 (Scottish Executive 2000) enshrined in statute the presumption of mainstream education, while recognising that there may be some pupils for whom special provision may be more appropriate, either because of their need for very specialised resources or because their challenging behaviour may be detrimental to those around them. The legislation

also retained the right of schools to exclude pupils. Anecdotal evidence from schools and correspondence in professional journals suggests that many teachers in Scotland believe that that most pupils with SEBD are now in the mainstream as the result of policies of inclusion. Data from the most recent School Census does not support this, indicating a fairly constant proportion of the school population in special schools and units, although the level of use of special provision does vary considerably between councils. Some recent research in Scotland suggests that for pupils identified with SEBD the trend may be towards more part-time or specialist provision and less full-time inclusion into the mainstream (Lloyd, 2003).

Historically there was very varied opinion and practice in terms of whether pupils with SEBD were included in the legal definition of SEN and whether they should be Recorded. The new *Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004* (Scottish Executive 2004) offers a broader, more functional definition of need; the new definition of *Additional Support Needs* will clearly encompass all those thought to 'have' SEBD. The legislation specifies that where there are complex or multiple factors to be addressed in support, and where children are receiving support from agencies in addition to education, they should be eligible for a *Co-ordinated Support Plan* (CSP). This may have a significant impact on the organisation of support for pupils identified with SEBD.

Financial support was initially provided to authorities by SEED, to undertake reviews of discipline policy at local authority and school level, and to create support units within schools to provide a focus for children requiring additional help to manage their behaviour and learning. Later funding was made available to enable local authorities to take forward a number of recommendations of the Report. Local authorities and schools were encouraged to employ additional staff <sup>2</sup>to promote positive classroom discipline and support troubled and troublesome children. Some authorities also adopted a staged intervention scheme derived from that developed in Birmingham, *Framework for Intervention*<sup>3</sup> (FFI). This approach recognises that there are strategies at whole school and at classroom level which teachers can employ to improve or manage more effectively the behaviour of pupils whilst also recognising that specialist intervention is sometimes necessary. FFI also promotes expertise of designated school based staff (as behaviour coordinators - BeCo's) in supporting colleagues. Other initiatives currently being piloted include restorative practices and the establishment of a web site ([www.betterbehavioursotland.gov.uk](http://www.betterbehavioursotland.gov.uk)) to share the range of approaches promoting good discipline that exist in Scotland.

#### *Additional staff in classrooms*

In earlier moves to raise attainment, and initiatives to address perceptions of deteriorating standards of behaviour in schools, the Executive in Scotland had increased support for teachers and pupils in the classroom. Some of this support has been through additional funding, training and curriculum flexibility as well as through the employment of additional staff.

In 1998 the *Classroom Assistant Initiative* was one of a number of initiatives supported by the Excellence Fund that aimed to raise standards of attainment in Scottish Primary schools. Education authorities in Scotland were given the opportunity to run small-scale pilots to test effectiveness of different approaches to the recruitment, training and deployment of classroom assistants in primary schools, with this initiative being 'rolled out' over the following 3 years. The following was identified as a key finding:

Overall, the impact made by the Classroom Assistant Initiative has been very positive. Education authority representatives, head teachers and classroom teachers believe that the most important contribution of classroom assistants is their flexibility, in supporting both teachers and pupils. Many also indicate

that having an extra adult in the class and 'freeing up' teachers are important (Scottish Executive, 2002: 3).

This evaluation recognised classroom assistants as having an indirect impact on pupil attainment by allowing teachers to devote more of their time to teaching. Interestingly this evaluation also stated that:

Head teachers, and to a slightly lesser degree teachers, felt that classroom assistants had improved pupils' motivation, and in some cases their behaviour as well (Scottish Executive, 2002: 6).

What the above quote suggests, and what the above evaluation did not discuss, was the importance of the relationship between pupils and additional staff, and what it was about that relationship that made this difference. The relationship between Additional Staff and pupils has been recognised by some commentators in terms of Additional Staff having 'insights and knowledge of the children' (Cremin *et al*, 2003: 424), 'tolerance, fairness and patience (Groom & Rose, 2005: 23) and of 'listening to both sides of the story' (Groom & Rose, 2005: 27).

The McCrone Report (McCrone, 2000) looked into teachers' pay, promotion structures and conditions of service. The post McCrone Agreement (Scottish Executive, 2001a) then resulted in reduced class contact time for teachers and an increase in additional support staff to facilitate this. Many evaluative studies of the impact of additional support in the classroom have therefore concentrated on what the implications are for the teacher and their teaching in terms of gaining more time to teach (Wilson *et al*, 2003) or for the inclusion of pupils with SEBD (Groom & Rose, 2005) and issues of discipline (Munn *et al*, 2004a). The wider elements of the distinctive help and support provided by additional staff on classroom ethos, or on the personal, social and emotional development of pupils, although recognised, have not been fully explored.

#### THE RESEARCH

The research discussed in this paper, commissioned by the Scottish Executive, had the following aims:

- To map how the funding made available to local authorities through the National Priorities Action Fund (NPAF 2003/4) was being used to employ additional staff;
- To explore the distribution and recruitment of additional staff and examine provision for their support and training;
- To assess how the roles of additional support staff, such as auxiliaries and home-school link workers and other staff have been developed to promote positive discipline;
- To explore the impact of these additional staff on positive discipline in schools.

The research was conducted in three overlapping phases. Phase one focussed on an analysis of NPAF spending drawing on information provided by SEED. The second phase involved the identification of three local authorities for in-depth study of different patterns of spending from the phase one analysis.

This paper will comment on the third phase of the research that involved work at authority and school level.

The questions explored with schools included:

- the nature and extent of additional staffing and how this was decided;

- the roles played by additional staff;
- perceptions of effectiveness of these staff in helping with discipline and the criteria of effectiveness being used;
- the effect of additional staff on school ethos;
- the availability of training and staff development;
- the sustainability of additional staffing.

### *Research Design*

Qualitative methods of data collection were chosen for this third phase of the research to provide detailed accounts and analysis that would illuminate current contexts and practices in a small number of local authorities. Interviews with schools staff, pupils and parents also allowed us to explore in some detail perceptions and understandings of the impact and role of additional staff. It was also important in this research that the voices of additional staff were included (O'Brien & Garner, 2001).

In each of 3 authorities two secondary, two primary and one special school or unit for children identified with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, were identified and interviews and documentary analysis undertaken with a range of teachers (74), additional staff (30), parents/carers (40) and pupils (60 in total, some individual interviews and 11 focus groups). Interviews were also held with key stakeholders in each authority (11 in total).

The interviews were semi-structured, specifying the general areas to be discussed but with no pre-determined order of questions, beyond a standard introduction and closure. Most were recorded and a sample transcribed. Interview transcripts were then comprehensively analysed in terms of emerging themes.

We cannot, of course, generalise from these local authorities to all local authorities in Scotland. It is also important to acknowledge that we sampled only a small number of schools within each authority and within each school, talked with a small sample of staff, pupils and parents. It is therefore likely that not all shades of perception have been captured. Third, the implementation of BBBL is in its early stages and there was a general agreement that it was too early to detect a measurable impact in terms of exclusion rates, or pupil attainments for example. Lastly, BBBL was one policy initiative amongst many designed to close the gap in achievement among pupils and schools and to promote supportive learning environments. However, the research did detect some patterns across authorities and schools that suggest that the perceptions being reported are not idiosyncratic.

### *The research findings.*

The discussion of effectiveness in terms of preventing 'indiscipline' or promoting inclusion is always problematic, even when measured in terms of apparently objective measures, for example disciplinary exclusion or discipline referrals. In this context, notions of effectiveness derived from interview data are necessarily subjective, measured in terms of qualitative judgements by a range of stakeholders. Clearly different ideas of *effectiveness* of additional staff are being deployed here, for example effectiveness in meeting pupils' learning needs, in helping teachers cope with competing demands, in linking more with families or in keeping pupils quiet? Often it may be that some complex mixture of all of these is involved in the notion of effectiveness employed by schools/local authorities in their own evaluations. The role of additional staff is very varied in that some are designated to help individual children who have a special identified need for additional support, others work to promote positive discipline with the generality of children through, for example, playground and lunchtime supervision duties, while a third group may have responsibilities for both individuals and the wider group at different times.

The findings relating to the effectiveness of additional staff included:

- Additional staff were generally seen by teachers and local authority managers as effective in promoting positive behaviour. A key feature was that they were able to model different (from teachers) and more informal ways of working with young people and their parents or carers.
- Children, young people and their parents were generally very positive about the help they received from additional staff. Some felt that their children would not still be in their school without this help.
- Those described as classroom assistants as opposed to, for example, learning support assistants, behaviour support assistants, special educational needs auxiliaries, were accorded low status as an extra pair of hands and were not included in the staff lists of some schools.
- The presence of additional staff tended to reduce the teacher's direct involvement with all, or with identified pupils.
- Greater clarity about the role of different groups of additional staff would be welcomed.

Across the three local authorities, there was a wide variation in the description, training, support, title and remit of the additional staff in classrooms, including those funded through the BBBL. This was reflected in the number of titles used to describe additional staff (teaching assistants, learning support assistants, behaviour support assistants, special educational needs auxiliaries, classroom assistants) and the overlap and diversity of roles in practice (though one authority was attempting to rationalise the roles of additional staff). It was also noticeable across the three authorities that many, if not all, additional staff in relation to discipline/behaviour support were generally not new recruits, as many had already held positions in the school (such as playground supervisors) and had an established reputation for working with pupils with challenging behaviour. This method of recruitment highlights the importance of personal skills and attributes above those of the purely academic. This method of recruitment may, however, have inadvertently led to further role and remit confusion as the skills of these staff would be known to a particular school and may well become part of the valued flexibility of those now in these positions.

The positive views of local authority managers and teachers towards DTG-funded additional staff were based, in part, on the view that the model of the individual teacher keeping control of the class through strength of personality or fear was no longer appropriate, given the diversity of pupil characteristics and needs. Simply having another adult present offering a different type of engagement with pupils was, in itself, of great value.

You only have to walk into a school and see the difference that learning assistants make, the difference that these approaches make. . . The more integrated approach, support for learning [is beneficial] (Education Officer).

If the behaviour support assistant hadn't been there at lunchtimes and intervals, I feel I would have more problems to sort out which would have affected the atmosphere in the classroom and given me less teaching time with the children if I had been sorting out discipline and behaviour problems and I don't know that the children would have had such a successful year. I don't mean to talk myself down - you would do your best - but having support, having another adult there to take children out, to talk problems through, to reinforce positive behaviour ... (primary teacher).

I'll battle to the bitter end to keep them because of the value of them – we have to (senior manager).

A key feature of the initiative, according to managers in the three authorities, was that the additional staff were able to model different and more informal ways of working and styles of interaction with parents/carers and children. This view was reinforced by staff and pupils in schools.

[they work in a way] that makes behaving well and doing it in a real fun kind of way .... It just helps tremendously (primary teacher).

The flexibility of additional staff was also seen as important.

We don't have them going off, getting paper ready when James in Primary 4 is having a bit of a shaky day (Assistant Head Teacher, primary).

I can put [behaviour support assistant - BSA] in [a school] for a block of time if it is a difficult time or a new child arrives from another region, or things blow up. I can agree with the school a certain amount of time, and this is a piece of work because I am in charge of that [BSA] is doing, and it doesn't get swallowed up in the school (Behaviour Support Teacher).

It was felt that aspects of the pupil/additional staff relationship, such as the use of first names rather than more formal forms of address, the opportunity for one-to-one support and conversations, and the opportunity to act as mediator or advocate for the young person, helped to re-engage some pupils with school. There were, however, a smaller number of counter examples where individual additional staff were perceived as being just as authoritarian as teachers.

Children and young people who were supported were overall very positive about the help they received from additional staff and many parents were delighted with the additional support and believed that their child was only being maintained in school as a result of this support. One mother of an S3 pupil said that having additional support made her son feel more positive about going to school when he knew this particular individual would be present in classes. Another parent commented:

I think it's a good way of spending money, because it keeps them in their mainstream schooling ... they would just get taken out of the school and taken somewhere else ... it helps keep them in their own environment (parent).

Pupils generally felt positive about the support they received:

It's stopped us (i.e. me) getting into trouble and getting kicked out of class ... If they know I'm going to get mental, they calm us down. ... If they weren't there I'd just get into total trouble – and end up getting excluded again (S3 pupil).

The following comment suggests that pupils not directly targeted with support were generally aware and appreciative of extra support in the classroom:

If there is troublesome members of the class, they concentrate on those and keep them quiet and the actual teacher can get on with the teaching without having to worry about keeping people quiet as well (secondary pupil in a focus group).

However, despite the fact that additional staff were generally regarded as making a positive contribution to classroom ethos and learning, there were some issues with regard to their status. A few parents in one authority believed that additional staff were a rather poor substitute for extra teachers. Parents in this authority had strong concerns about confidentiality issues when people from the local community (who were employed as additional staff) may have access to information about sensitive

family matters.

Across the authorities, however, teachers tended to regard additional staff described as Special Educational Needs auxiliaries and behaviour support assistants as fellow professionals. Those described as classroom assistants, on the other hand, were seen as 'an extra pair of hands' rather than colleagues or fellow professionals – even if there was considerable overlap in the tasks undertaken. The low status accorded to the 'descriptor' of classroom assistant was also evidenced by a failure in some schools to include them in staff lists. Although key staff in the three authorities agreed that the DTG initiative had been highly successful in opening up opportunities for new forms of inter-agency working to support pupil behaviour and learning, the practice of regularly including additional staff in inter agency meetings was rare.

There was also, in many schools, a lack of clarity about the specific remit of additional staff, which was further complicated by the many different job titles and overlapping job descriptions. There were examples of additional staff allocated to class which included a pupil with SEBD, though working with the class in general; as part of behaviour support, with responsibility to help develop behaviour control management; providing general support for class/subject teacher; providing a mixture of behaviour support, administration support and general educational support. There were also examples of some additional staff having their role clearly negotiated in advance, and those who were allocated tasks on the day.

A general view across sectors and authorities was that greater clarity in the role of different groups of workers would be welcomed. In addition, it was suggested that there was a need for training for class and subject teachers in how to work efficiently with additional staff. There was a general view that further improvements in the training, pay, conditions of service and career structure of additional staff were required. All three authorities had offered some training to additional staff, but the extent and uptake of such training varied. Some additional staff had attended PDA courses (Professional Development Awards) offered at local FE colleges, and others had 'on the job' training. This variation in training and opportunities also meant that there was no clear career structure for additional staff:

I laughed when you said, 'Is there a career structure?' I wish there was  
(Behaviour Support teacher talking about career path for additional staff).

There was general agreement from the three local authorities that the conditions of service, pay and career structure for additional staff was a major issue requiring to be addressed at local authority and national level. Staff development and training in effective working practices for additional staff, and training for the teachers working with them, was also identified as an area for future development. Additional staff were almost all women, often from local areas; some had qualifications well beyond those required for the post and which could have been associated with more highly paid work. Some staff were willing to work at this level because of the hours that fitted with family life, others enjoyed the work. However there was a strong sense, acknowledged by many respondents, that many additional staff offered skills and qualities well beyond their level of employment and pay.

There was concern that some schools need to address the problem of the low status assigned to additional staff, which may be conveyed to pupils and parents and is likely to limit the possibilities for effective action. Important issues of confidentiality were also identified, as many additional staff working in the school could be close neighbours and/or members of the local community and they may have access sensitive family information.

In summary the issues raised by the research were those of; the importance of personal skills and attributes; different and informal working practices; flexibility; maintaining some pupils in mainstream; confidentiality; roles and responsibilities;



and low status.

#### DISCUSSION

From the perspectives of education officers, senior school managers, teachers, parents and pupils this research indicated overwhelming support for the role of additional staff in the classroom. However, the range of reasons given for this - contributing to classroom discipline, supporting individual pupils, supporting the teacher, keeping a pupil in school - do give an indication of the complexity of the role and expectations of these staff.

The range of roles and expectations is now reflected in the UK wide *National Occupational Standards* (2001) for teaching/classroom assistants, which places emphasis on responsibilities rather than listing specific tasks or duties:

Values and principles include

- Working in partnership with the teacher
- Working within statutory and organisational frameworks
- Supporting inclusion
- Equality of opportunity
- Anti discrimination
- Celebrating diversity
- Promoting independence

The above is a far step from that of being 'an extra pair of hands' in the classroom and presents particular challenges both for additional staff and teachers in the management of roles and responsibilities. Each of the above values and principles are linked to practices to promote and support them. In order to 'promote independence' for example, Additional Staff are asked to encourage pupils to make their own decisions and take responsibility for their own actions' (National Occupational Standards, 2001: 5). These principles are also central to the development of Restorative Approaches in schools and are increasingly being embraced by teachers (Lloyd *et al*, forthcoming).

The GTCS (General Teaching Council Scotland) and Scottish Executive emphasise that the role of these staff in Scotland is clearly to support and to be directed by the teacher in charge of the class (GTCS, 2003). Nonetheless our observations suggests that some additional staff are involved in 'new learning', both in one-to-one and small group situations. There has also been widespread concern regarding additional staff who are used to help manage pupils with challenging behaviour. Indeed O'Brien and Garner (2001) suggest that this situation is particularly problematic when viewed in terms of these most vulnerable pupils being supported by the least trained staff. The ability and flexibility of additional staff to accompany a pupil with challenging behaviour out of the classroom could, and often does, remove the immediate responsibility for the child from the teacher. This may result in teachers advertently, or inadvertently, avoiding dealing with behaviour or the circumstances that may have prompted it.

From an observation carried out for this research there was a situation where the relationship between a teacher and pupil had broken down and the role of the additional staff appeared to be one of mediation.

So, as a precursor to successful role management, there needs to be recognition of the confusion between the role of additional staff and that of the teacher (Calder & Grieve, 2004), especially when the role of additional staff may be seen to encroach upon that of the teacher in terms of additional staff increasingly providing learning support (Wilson *et al*, 2003). There is also a further tension between providing clear

definitions of roles and responsibilities while maintaining the valued flexibility of the role (Schlapp & Davidson, 2001).

The increasingly prominent profile of additional staff highlights the lack of training and career structures currently available to them (Wilson *et al*, 2003). Although the recruitment of additional staff is dependent upon personal qualities above those of academic qualifications and formal training (Groom & Rose, 2005), this should not prevent or hinder the professional development opportunities for additional staff. However, although training and qualifications for additional staff are being developed locally and nationally, it would be detrimental if such training inadvertently resulted in more rigid working practices and a diminishing of the informal nature of these relationships in schools.

Although professional status and training are important, for most pupils and their families this was less important than the interpersonal qualities and skills of the individual. Despite the complexity of the issues affecting young people and their relationships, it is possible to identify some characteristics of effective helping (Lloyd *et al*, 2001b). In earlier research a parent was asked who, out of the several professionals involved with the family had been the most helpful, answered 'some woman came round' (Lloyd *et al* 2001a). The impact of this anonymous individual (who had visited the family only once) had remained with this parent because they had engaged with them empathetically and with concern and understanding. There were also some examples (in the research) of the person described as most trusted and supportive (by both parents and pupils) being an assistant head teacher or principle teacher. The approach modelled by these individuals is similar to those modelled by additional staff in schools and reflects moves to encourage communication and understandings between pupils, parents and school. These models of working can promote levels of equity and participation between those involved, and it may also be that additional staff can offer the kind of informal support valued by some parents intimidated by teachers and aware of their own negative experiences of schooling.

In the context of multi agency working in schools (Lloyd *et al*, 2001b), support was valued when it was perceived as non-judgemental, genuine and equitable. Although this way of working was often found among those such as youth workers, and the semi specialist children in trouble workers, it was often the case that others, such as additional staff or mental health workers, were not regularly included in these meetings. So if, as we are arguing, the effectiveness of additional staff is partly located in their relationship with the young person, their exclusion from forums such as inter agency meetings is of concern, as these staff could play an important role as mediators and advocates for young people. There is therefore a need for all schools to think further about the conditions necessary to maximise the input of additional staff without destroying or limiting the qualities that are integral to their effectiveness.

#### CONCLUSION

This research into the effectiveness of additional staff in our schools has highlighted the positive impact they can have on the way individual pupils, the generality of pupils, and parents feel about school. Education officials and teachers also recognise many benefits of having additional staff in the classroom. However as the effectiveness of additional staff in schools becomes increasingly evident and their numbers rise, issues of roles and responsibilities, confidentiality, training and status still need to be addressed. Equally notions of effectiveness are diverse and may be contested, for example they may relate to managing individual pupils where others may see this as avoiding curricular or pedagogical change.

While we recognise that relationships between pupil and additional staff cannot be isolated from the larger school structures and relationships within them, the impact of additional staff in the classroom does appear to reflect the changing nature of

working relationships of some of those involved with the children and young people; especially for those who are now working as part of multi-agency teams. Professional identity and different professional boundaries and cultures are increasingly coming under pressure as policy makers insist on inter-agency working. For many classroom teachers their involvement with other professionals has not historically been included in teacher training. Although it might appear that the skills and attitudes that appear as a crucial part of the effectiveness of additional support workers, are or should be, cross professional, this seems unlikely given the continuing hierarchy evident in schools. Indeed interpersonal relationships in an informal equitable style may be difficult for some teaching staff to accept or maintain along with their role in class management and control, although new initiatives such as Restorative Practices in Schools (Lloyd *et al*, forthcoming) place emphasis on the facilitation of positive relationships between everybody in a school community.

The increasing number of additional staff in the classroom and current discussions around the teaching profession generally could, therefore, provide an opportunity for the development of new ways of classroom management and working practices that can promote positive relationships between all those involved. How the role of additional staff develops will have implications for the professional role and autonomy also of teachers, and relates to changes to their work, such as an extended responsibility for pastoral care. Teachers could review and develop their own role together with, and as complementary to, that of additional staff or they could, as is sometimes the case, use these staff to avoid reflecting on or changing their own approach.

The effectiveness of additional staff has been discussed in terms of their ability to offer different and more informal ways of working and styles of interaction with parents/carers and children; offering non-judgemental, genuine and equitable support (both educational and emotional). The value of having additional staff in our schools is now widely accepted, but this research suggests that their role within schools needs to be recognised and clarified; this is most likely to be achieved when concerns over low pay, low status, short term contracts and of feeling undervalued, can be more satisfactorily addressed. Paradoxically, however, there remains the question as to whether the ambiguous and more informal status of classroom assistants in itself contributes to the positive relationships that many have with pupils and parents; making it important that, if we are to further professionalise this role it does not acquire those characteristics of defensive distance, sometimes seen to be inherent in other educational professionals.

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<sup>2</sup> We will use 'additional staff' throughout this paper to include all the aforementioned job descriptors

<sup>3</sup> Now called Staged Intervention (FFI) in Scotland.

The Additional Support for Learning legislation in Scotland also promotes inclusion. There is a duty to provide additional support for learning when any child or young person needs support for whatever reason. Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice, the statutory guidance which accompanies the Additional Support for Learning Act explains that there is a range of factors that may give rise to a child's additional support needs. The Scottish Government published guidance Included, Engaged and Involved Part 1: attendance in Scottish schools (2007) aims to promote good attendance in schools and provides guidance for Local Authorities and schools on how to promote engagement and motivation, including among those who may be at risk of poor attendance.