

Below the radar: low-level disruption in the country's classrooms

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) raised concerns about low-level disruption in schools in his Annual Report 2012/13. As a consequence, guidance to inspectors was tightened to place greater emphasis on this issue in routine inspections. In addition, HMCI commissioned a survey to ascertain the nature and extent of low-level disruptive behaviour in primary and secondary schools in England.

The findings from that survey show that teachers, parents and carers are rightly concerned about the frequent loss of learning time through low-level but persistent disruptive behaviour. This report demonstrates that, in too many schools, teachers are frustrated by this sort of behaviour and are critical of colleagues, particularly those in leadership positions, who are not doing enough to ensure high standards of pupil behaviour.

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Executive summary

This report draws on evidence from Ofsted's inspections of nearly 3,000 maintained schools and academies between January and early July 2014. It includes evidence from 28 unannounced inspections of schools where behaviour was previously judged to require improvement.

The report also summarises the findings from two surveys, commissioned by Ofsted and conducted independently by YouGov, gathering the views of parents¹ and teachers.²

The findings set out in this report are deeply worrying. This is not because pupils' safety is at risk where low-level disruption is prevalent, but because this type of behaviour has a detrimental impact on the life chances of too many pupils. It can also drive away hard-working teachers from the profession.

Some school leaders are failing to identify or tackle low-level disruptive behaviour at an early stage. Some teachers surveyed said that senior leaders do not understand what behaviour is really like in the classroom. This supports the findings of the recent international survey from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which found that there were marked differences between headteachers' and pupils' views of behaviour.³ This showed, for example, that twice the proportion of pupils compared with headteachers said that disruption hindered their learning in mathematics.

Typical features of this sort of behaviour include pupils:

- talking unnecessarily or chatting
- calling out without permission
- being slow to start work or follow instructions
- showing a lack of respect for each other and staff
- not bringing the right equipment
- using mobile devices inappropriately.

The YouGov surveys show that pupils are potentially losing up to an hour of learning each day in English schools because of this kind of disruption in classrooms. This is

¹ The term 'parents' in this report refers to parents and carers.

² The YouGov surveys were commissioned by Ofsted to gather the views of samples of 1,024 parents and 1,048 teachers.

³ Only 7% of headteachers thought that learning was hindered by disruption, but 15% of students said they could not work well in their mathematics lessons because of disruption. *PISA 2012 Results: Ready to Learn: Students' Engagement, Drive and Self-Beliefs* (Volume III), OECD, 2013;

www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results-volume-iii.htm.

equivalent to 38 days of teaching lost per year. A large number of pupils, therefore, are being denied a significant amount of valuable learning time.⁴

Too many school leaders, especially in secondary schools, underestimate the prevalence and negative impact of low-level disruptive behaviour. Many teachers have come to accept some low-level disruption as a part of everyday life in the classroom.

One fifth of the teachers surveyed indicated that they ignored low-level disruption and just 'tried to carry on'. However, this behaviour disturbs the learning of the perpetrators as well as that of others. According to the teachers themselves, an average secondary school might contain five or six teachers who lose at least 10 minutes of learning time per lesson as they struggle to maintain good order. In primary schools, this averages out at nearly one teacher in every school. Furthermore, while a large majority of the teachers surveyed said they feel confident in dealing with this kind of behaviour effectively, about one in 20 said they did not. This represents around three teachers in the average secondary school who are diverted from teaching by what – for them – is a daily challenge to maintain the necessary standards of discipline. This places them under unnecessary pressure.

Over half of the teachers surveyed said that their school's policy on behaviour was helpful, but only around a third said that it was applied consistently across the school. In some instances, hard-working teachers have their efforts to maintain discipline undermined by the inconsistent approach of other teaching staff to behaviour. Too often, this inconsistency is not being tackled by their senior leaders.

Inconsistency in applying behaviour policies also annoys pupils and parents. For too many pupils, having a calm and orderly environment for learning is a lottery. Parents consistently say that good discipline is the foundation stone of a good school.⁵ Many pupils and parents report frustration when disruption is not dealt with effectively. These parents are concerned that behavioural problems are contributing to pupils not being prepared well for further education and employment. Indeed, employers continually complain that too many young people have poor attitudes to work.⁶

Four-fifths of the parents surveyed wanted the school to communicate its expectations around behaviour clearly and regularly. Many parents wanted a more formal and structured environment in the school that would give their children clear boundaries for their behaviour.

⁴ Part A provides the underpinning data.

⁵ *Prospect*, April 2009, published a survey of parents that showed good discipline to be the key factor for 82% of parents.

⁶ The CBI has identified paying attention and resisting distractions, getting to work right away rather than procrastinating and allowing others to speak without interruption as some of the 'Characteristics, values and habits that last a lifetime'. *First Steps: a new approach for our schools*, CBI, 2012; www.cbi.org.uk/campaigns/education-campaign-ambition-for-all/first-steps-read-the-report-online/change-is-possible.

Ofsted inspection reports on schools with behaviour that is less than good often highlight the fact that standards of discipline vary within the school. This is partly because some teachers lack the skills to enforce consistently high standards of behaviour. However, some of the teachers surveyed laid the blame on their senior leaders. These teachers believed that some leaders are not high profile enough around the school or do not ensure that the school's behaviour policies are applied consistently. Too often, teachers complained that their senior leaders did not assert their authority.

In some schools, teachers blur the boundaries between friendliness and familiarity, for example by allowing the use of their first names. In these circumstances, pupils too often demonstrate a lack of respect for staff by talking across them or taking too long to respond to instructions.

In the best schools, creating a positive climate for learning is a responsibility shared by leaders, teachers, parents and pupils. Leaders in these schools are uncompromising in their expectations and do not settle for low standards of behaviour. They do not shy away from challenging teachers, parents or pupils, where this is necessary. These leaders:

- are visible in classrooms, school corridors and grounds
- know if – and where – low-level disruption occurs and ensure that all staff members deal with it
- have high expectations of behaviour and are consistent in dealing with disruptive pupils
- explain and enforce their expectations successfully to staff, pupils and parents.

Part A. Findings from the independent surveys of parents and teachers

What do we mean by low-level disruption?

'Talking to classmates when the teacher is talking; calling out answers instead of raising a hand; making silly comments for attention; passing notes; surreptitious throwing of small pieces of paper; arriving late to lessons; deliberately sitting in the wrong seat; minor squabbles during group work tasks.'

(Primary school teacher)

'Children talking between themselves when they should be listening; fiddling with anything; writing when they should be listening; refusing to work with a talk partner.'

(Primary school teacher)

'Chatting to neighbours; swinging on chairs; tapping pens; turning round; quietly humming; commenting quietly on something the teacher/a peer has said in class discussion; shouting out.'

(Primary school teacher)

'Talking to each other (not about the work); texting or looking at mobile phones; rocking on chair or getting up from seat; putting on make-up; messing about with friends – for example play-fighting; dropping pens and equipment on the floor; throwing paper planes.'

(Secondary school teacher)

Chatting; not working; not focusing on the task set, just sitting there doing nothing; uniform incorrect, including wearing make-up; rolling eyes at teachers or other impolite gestures or behaviours; lack of homework, making it difficult to continue with your scheme of learning; calling out; demanding attention without regard for other students' needs; refusing or delaying with argument [about] taking off of coats and not placing bags on the floor; turning up late, disrupting the learning going on in the lesson.'

(Secondary school teacher)

- Teachers and parents agreed that the most common form of low-level disruption was idle chatter unrelated to the work in hand. As can be seen from Figure 1, they also agreed that ‘disturbing other children’ in general was a problem. Over two-thirds of parents said they relied on reports from their children or children’s friends to gauge the level of disruptive behaviour.

Figure 1: Leading types of low-level disruption – teachers’ and parents’ viewpoint

Main types of disruption identified by teachers in all types and phases of school surveyed	% of teachers reporting this ⁷	% of parents reporting this (for comparison)
Talking and chatting	69	46
Disturbing other children	38	39
Calling out	35	14
Not getting on with work	31	17
Fidgeting or fiddling with equipment	23	10
Not having the correct equipment	19	-
Purposely making noise to gain attention	19	17
Answering back or questioning instructions	14	11
Using mobile devices	11	-
Swinging on chairs	11	-

- There were important differences between the opinions of primary and secondary teachers surveyed. Common problems identified by primary teachers were:
 - calling out (half of the teachers)
 - disturbing other children (almost half of the teachers)
 - fidgeting with equipment (over a third of teachers).
- Frequent disruptions identified by secondary school teachers were:
 - not getting on with the work set (over a third of teachers)
 - not having the correct equipment (a quarter of teachers).

⁷ One thousand and forty eight teachers and 1,024 parents were asked to report the three most prevalent types of disruptive behaviour from a list. Figure 1 shows the proportion reporting this type of disruption in their top three.

Technology (such as using mobile phones during a lesson) was not a concern for primary teachers, but was for just over one in six secondary teachers.

4. The opinions of teachers in England were very similar to a survey of those in Scotland conducted in 2012.⁸

How often does low-level disruption take place?

5. Some types of low-level disruption are very common. Around two-fifths of the 723 teachers in the survey who believed that disruptive 'talking and chatting' was a key problem said it occurred in almost every lesson. This was much more frequent than parents believed; around a sixth of them, responding to a comparable question, thought that 'talking or chatting' occurred several times a day. Approximately a quarter of the 397 teachers who identified 'disturbing other children' as a key problem thought that pupils disturbed others in almost every lesson; around one in eight parents thought this happened 'several times' a day.
6. Some of the teachers who provided a more detailed response to the question about the frequency of low-level disruption suggested that the behaviour persisted because of pupils' and students' poor attitudes:

'Students want to show off, are anti-establishment, or feel they have the right to be superior.' (Secondary school teacher)

'Pupils are not prepared to listen unless they are entertained.' (Primary school teacher)

7. However, some teachers also associated low-level disruption with enthusiastic pupils who had limited social skills:

'Enthusiasm and lack of self-control – students are sometimes very keen to say the right answer and don't appreciate that the teacher needs to ask all the students. Sometimes it's a question of manners. In my experience students are rarely being deliberately rude, but lack awareness that interrupting is inappropriate. These students would also shout across their parents if they were having a conversation with someone else. Sometimes students call out to seek attention from classmates in 'class clown'-type behaviour.' (Primary school teacher)

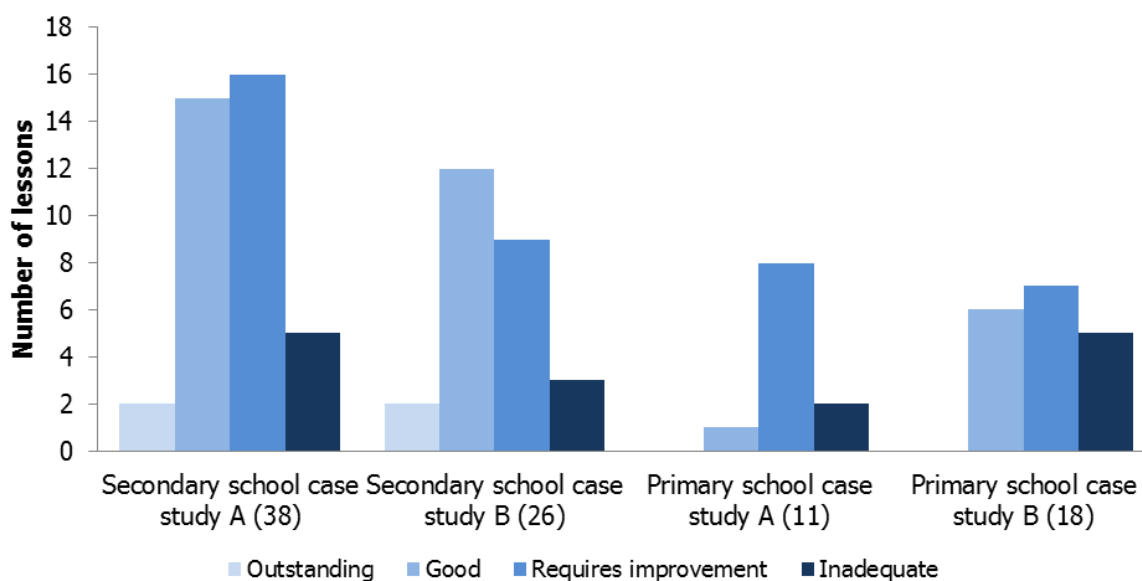
'Children wanting to answer questions/being over enthusiastic/not understanding they shouldn't be calling out.' (Primary school teacher)

⁸ The Scottish Government, *Behaviour in Scottish Schools 2012: Final report*, www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/3051/Behaviour-in-Schools-Research.aspx. Talking out of turn and hindering other pupils were the main behaviours listed.

Does low-level disruption affect learning negatively?

8. Teachers had widely different views of how behaviour affected learning. Just over a quarter of those surveyed thought that the impact of low-level disruption on learning was high, while nearly a third thought it had little or no impact. This variation is at the heart of the problem and is confirmed by inspection evidence, which shows that variation in behaviour not only exists between schools but can also be found across different classes within a school. Having a calm and well-ordered classroom can be, therefore, something of a lottery for pupils. For those who experience the most disruption in school, significant damage can be done to their life chances.
9. This variation can be seen in what inspectors observed in the classrooms in four schools where behaviour and safety were judged to be inadequate overall.⁹ Even in these schools, behaviour in different classes commonly varied from good to inadequate and, on occasions, was outstanding.

Figure 2: Number of behaviour judgements from lessons in two secondary and two primary school inspections in 2014 where ‘behaviour and safety’ was judged to be inadequate overall



Source: Ofsted inspection

Number of lessons observed in parentheses

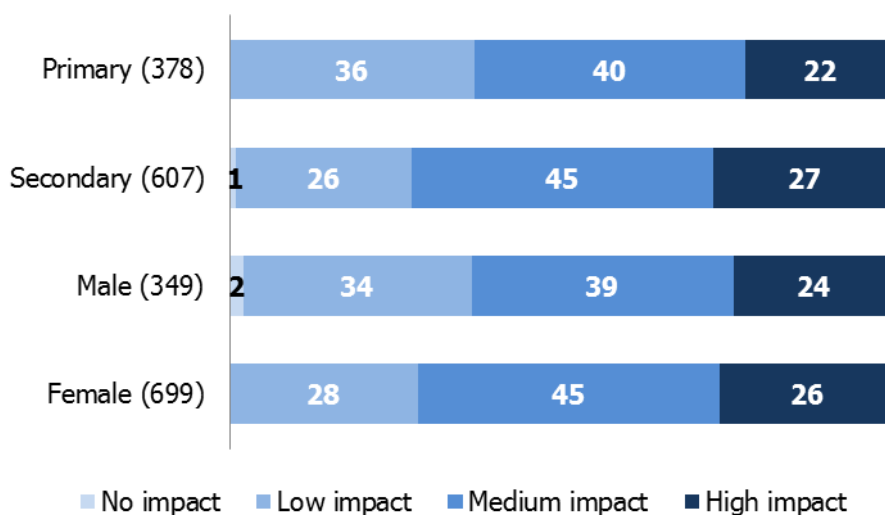
No lessons were judged outstanding for behaviour in either of the primary school case studies

10. Secondary school teachers identified a greater impact on learning from low-level disruption than those in primary schools. Close to three quarters of those secondary teachers surveyed said that low-level disruption was a major

⁹ The overall grade for behaviour and safety includes evidence from outside the classroom.

problem, having medium or high impact on learning. Female teachers had more negative views than male teachers.

Figure 3: Percentage of teachers responding to the question ‘What impact, if any, do you think low-level disruption generally has on the learning of pupils in the class?’



Source: YouGov teacher survey

Figures are rounded and may not add to 100.

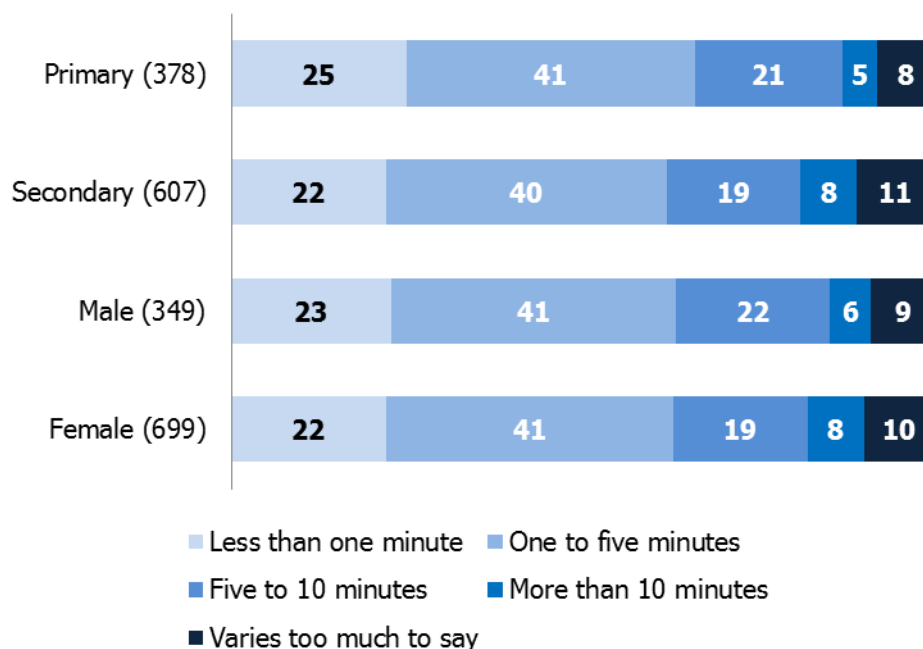
Sixty three teachers working in all-through schools are included in the male/female bars but excluded from the primary and secondary bars.

11. Teachers also had varying views of the amount of learning time lost through disruption. However, while just over a fifth of the secondary teachers surveyed said that it resulted in very little lost time in class, it is of great concern that over a quarter thought it wasted at least five minutes per hour. The situation in primary schools is less acute, but still concerning.
12. Broadly one in 12 secondary teachers said that more than 10 minutes of learning was lost per hour. If these survey findings generalise to the whole-school population, this means that, in the average secondary school, this disruption is equivalent to between five and six teachers identifying a significant loss of learning in lessons.¹⁰
13. In primary schools, the equivalent figure was one in 20. If generalised, this level of disruption would mean that, on average, nearly every primary school has a teacher struggling to maintain an orderly working environment.¹¹ As younger children tend to have one teacher all day, this represents a considerable amount of time lost for the pupils in that particular class.

¹⁰ Department for Education figures indicate that the average secondary school has 72 teachers.

¹¹ The average primary school was 14 teachers.

Figure 4: Percentage of teachers responding to the question ‘On average, how much learning time is lost within each hour of teaching time when a single episode of low-level disruption occurs?’ Responses by provider type



Source: YouGov teacher survey

Figures are rounded and may not add to 100.

Sixty three teachers working in all-through schools are included in the male/female bars but excluded from the primary and secondary bars.

- Parents held even more negative views. Over two-fifths of those surveyed (including a slightly higher proportion of parents of secondary-age students) agreed that their child’s learning was adversely affected by the behaviour of others. Again, however, the range of views from the survey was striking. Almost three in 10 parents disagreed that the behaviour of others affected their child’s learning.

Can teachers cope with low-level disruption?

- Most parents have an opinion on whether teachers can manage disruptive behaviour or not, mainly from listening to their own children. One in 10 parents with primary-age children and just one in 20 of the parents of secondary students were not confident that their child’s teachers were able to handle disruptive behaviour in the classroom. However, similar proportions did not give an opinion. This means that more than eight in 10 of the parents of secondary students clearly expressed confidence that teachers could handle disruptive behaviour.
- The teachers surveyed were generally very confident about their ability to manage behaviour. Few teachers were ‘not very confident’ about handling

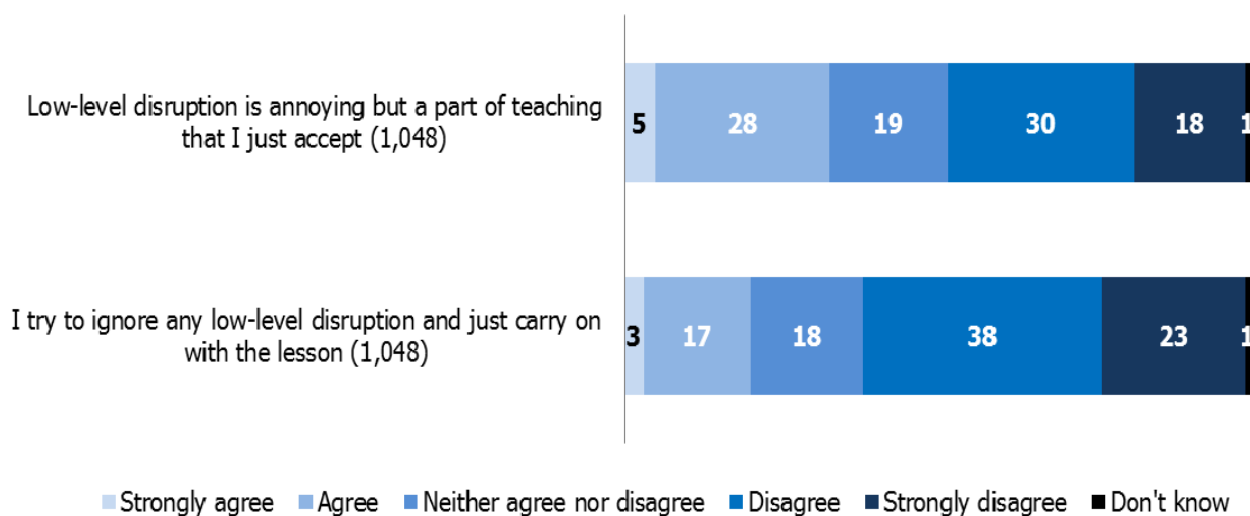
disruptive behaviour and none said that they were 'not at all confident'. There was very little difference between the responses of primary and secondary teachers.

17. However, teachers' confidence sometimes appeared to be undermined by fear of discussing problems with senior staff:

'The headteacher and senior staff could support teachers with disruptive students and insist on a consistent approach to discipline and ensure it is carried out across the school by supporting the teachers, instead of blaming the teachers when poor behaviour is brought up to the leadership team.' (Secondary school teacher)

18. The survey explored this issue through questions to teachers about their attitudes to low-level disruption. A third of teachers 'accepted' it as part of teaching, whereas nearly half said they did not (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Percentage of teachers responding to the following statements on low-level disruption



Source: YouGov teacher survey

Figures are rounded and may not add to 100.

19. These figures may be affected by the different levels of tolerance that teachers have, but they emphasise how widely teachers' expectations vary and help to explain why inconsistency in handling misbehaviour annoys young people and their parents:

'Improve some of the teaching staff who are not fit for purpose but have been in position too long.' (Parent of a secondary school student)

'The school needs a more permanent set of teaching staff – this would provide a better learning environment and more consistency and stability.'
(Parent of a primary school pupil)

20. Teachers' responses to some of the questions in the survey were analysed to see whether training to deal effectively with behaviour made any difference to their attitudes. Of the 418 teachers who responded, nearly a third of secondary teachers and a fifth of primary teachers who had experienced such training said it was not very useful. Over half of those who found training didn't help said that talking/chatting occurred in almost every lesson. A third of teachers surveyed said they had been given no training or professional development on dealing with behaviour.

Do school behaviour policies make any difference?

21. The YouGov survey showed that teachers use a mixture of school and personal strategies to deal with behaviour. Around four-fifths indicated that they used the school behaviour policy to tackle low-level disruption, although one in 20 said they did not. Almost nine in every 10 also said they used their own behaviour management strategies to tackle disruption. As we have seen, a large majority said they could do this confidently.
22. Inconsistency surfaced when teachers responded to questions about their school's behaviour policy. Around a sixth said their school's behaviour policy was unhelpful. Only a quarter of secondary teachers agreed that the behaviour policy in their school was applied consistently by all staff compared with half of primary teachers. Only a third of all teachers said the headteacher provided support in managing behaviour. It was evident that some teachers felt considerable frustration about how behaviour policies were being implemented and managed. Their comments focused particularly on their colleagues' variable use of school policies and the failure of senior leaders either to enforce the policies with staff or to apply them consistently with pupils.
23. Some teachers indicated that senior leaders were ineffective in engaging with parents and were too isolated from the realities of day-to-day life in the classroom. They suggested that senior leaders should:

'Improve behaviour by tackling the inconsistent members of staff.'
(Secondary school teacher)

'Make sure expectations are consistent and reinforced by all – I am fed up of being the disliked teacher because I follow school expectations and others don't – this has happened in every school I've worked in.'
(Secondary school teacher)

'...make sure that all staff apply the behaviour policy consistently. Make sure that they back up supply teachers by appearing in lessons

unexpectedly and asking supply teachers for feedback at the end of the day.’ (Secondary school teacher)

24. The survey also investigated how well a school’s policies extended beyond its doors. Nearly a third of the 748 parents surveyed who answered the question did not agree that pupils adhered to behaviour policies when they were travelling to and from school.

What can be done better?

25. Teachers were asked what could be done to improve the culture for learning in their schools. Over three-quarters responded that high expectations needed to be communicated clearly and regularly to pupils and parents. Over half of teachers wanted more engagement between the school and parents about behaviour. Four-fifths of parents also identified regular communication to pupils of the school’s expectations as a way of improving the learning culture. Three out of 10 teachers indicated that the headteacher could do more to ensure that other staff applied policies consistently. This suggests that teachers are aware of internal variations in their own school and want senior leaders, who should be monitoring and taking more effective action, to take more responsibility for putting a stop to this. Teachers raised this concern in several comments:

‘Be consistent with behaviour policy and make sure teachers apply it properly.’ (Secondary school teacher)

‘Make sure it is implemented throughout the school by all staff.’
(Secondary school teacher)

‘Ensure that staff are consistent in their expectations, especially in dealing with uniform at the start of the day.’ (Secondary school teacher)

26. Some parents thought that schools were not identifying weak teachers:

‘It’s not the children, it’s the way in which they are taught. Constant changing of teachers, as the school struggles to employ capable permanent staff; lack of interesting lessons; one of my child’s teachers is, according to my child, a great person but a terrible teacher. None of the students have said anything to the staff because he’s such a nice guy. How does that help their education? How is this teacher being measured?’
(Parent of a secondary school student)

‘A more consistent approach across all classes – there are isolated instances where bad behaviour is not dealt with swiftly enough and this is seen as tolerable by some students and they take this attitude into other classes.’ (Parent of a secondary school student)

27. Around three in 10 secondary teachers said that their headteacher supported them in managing poor behaviour and this was reflected in some teachers’

comments. Conversely, many teachers indicated that senior leaders were not visible or assertive enough in enforcing discipline, school rules or establishing the right ethos. As a result, having the correct uniform and not chewing gum in classes, for example, were perceived as unimportant. In some cases, teachers said that senior leaders had too narrow a focus and needed to set higher expectations of behaviour, including by being visible in the classroom themselves:

‘Tighten up the uniform, tighten up the culture so low expectations are raised across the board, remove the system of non-teaching pastoral staff (cheap and ineffective heads of year who are not qualified to do anything really, never mind set the standards for the school's ethos!). Visit leading private and state schools to observe how poor behaviour should be handled and how to instil an ethos of high expectations in staff and students. Stop obsessing about results and start obsessing about courtesy, hard work, effort, presentation and the general ethos. Given an already outstanding teaching team, the factors listed above are the barriers to outstanding.’ (Secondary school teacher)

‘Maintain a physical presence. Establish clear expectations and keep coming back to these regularly, evaluating progress at least every half term.’ (Primary school teacher)

‘By creating a presence on the corridors they could better support the staff so that the students are led to believe that the teachers are not powerless but have the full support of the senior leadership team.’ (Secondary school teacher)

28. Parents also reflected the same desire for greater consistency. Of those responding, just under two-thirds said that the headteacher should make sure all staff applied the behaviour policy as a way of improving the learning culture. A similar proportion said rules on school uniform should be applied consistently.

‘Teachers being consistent with expectations and attitudes.’ (Parent of a secondary school student)

‘Punish poor behaviour more consistently. In our view there is too much leeway given to some children who are aggressive/bullying/disruptive.’ (Parent of a primary school pupil)

29. Some parents called for greater formality in schools:

‘The school should insist students pay attention to the teacher – none of this calling the teacher by their given name. It is Miss, Sir or Mrs/Miss X.’ (Parent of a secondary school student)

30. However, a number of the parents surveyed also made many positive comments about schools and expressed the view that they thought teachers were doing a good job:

‘I am completely happy with the learning culture at my son’s school.’
(Parent of a primary school pupil)

‘The learning culture at my child’s school is very effective.’ (Parent of a primary school pupil)

‘Doesn’t need improving; they have done a wonderful job with my looked after child with behavioural and emotional difficulties. Fantastic support!’
(Parent of a primary school pupil)

How involved are parents in supporting high standards of behaviour?

31. A school’s behaviour policy can help parents understand its expectations and the part they can play in supporting good behaviour. Almost a quarter of parents of primary school pupils and a sixth of parents of secondary school students were unaware of whether their child’s school had a behaviour policy or not. Of the 817 parents surveyed who were aware of their school’s behaviour policy, around one in 12 thought that the policy was unhelpful and a quarter of secondary parents could not agree that it was applied consistently. However, both the parents and teachers surveyed agreed that parents should be much more involved in behavioural issues. The responses suggested that partnerships between parents and schools were not always effective and that communication could be weak.

32. Some parents indicated that schools should expect more of them:

‘Being strict for both parents and pupils.’ (Parent of a primary school pupil)

‘Get parents of disruptive children to understand why it is important they support the school.’ (Parent of a primary school pupil)

‘Find a way to feed back to parents more regularly on the child’s learning, and perhaps introduce an opportunity to guide parents on techniques to improve discipline at home.’ (Parent of a secondary school student)

‘Engage with parents more – communicate why there is very little homework set and what parents can do to help bring the learning culture into the home.’ (Parent of a secondary school student)

33. Other parents saw the advantages of good communication or wanted more support:

'My son is fortunate enough to attend an excellent school and I have no advice to offer the teaching professionals there. Good communication is the key: they inform me quickly if they have concerns and I act accordingly. I inform them if I am concerned about anything and they also act very promptly to deal with it and feed back to me on it.' (Parent of a secondary school student)

'I think parents can help with behaviour but some parents do not care if their children are behaving badly at school. Schools need a very clear policy which is regularly communicated to students and teachers. There should be zero tolerance of bad behaviour and very clearly specified consequences which are adhered to.' (Parent of a secondary school student)

'They should communicate more with the parents of children that do well to encourage positive praise. Immediate communication of bad behaviour would be good, too. Often you don't find out until weeks after when a specific behaviour has been going on for a while.' (Parent of a secondary school student)

34. Some parents also thought that more could be done to promote better partnerships for learning in areas such as homework:

'Set proper regular homework, not reliant on internet, use exercise books not random pieces of paper. A system where all homework is completed by a set date with a specific place to leave it first thing on that date. Exercise books can be brought home not made to leave them with teacher so parents can actually see their child's work. Bring back text books!' (Parent of a secondary school student)

35. Teachers saw strong relationships with parents as the best way of building a positive learning culture. Three-quarters of teachers ranked 'communicating high expectations about behaviour to both pupils and their parents' as the most important factor in building a positive culture. The second most important factor was engaging parents on issues about behaviour.

Part B. Evidence from school inspections since 1 January 2014

36. The importance of good behaviour in schools was highlighted in 'Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's Annual Report 2012/13':

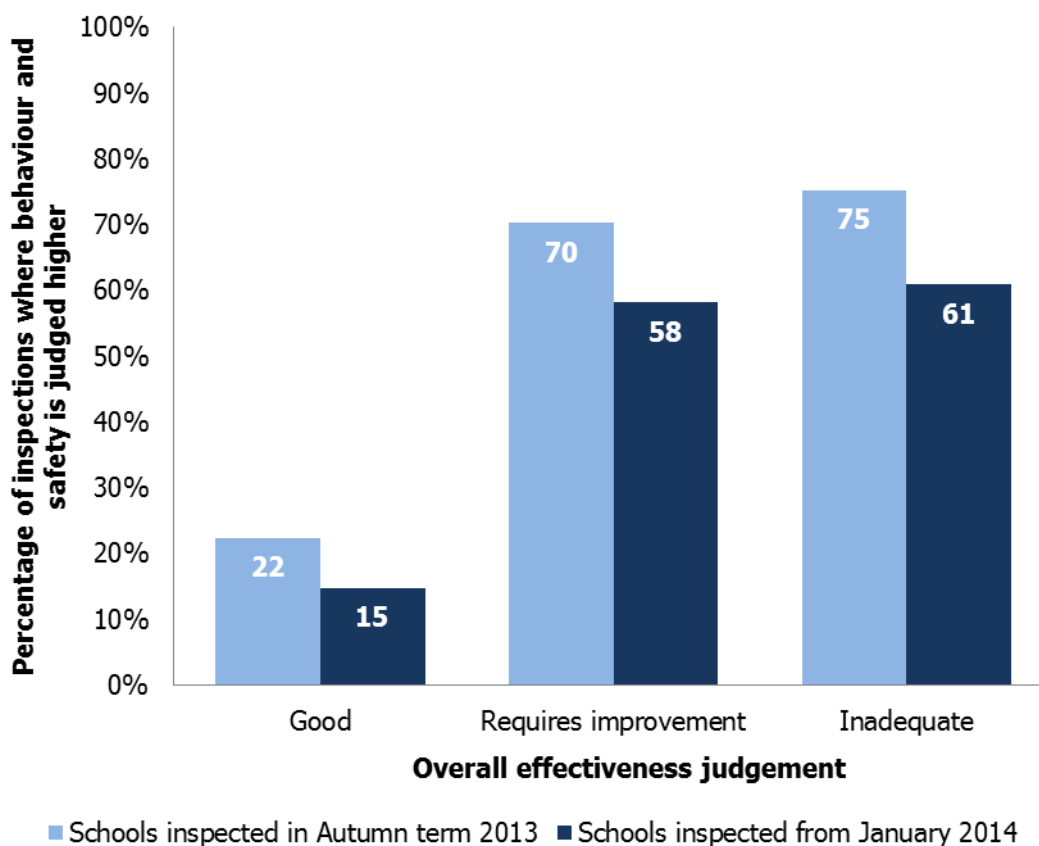
'In the best schools, strong leaders and governors routinely challenge low expectations and mediocre teaching. They create a culture in which good teaching can flourish – orderly and welcoming schools that insist on high standards, where teachers routinely challenge children to do better. These leaders reward good performance and tolerate neither inconsistent teaching nor poor behaviour. This contrasts sharply with a minority of poor schools where leadership loses focus on the essential job of ensuring high standards of behaviour and improving teaching and learning. In these schools, low-level misbehaviour in the classroom often slows pupils' progress.'¹²

37. In January 2014, Ofsted revised its guidance for inspectors to raise expectations about behaviour and more closely link it with the effectiveness of leadership and management. Since then, fewer schools have had behaviour judged to be better than other aspects of their work (Figure 6).¹³

¹² *Ofsted Annual Report 2012/13 – Schools* (130236), Ofsted, 2013; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/ofsted-annual-report-201213-schools.

¹³ In secondary schools judged good since January 2014, 13% have been judged to have outstanding behaviour and safety; the corresponding figure was 24% in the autumn term 2013. In secondary schools judged to require improvement, there has been a fall from 68% of schools in the autumn term 2013 to 47% (as at May 2014) in which the judgement on behaviour was more positive than the judgement on the school's overall effectiveness.

Figure 6: Changes in inspection judgements for behaviour and safety and overall effectiveness, showing whether the grade for behaviour and safety is higher than or the same as overall effectiveness, autumn 2013 and spring 2014



Source: Ofsted inspection

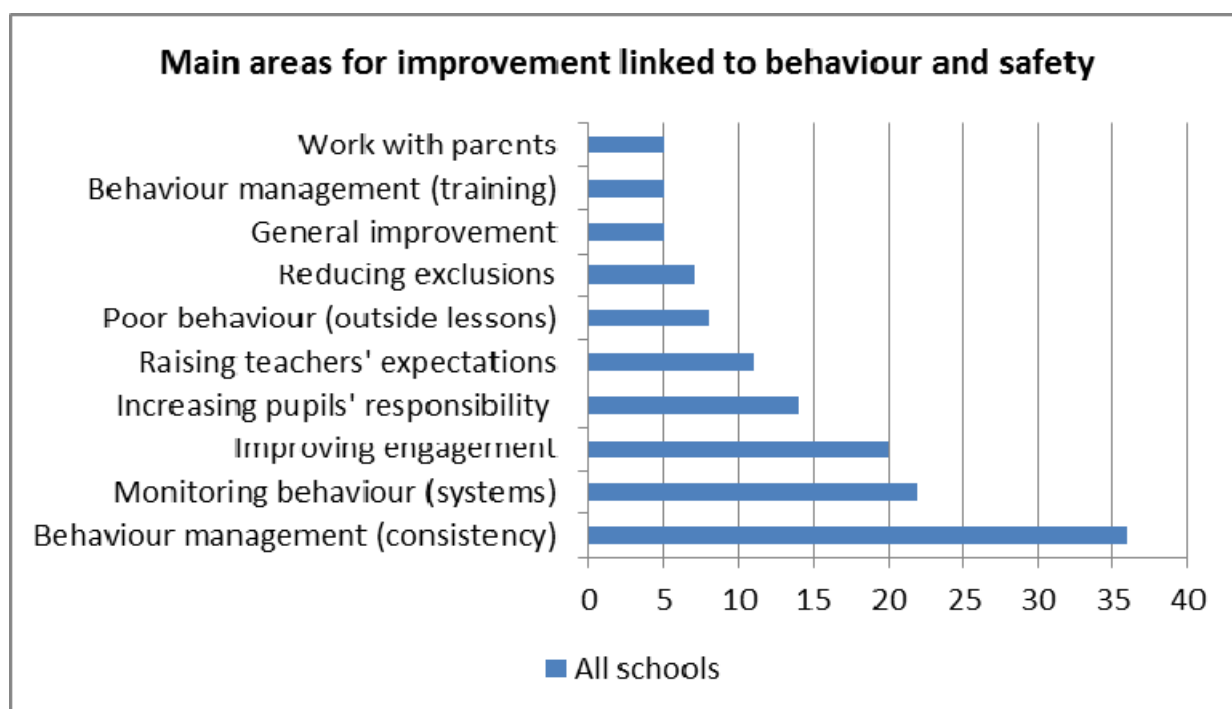
38. Following the revisions to inspection guidance, inspectors are increasingly identifying areas for improvement that relate to behaviour, including in those schools where it has not been judged inadequate but where it does provide some cause for concern.

Where schools aren't getting it right

39. In schools inspected since January 2014 where there were concerns about behaviour, the most common issue was a lack of consistency in setting, and insisting on, high standards of behaviour. Figure 7 shows the most common aspects referred to in a sample of 95 inspection reports from 2014 in which behaviour was a concern.¹⁴

¹⁴ These were drawn from 374 inspections graded 3 (requires improvement) or 4 (inadequate) for behaviour and safety in this period; all were graded 3 or 4 for overall effectiveness.

Figure 7: Analysis of areas for improvement relating to behaviour in 95 schools inspected between January and March 2014



40. Inconsistency in how behaviour was dealt with across different classes was prevalent in over a third of the 95 schools studied. This echoes some of the findings from the YouGov surveys. It highlights the importance of both senior leaders and individual teachers enforcing the school's expectations and codes of conduct in a way that is consistent for pupils. If the problem of low-level disruption persists in a school, it is plainly the responsibility of senior leaders to tackle this and also of governors to challenge them about it. Individual teachers also have responsibility for implementing the school's policy and upholding high expectations in the classroom.
41. These inspection reports also give clear examples of schools where behaviour was previously judged to require improvement and senior leaders subsequently failed to respond quickly enough to problems with classroom discipline. As a result, the culture in lessons deteriorated:

'[The pupils'] ...lack of engagement in lessons frequently leads to disrupted learning. Behaviour is often better around the school, for example in the corridors, than in lessons. **The school has failed to deal effectively with behaviour in the classroom.** Too often, as seen in 34 instances so far this term, pupils are sent to the inclusion room and the problem is not tackled at the source to reach long-term solutions.

'Not all teachers, particularly temporary teachers, are implementing the school's new behaviour policy. As a result, students' poor behaviour is

not consistently, or effectively, tackled by staff. Students commented on the high numbers who leave their own lessons and disrupt learning in other classes.’ (Ofsted inspection report)

42. In some of these 95 inspection reports, standards were identified to have been allowed to slip in less dramatic ways, but with long-term detrimental consequences for the culture of the schools:

‘**Students are not required to wear school uniform.** Some staff take the lead of the headteacher and dress in a business-like fashion. However, in other cases, **teachers’ attire is too casual and does not promote high professional standards or expectations.** My visits to lessons and observations around the school revealed continuing concerns with the behaviour of some students. This included answering back when challenged and talking over the teacher’s instructions.’ (Ofsted monitoring inspection)

‘Inspection evidence from observations, supported by the views of students and staff, indicates that behaviour is not consistently good and that some staff do not apply the academy’s policies [...] **A minority of students are slow in moving to lessons and need considerable encouragement from staff to get to lessons on time.**’ (Ofsted inspection report)

‘Not all school rules are consistently applied; for example, **students sometimes take food out [of the dining hall] and this leads to a small amount of litter** in the area; although most students look smart, **some students wear their school uniform in an untidy manner.**’ (Ofsted inspection report)

‘In too many lessons, **low-level disruption, lack of concentration, social chatting and calling out** are allowed to continue without being challenged by the teacher. Teachers do not consistently follow the academy’s guidelines for dealing with poor behaviour. As a result, time is wasted, the pace of learning slows down and very little work is done.’ (Ofsted inspection report)

43. Between January and July 2014, Ofsted also conducted unannounced inspections of behaviour in 28 schools. These inspections evaluated improvements in schools where behaviour had been judged to be less than good at the previous section 5 inspection and where the areas for improvement had signalled the need to take significant action. These schools were selected as also having good leadership and management and so were likely to have sufficient capacity to tackle the identified areas for improvement. Only 64 schools met these criteria.
44. In one of the schools visited, behaviour had declined to the extent that inspectors judged the school to require special measures. In one other,

inspectors expressed concerns that behaviour was declining, although was not yet inadequate. However, in most of the others, senior leaders had taken the earlier inspection findings seriously and had improved – or were starting to improve – their approaches to ensure greater consistency and higher expectations. In two schools, behaviour and safety were judged to be good.

45. In almost all of the schools, however, inspectors still judged behaviour to require improvement. For example:

‘There is [still some] horseplay and noisy behaviour, but students settle down quickly when teachers tell them to stop. Students told me that there used to be a lot of poor behaviour at break and lunchtime, with people running around corridors, ‘barging’ each other, throwing food around and breaking windows. They say that such things are now very rare.’ (Ofsted monitoring inspection)

46. Inspectors found examples of behaviour varying across classes during the unannounced inspections, which reflected many of the findings from the YouGov surveys:

‘Students’ behaviour requires improvement because some teachers are accepting of poor behaviour in lessons, which disrupts learning. **These teachers do not follow the academy’s behaviour policy consistently and often ignore students’ casual use of foul language.**’ (Ofsted monitoring inspection)

‘...in too many lessons, teachers do not follow the academy’s behaviour policy so learning is disrupted. During the inspection, there were occasions in lessons when students moved out of their seats without permission to chat to others. Some students stopped working to brush their hair. Teachers did not challenge this behaviour. **The same students were observed behaving impeccably in other lessons with different teachers. Students echoed these observations by indicating that their behaviour varied according to the teacher.** Some teachers also ignored the use of foul language during lessons.’ (Ofsted monitoring inspection)

47. While some senior leaders in these schools were making concerted efforts to improve behaviour, the results were patchy. This was mainly because not all teachers were following the school’s – often new – behaviour policy. Some staff and students commented that the systems were too complicated or bureaucratic. One result of this was that schools were slow to pick up on what was happening in the classroom and to take the necessary action.

‘Where poor behaviour was observed... **teachers had often used up all of the stages in the behaviour system within a short period** from the start of the lesson.’ (Ofsted monitoring inspection)

In one of the schools inspected where behaviour had declined, senior managers had not made adequate preparation for a period of staff change:

'...instability in staffing and regular staff changes have limited the impact of the systems to manage and promote good behaviour.

Although there are regular induction and training sessions, not all teaching staff yet have the skills to consistently create high expectations within the classroom. Similarly, not all staff take an active part in the management of behaviour outside of lessons. Too often staff supervising the students are passive and fail to engage with the promotion of positive actions.' (Ofsted monitoring inspection)

Where schools are getting it right

48. In the best schools inspected since January 2014, senior leaders set high expectations and enforce codes of conduct. They recognise that good discipline is needed to create a positive climate for learning and that this is a responsibility that should be shared by leaders, teachers, parents and pupils. Where needed, effective school leaders are uncompromising in their expectations and never settle for lower standards of behaviour. If low-level disruption exists, they challenge it readily and do not hesitate if students need admonishment or if parents need to be involved. In this example of a school where behaviour improved from good to outstanding, the headteacher sets the tone, but all staff are engaged in ensuring high standards:

'The atmosphere in classes and around the school is calm and positive. The number of students who are excluded for a short amount of time has fallen rapidly in recent years. **Students understand the school's behaviour policy and know it will be implemented rigorously by staff.** They told inspectors that the system of sanctions and rewards works well and that staff apply it consistently. They were happy to talk about how much they enjoy school and their lessons.' (Ofsted inspection report)

49. The best headteachers and their senior leaders are usually visible in classrooms, corridors and around the school grounds. This echoed the points made by teachers in the YouGov surveys. These senior leaders know where low-level disruption might occur and if it does they make sure that it is dealt with by staff and that parents are informed, so that it is less likely to happen in future.
50. In these schools, high expectations of behaviour have been spelt out by senior staff and are applied consistently, with similarly consistent responses to any pupils who engage in minor or other disruptive behaviour. Staff, pupils and parents know what is expected of them and any transgressions by pupils are met with a robust response:

‘Behaviour logs show that the rare instances of poor behaviour are dealt with effectively by staff, and that full records are kept and analysed for trends. **Students themselves are clear that staff will deal with bad behaviour.** They know who to report concerns to and are clear these will be followed up.’ (Ofsted inspection report)

51. In another school, where behaviour had improved from good to outstanding, any problems were addressed immediately:

‘The behaviour of students is outstanding...They show a great enthusiasm for their learning and are keen to do well. As a result of the good teaching they receive and the consistently good management of behaviour by all staff, they show positive attitudes to learning... **The school is quick to identify students at risk of underachieving due to poor behaviour** and to work to change their attitudes.’ (Ofsted inspection report)

52. Similar patterns were found in other schools with outstanding behaviour:

‘Underpinning such outstanding behaviour are systems that are applied fairly and consistently by all staff. **Students know what is expected of them and the consequences that follow should they fall out of line.** “It encourages us to behave well and none of us wants to let the school down” was the opinion of one student that summed up the success of the school in a nutshell.’ (Ofsted inspection report)

53. Improving schools do not ignore instances of minor or other disruptive behaviour. They apply the rules uniformly and with rigour:

‘In a very small minority of lessons observed, poor behaviour by one or two students led to disruptions to learning. **The school’s own behaviour logs indicate that incidents are minor and relatively infrequent and that they always lead to appropriate sanctions.** There is an automatic link from the behaviour log to the parental email system so that parents receive a daily email detailing both positive and negative occurrences for their child as well as a record of their homework for that evening.’ (Ofsted inspection report)

‘Students’ behaviour, attitudes and readiness to learn in lessons are good. There is very little lateness or disruption to lessons. Leaders have created systems that encourage positive student attitudes. **They take swift and decisive action when students do not meet their required standards.** Consequently, students speak positively about the significant improvements they have seen to conduct in lessons.’ (Ofsted inspection report)

Further information

Publications by Ofsted

Ofsted Annual Report 2012/13 – Schools (130236), Ofsted, 2013;
www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/ofsted-annual-report-201213-schools.

Further reports by Ofsted about behaviour and related matters can be found at:
www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/our-expert-knowledge/attendance-and-behaviour-schools.

Other publications

First Steps: a new approach for our schools, CBI, 2012;
www.cbi.org.uk/campaigns/education-campaign-ambition-for-all/first-steps-read-the-report-online/change-is-possible.

PISA 2012 Results: Ready to learn: students' engagement, drive and self-beliefs (Volume III), OECD, 2013; www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results-volume-iii.htm.