



Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL Cymru's) Response the WAG's Consultation on *Behaviour in Schools – Safe and Effective Intervention*

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers represents over 160,000 education professionals across the four constituent parts of the United Kingdom. It draws its membership from teachers and lecturers, leaders and support staff in maintained and independent schools, and Further Education Colleges. As well as campaigning vigorously to protect and enhance members' pay and conditions ATL also believes that the education profession has a key role in developing education strategy and policy. ATL Cymru represents over 6,500 education professionals in colleges and schools across the whole of Wales.

ATL believes this consultation is full of good intentions but weak on the concomitant funding that will be made available to help schools and LEAs implement these policies. Teachers try to do the best they can for all their students but have to make difficult decisions based on available funding. There are particular issues, for instance, in dealing with "problem" children who arrive at school after a "transfer" from outside the LEA. They can need additional support but the funding, if it comes at all, is long after the initial need. There are also problems in accessing external agencies services. If teachers identify a problem then they have to wait for support. In some cases this takes many months, by which time it is often too late or a much bigger problem to deal with.

Section 1: New powers and duties under the Education and Inspections Act 2006

ATL agrees that there should be a *requirement for head teachers to consult with pupils and staff working at the school in developing their behaviour policy.*

ATL believes that learning is more meaningful and pupils learn more when they are engaged in their learning. We believe that this must involve more than just taking part in lessons. Real engagement means participation in decisions that affect their schooling. There are risks associated with this kind of engagement by pupils, but ATL believes that schools, and government, must consider how to minimise these risks, so that pupils and their teachers can benefit.

Benefits of pupil involvement

ATL members have identified a range of benefits of greater participation. For pupils these include increased self-confidence and feelings of empowerment, and a greater sense of responsibility. Many also point to the potential for improved behaviour with pupils taking responsibility for their own and others' behaviour, as well as improved learning.

In a recent survey, ATL members said that pupils have a vital role to play in decision-making at school level. In particular, pupils should be involved in practical issues such as resources and equipment, school rules, timetabling and uniform, as well as extra-curricular (out-of-school) activities and pastoral issues, such as anti-bullying, and behaviour policies and practice. Although some members expressed concerns about pupil involvement in areas like staffing and recruitment, and others in issues of school management, finance and strategic planning, many others suggested that all areas were open to pupil involvement, with certain caveats.

ATL believes that pupil participation in decision-making must be properly managed and that it should be introduced differently depending on the ages of the children concerned. This means that:

- all staff must be consulted before pupils become involved
- pupils must be supported so that they can develop the necessary skills to provide constructive input so that they are aware of the part they play in decision-making
- teachers and support staff must have access to training to ensure that they too have a voice in the decision-making, and the know-how to guide their pupils.

Schools must not simply assume that this support is in place

Section 2 Revised guidance on the use of force to control or restrain pupils.
Section 3 Guidance relating to the new power for schools to be able to search pupils for weapons without their consent, contained in the Violent Crime Reduction Act, 2006.

ATL believes that in certain cases it maybe appropriate for parents to be asked to attend a search that is being planned on a pupil. A record of any searches undertaken on pupils' needs to be recorded to ensure that if a pupil moves to a new school then they are fully aware of their past behaviour. New members of staff also need to be made aware of a pupil's history and behaviour.

ATL would like to stress that teachers should only be involved in consensual searches of pupil's possessions. Should any non-consensual searches be needed then we are firmly of the opinion that teachers should not be responsible for carrying them out nor expected to do so.

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