



RESEARCH

Collaborative behaviour improvement in schools: implications for global policymakers

Richard Churches, Richard Warenisca, Tricia Bunn and Tom Bennett

2025

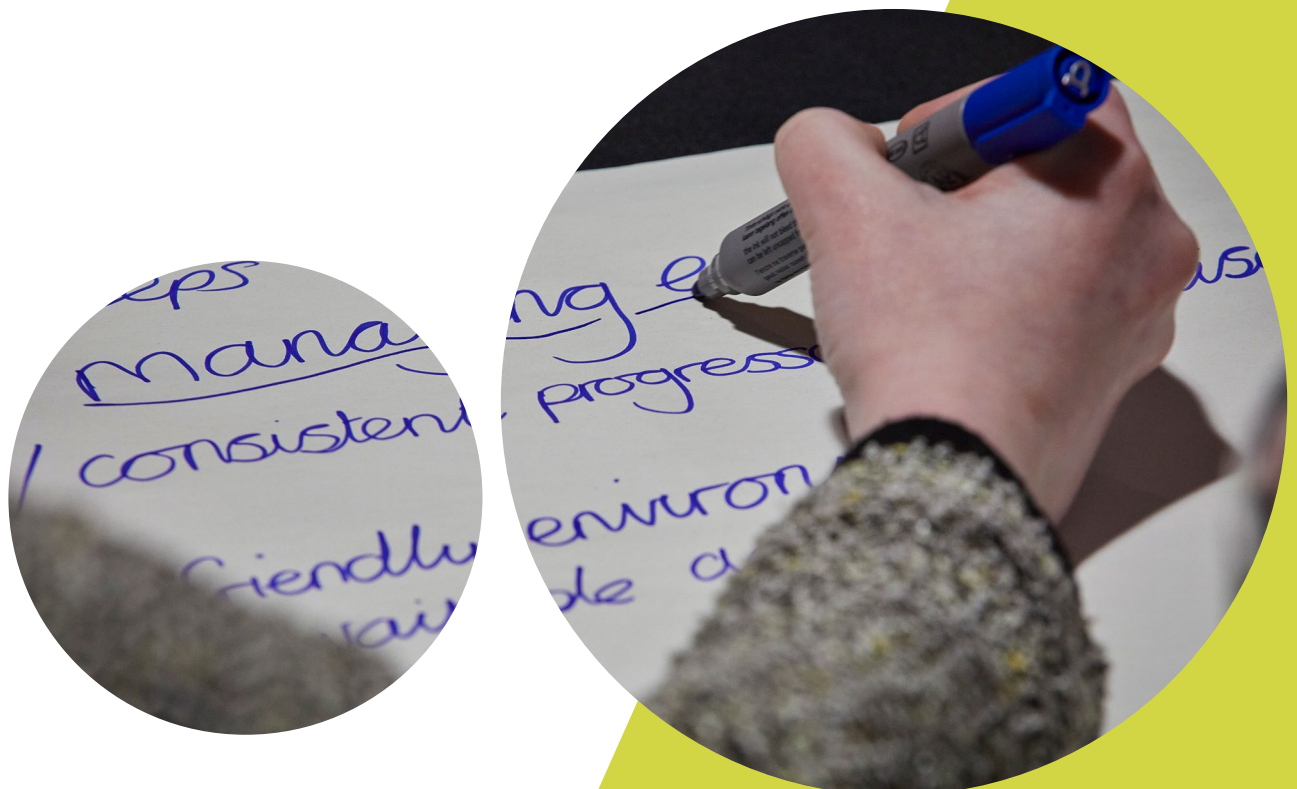




Table of contents

Summary	3
Our approach	4
The programme	5
Recruitment of schools and the education context in England	7
The Behaviour Hubs programme of support	9
Analysis of participant surveys and qualitative data	10
Improvements in behaviour standards in participating schools	12
Cost-effectiveness of a collaborative delivery between the government and schools	14
School-led support as a policy lever	15
Conclusion	17
Implications and recommendations for policymakers	18
References	19

Summary

The authors of this publication are:

- » Dr Richard Churches, Director of Research at Education Development Trust
- » Richard Warenisca, Behaviour Hubs Senior Programme Manager
- » Tricia Bunn, Behaviour Hubs Senior Education Advisor, and
- » Tom Bennett OBE, Behaviour Adviser for England's Department for Education and chair of a 2020 DfE task force aimed at improving behaviour in England's schools.

This publication documents the structure and impact of a unique behaviour improvement programme, which was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) in England and delivered, in partnership with schools, by Education Development Trust (EDT). We discuss how the programme's approach can be seen as a form of policy reform that succeeds in balancing accountability, autonomy and support, within an evidence-based policy framework. The model of identifying the most successful practitioners and using them to support and lead the improvements of others is a valuable global policy lever that allows the integration of local wisdom into challenging reform agendas. By extension, such an approach facilitates the buy-in of schools receiving support.

This report highlights the following key implications for policymakers:

1. Evidence-informed policymaking may be most effective when mechanisms for systematically allowing the local translation of evidence into policy delivery are identified in advance and planned for.
2. Using the most effective practitioners to support those in need of improvement ensures that there is a continuing sense of autonomy and shared purpose. This may have benefits in high-accountability systems, such as those with regular high-stakes school inspections.
3. Finding ways for schools in need of improvement to learn from the effective practice of other schools encourages buy-in and supports cost-effective policy delivery.

Our approach

This research aimed to document the collaborative approach employed by the Behaviour Hubs programme in England and assess its implications for global policy. The public research team at EDT collaborated with the Behaviour Hubs programme delivery team to:

- » **review key documentation, prior to and during programme delivery, to record the initial policy intentions and methodology**
- » **carry out a thematic analysis of feedback and survey data from participating schools and multi-academy trusts (MATs)⁴**
- » **consider relevant Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) inspection-grade evidence associated with participating schools**
- » **calculate the per-pupil cost of the programme and compare it with cost effectiveness data from a range of similar interventions**
- » **draw together conclusions and implementations for policy delivery, particularly where those policies seek to implement the latest research evidence.**



⁴ As schools have been granted greater autonomy, in England, so they have also begun to cluster together often under the leadership of a single headteacher or principal (known as an executive principal). One common model is the multi-academy trust where 'academies' (schools with autonomy from traditional local authority control) amalgamate into a 'trust' (a form of not-for-profit charity).

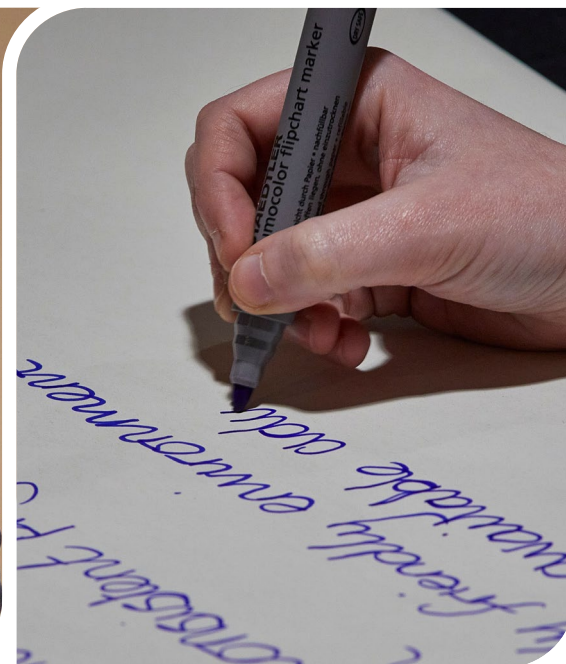
The programme

In England, the use of evidence to inform policymaking has become a key aspect of government decision-making and forms the basis for programme curriculum content (McAleavy, 2016; McAleavy, 2021). Notably, the DfE provided funding for the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF),⁵ a charity that conducts similar work to the What Works Clearinghouse⁶ in the USA (such as commissioning randomised controlled trials, conducting meta-analyses, and writing evidence-informed guidance for teachers). The DfE has also conducted evidence reviews to directly inform the rollout of policy and teacher professional development; the use of such evidence in the Behaviour Hubs programme is an example of this.

The core training content for the programme builds upon the DfE's evidence review *Creating a Culture: How School Leaders Can Optimise Behaviour* (Bennett, 2017). This review was led by Tom Bennett,⁷ co-author of this report, who also pioneered approaches to the involvement of schools in research and evidence-informed practice, through the grassroots organisation ResearchEd, and the concept of the school research lead (Bennett, 2016).

The review identified several core principles for successful school behaviour policies, including:

- » **a clear understanding of the school's culture**
- » **high expectations for all students, emphasising the importance of each student**
- » **consistency and meticulous attention to detail in the execution of school routines, norms and values.**



⁵ www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk

⁶ <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

⁷ Bennett has remained a key figure as part of the delivery team for the programme.

Behaviour Hubs is a one-year programme of support (two years for MATs), available across England to mainstream primary and secondary schools, special schools and alternative provisions (such as pupil referral units).⁸ Behaviour Hubs aims to help senior leaders create the conditions for an effective and sustainable behaviour culture throughout their setting. The programme matches partner schools and MATs (usually those whose student behaviour has been identified as in need of improvement by Ofsted),⁹ with a lead school or MAT with an exemplary track record in behaviour management. These lead settings work in close collaboration with their partner settings, identifying opportunities to improve behaviour culture and develop new behaviour policies and approaches.

The Behaviour Hubs programme goes beyond the top-down, one-off training or accreditation model sometimes used by governments around the world to roll out policy. The programme systematically integrates schools with outstanding student behaviour into the delivery process and the translation of the best available evidence into local practice. It integrates the wisdom of local school leaders and gains the buy-in of supported schools because they respect that local wisdom. Critically, schools learn from the interpretations of evidence-based practices by outstanding schools, rather than from practices that may not be grounded in research evidence. The programme does this by offering a tailored support package, whereby schools work collaboratively to share practice and innovations that emerge during the implementation of evidence-informed approaches.



“

The programme systematically integrates schools with outstanding student behaviour into the delivery process and the translation of the best available evidence into local practice.

”

⁸ Pupil Referral Units provide support to children who have been permanently excluded from a school or schools.

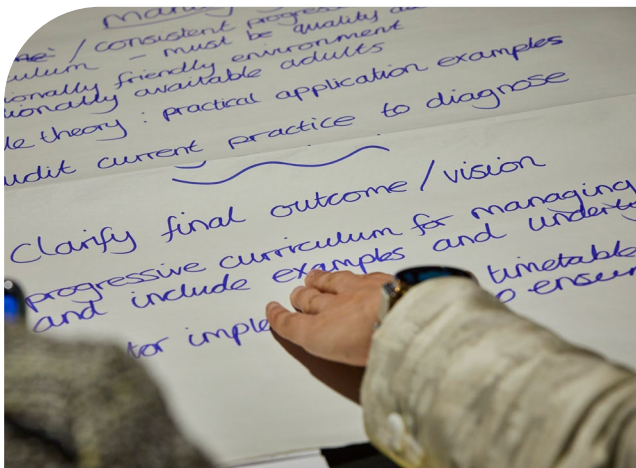
⁹ The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (the body which carries out school inspections in England).

Recruitment of schools and the education context in England

In 2020, the DfE in England launched the Behaviour Hubs programme and called for school leaders to apply to become lead schools or MATs. Applications were invited from primary and secondary schools, special schools and alternative provisions with exemplary behaviour management practices and a strong whole-school culture. The lead schools and MATs were responsible for supporting other schools to improve their behaviour culture and practices.

Since 2010, schools that demonstrate a high quality of provision during Ofsted inspections are granted increased autonomy, while others already have greater autonomy from the start. These schools, known as academies or free schools, are largely no longer under the control of local authorities (the middle tier of the English education system that previously almost all schools were accountable to). Instead, they receive their funding directly from, and report directly to, the DfE. Over time, some academies have begun to amalgamate into MATs, drawing on their perceived benefits of economies of scale and collaboration. Many have also acquired the status of teaching school – first proposed by the DfE in 2010 – which mirrors the teaching hospital model in medicine and healthcare. These changes represent a significant shift in education policy compared to previous reforms; the trend in education policy in England since the late 1980s has been towards increasingly greater school autonomy.

Where they exist, teaching school alliances, or hubs (teaching schools with a cluster of schools they are associated with), and MATs, have taken on the teacher professional development role previously carried out by local authorities. In addition, many are now able to qualify teachers through school-centred initial teacher training centres (SCITTs), becoming awarding bodies for qualified teacher status (QTS). This shift has resulted in a decline in the number of teachers qualifying on university postgraduate courses (such as the post-graduate certificate in education), although many SCITTs offer such accreditations alongside school-accredited QTS. They also provide ‘appropriate body’ status (a legal designation in England) allowing them to sign off the induction period that teachers are required to complete after qualifying (currently known as the Early Career Framework). In addition, some teaching school hubs are the lead deliverers of a range of government teaching and leadership qualifications – particularly National Professional Qualifications (see McAleavy, 2021).





The high level of autonomy in the English school system is balanced by high accountability for the results of regular inspections by Ofsted (who provide independent publicly available reports on the quality of individual schools). England also differs from many other education systems around the world in that parents have far more choice regarding which schools they enrol their children in. Publicly available Ofsted inspection grades support parents with making that choice; this was introduced in the late 1980s with the aim of leveraging improved standards as schools began to compete for students (Gibbons, Machin and Silva, 2006/2007; West, 2023).

In Behaviour Hubs lead schools, the DfE and EDT sought to identify inspirational senior leaders who had successfully established strong, positive behaviour cultures within their institutions. Those leaders then provided customised, one-to-one support to other schools, helping them to make comprehensive cultural changes. Lead schools committed to offering around 15–20 days of senior leadership time each academic year to support other institutions, with additional assistance sometimes coming from other key staff members.

In the lead MATs, EDT sought out experienced executives who had worked across multiple schools. Those executives then supported other MATs in developing effective trust-wide behaviour management strategies. Each lead MAT included at least one lead school providing support to other schools, and MAT staff members also helped other MAT executives to implement successful behaviour management practices. The MAT-to-MAT executive component of the programme involved approximately 15–20 days of MAT leader time per academic year.

Between Spring 2021 and Autumn 2024, 60 lead schools and MATs, and a specialised team of advisers, worked with 664 schools in hubs across England, providing support to partner schools that had self-identified as needing improvement.

The Behaviour Hubs programme of support

The support package offered to partner schools included several elements designed to enhance behaviour management practices, and lead schools provided partner schools with in-depth analysis and support for action planning. This involved mentoring, ongoing targeted advice, and oversight throughout the development and implementation of action plans regarding their behaviour management practices and approaches.

For partner MATs, the support extended to MAT-to-MAT collaboration. Leaders from the central executive team of a lead MAT worked closely with their counterparts in a partner MAT, to develop and implement a comprehensive behaviour management strategy across all schools within the trust. Additionally, partner schools and MATs benefited from various resources. For example, they had access to virtual training events created by the behaviour adviser team, focusing on effective behaviour management principles and practices identified in the evidence review (Bennett, 2017). Partner schools also attended open days at lead schools to observe exemplary behaviour management practices firsthand.

The Behaviour Hubs programme also included hub networking events, where lead and partner schools came together to network, form clusters, and share experiences. Furthermore, all participating schools had access to a free online repository of good practice resources, developed and curated by behaviour advisers. This repository included case studies of exemplary practices and tools for schools to assess their own behaviour management practice.



Analysis of participant surveys and qualitative data

Analysis of participant surveys and qualitative data¹⁰ reveals several key insights into the effectiveness of involving schools as policy deliverers. This section summarises that analysis and includes typical examples from schools.

- » Schools, with their deep understanding of local contexts and needs, tailored reforms to address specific challenges effectively, enhancing the relevance and impact of policy changes.
- » Direct involvement in policy delivery fostered a sense of ownership and commitment among educators, contributing to a more effective execution of initiatives. In addition, lead schools found themselves developing their expertise alongside those they were supporting.

“The willingness of colleagues from different schools to share the difficulties and challenges they are either facing or have faced was reassuring and helpful. In the past, sharing that there are challenges with behaviour of pupils may have been frowned upon, but the Behaviour Hubs programme makes it feel like everyone is in it together.” **Chantry Middle School, Partner School Survey, July 2024**

“The programme has been a huge success from our perspective as a lead school and lead trust. Networking has led to all involved improving their settings – whether that be as a partner school following their action plan or as a lead school striving to make more gains.” **Kings Leadership Academy, lead school survey, July 2024**

- » Participation in policy delivery helped build educators' professional skills and capacities, essential for driving successful reform. This was true for both lead and partner settings.

“Having the opportunity to observe and discuss behaviour policies and protocols with partner schools has enabled us to reflect on our own practice and how it may be improved. Working with schools on whole school improvement plans linked to behaviour has proven to be excellent continuing professional development for the senior leaders at our school.” **Worthing High School, lead school survey, July 2023**

“The combination of the lead visit days, open days, networking events and online modules allow school leaders to research best practice, see it in action and then have an experienced leader to discuss and talk through solutions. The resources online are of high quality, the best practice schools have been outstanding. Some of the best continuing professional development me and my team have experienced.” **Hope Academy, partner school survey, May 2024**

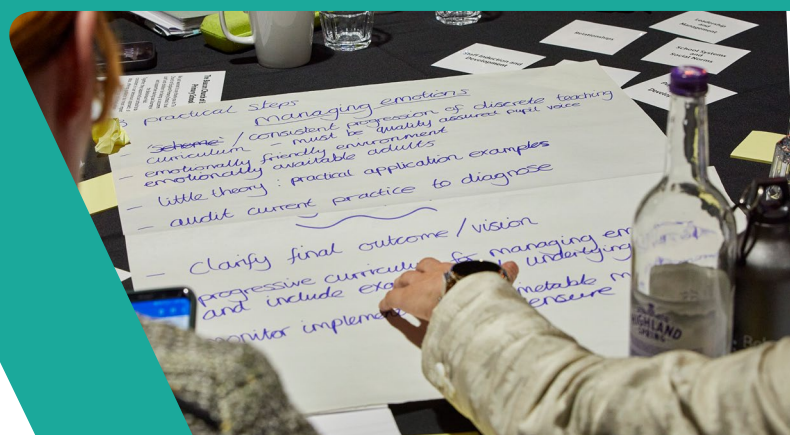
¹⁰ Over two years of delivery, a wide variety of regular feedback surveys and questionnaires have been completed by programme participants. We scrutinised the qualitative data from these to identify key themes that were present in the data and example quotations that exemplified commonly held views about the programme structure. This included all end-of-programme surveys that have been completed by graduating schools (372) and post-event surveys and feedback.

- » Schools appreciated the flexibility and adaptability afforded by their involvement in policy implementation, allowing them to adjust policies based on real-time feedback, evolving circumstances and local context.

“It was useful visiting other school settings, especially where we were able to view behaviour in practice. Being able to discuss our action plan and use our support school to provide a third-party view of our progress of implementation was extremely useful in demonstrating that what we believed was being effective in school, actually was. It was beneficial to have opportunities to discuss behaviour practice with other schools and share ideas. Completing the programme with the various support sessions and visits throughout the year helped to ensure behaviour remained a key focus throughout the project, helping our action plan implementation to be successful.” **Kings Ash Academy, partner school survey, July 2024**

“We have really enjoyed being a part of this programme and highly regard it as an excellent way to use effective practice to support others to be able to develop their own. The coaching and mentoring approach has been really instrumental in empowering other schools to develop their own behaviour policy and practice, and the programme has highlighted the absolute need for strong, positive relationships, both between staff and children and professionals too. Being a lead school and trust has been something we have been proud to do as well, as it has enabled us to reflect on our own practice and further develop too.” **Manor Park Primary, lead school survey, July 2024**

- » Participants frequently contrasted this approach with previous top-down methods, revealing several limitations in other types of policy initiative. They noted how centrally imposed policies often lack relevance to local contexts, leading to a disconnect between reforms and the actual needs of schools. This disconnection can undermine policy effectiveness. Resistance and low buy-in from educators were also common themes, with many pointing to feeling alienated by top-down directives. This lack of engagement hampers successful implementation. Rigid, centralised policies can inhibit schools’ ability to adapt to unique challenges, reducing their effectiveness. The Behaviour Hubs programme was frequently seen to be avoiding these issues.



Improvements in behaviour standards in participating schools

In England, schools are regularly inspected by Ofsted and given one of four grades from 'outstanding' to 'inadequate', with intermediate grades of 'good' and 'requires improvement'. Currently, grades are given in four areas: the quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management (Ofsted, 2023).¹¹ These grades are made publicly available to inform parental school choice decisions. Since September 2024, schools have not been given an overall summary grade. We looked at the available Ofsted inspection grades for behaviour over the delivery of the Behaviour Hubs programme. However, because of the limitations in using this data (as discussed below), we offer this for completeness only.

327 schools have completed the Behaviour Hubs programme.¹² Approximately 370,000 pupils were on roll at these schools during their participation. 68 schools had been recently inspected by Ofsted before joining. 71 were inspected during the programme, and 167 had graduated from the programme by the time we began this analysis. Although this is an ostensibly reasonable sample size, looking at Ofsted inspection grades to infer the strength of any effect of the programme has had several limitations. This could only be dealt with by substantially reducing the sample size until a valid and reliable group was identified.

Firstly, we had no control group with which to compare the schools that participated in the programme. Secondly, the most recent Ofsted inspection grade available for many schools was for the period during which they were already receiving support. In part, this was because of the infrequency of inspection compared to the period of programme delivery. At the point of analysis, the Behaviour Hubs programme had been in place for just under three years, whereas schools in England are usually inspected every four years.



¹¹ A current proposal, if accepted, will revise the grade and reporting into a new five-point report card structure.

¹² In six cohorts between April 2022 and January 2023.



Most importantly, the Ofsted inspections framework (the guidance used by inspectors and inspection teams to underpin their judgements) changed midway through the programme. Therefore, many schools' baseline cannot be considered to be a viable direct comparison to their inspection judgements on graduation from the programme. Finally, during the period of delivery, the programme adapted as schools with 'good' or 'outstanding' practice also began to request participation. This potentially weakened any effect, because these schools were already operating at the target levels the programme was aiming to achieve.

Considering these limitations, the most valid and reliable approach we identified was to focus on the data from those schools that had pre- and post-intervention Ofsted judgements under the same Ofsted framework (the new revised framework). Although producing a more trustworthy sample for analytical purposes, this resulted in a relatively small group¹³ compared to the total number of participating schools, and the number with pre- and post-intervention Ofsted judgements across both frameworks.¹⁴

Using this smaller sample, we compared the Ofsted behaviour judgements for schools that participated in the programme only when under the new inspection framework, in order to estimate the strength of any improvement.¹⁵ We found that there was a moderately large positive improvement effect in the Ofsted inspection behaviour judgements of the schools, overall.¹⁶

Then (considering the programme goal of achieving good or better behaviour in schools that had previously been judged as 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' – the two lowest grades), we compared pre- and post-test the proportion of schools that had good or better behaviour with those that were judged by Ofsted as 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate'.¹⁷ In other words, those that had moved from the target group for the programme into good or better behaviour management practice. We found a large positive significant effect.¹⁸

It is also worth noting that of the schools that were judged as 'adequate' or 'inadequate' upon joining the programme, under the new Ofsted inspection framework, all but one (18 out of 19, or 97.4%) graduated with good or better behaviour management practices. One school's Ofsted grade moved from 'inadequate' to 'outstanding'. There is the potential to look at the available data again in 2025 when more graduating schools with pre-test data from the same framework have been inspected.



¹³ n = 34

¹⁴ It was not possible to mitigate for the inclusion of schools with already good or better behaviour. Therefore, the effects reported below may be attenuated by this.

¹⁵ The strength and direction of change was calculated using the same approach to pre- and post-test within-participant only data used by Hattie (2009). Note that uncontrolled within-participant effects are likely to be inflated due to the lack of a control group, since control groups are usually also found to have made improvements.

¹⁶ d = 0.56

¹⁷ Chi-squared with the effect size Phi converted to Cohen's d.

¹⁸ $\chi^2(1, N = 34) = 6.07, p = .014, \pi = 0.42, d = 0.85, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.51, 1.18]$. The confidence interval (CI) data here suggests that in 95% of repeated programme deliveries the effect might be expected to be with the range d = 0.51 to 1.18.

Cost-effectiveness of a collaborative delivery between the government and schools

The cost of the Behaviour Hubs programme can be compared to other similar initiatives. As well as conducting meta-analyses and randomised controlled trials, the EEF uses a cost categorisation system to help schools and others in the English education system evaluate the financial feasibility of educational interventions. Costs are calculated per pupil and are annualised to provide a standard measure for comparison. These calculations consider direct expenses (such as training, resources, and materials) and, where applicable, spread costs over multiple years to reflect the intervention's longevity. The EEF then assigns interventions to one of four '£' to '££££' categories.¹⁹

The cost of behaviour programmes evaluated by the EEF vary substantially. For example, Positive Action (O'Hare et al., 2018) cost £9.38 per pupil annually, placing it within the '£' (very low cost) category. In contrast, The Good Behaviour Game (Humphrey, 2018), cost £35.53 (a '££' low category cost). More generally, whole-school behaviour approaches cost around £20 per pupil per year. These approaches emphasise universal behaviour improvement strategies and are designed for scalability. In contrast, the cost of targeted behaviour interventions is much greater depending on the intensity of support. Small group or one-to-one interventions can exceed £250 per pupil annually, placing them in the '££££' highest cost category (EEF, 2024).

Costs of behaviour programmes demonstrate a clear trend. Although higher-cost, more intensive interventions appear to yield slightly greater effects, lower-cost, whole-school approaches deliver better value for money because of their scalability. Like other low-cost interventions, Behaviour Hubs focuses on creating sustainable improvements in school-wide behaviour and culture. The total cost of the programme over its lifetime was £23.45 per pupil (since 2020). When annualised (schools typically remain on the programme for one year), its annual cost is £5.86 per pupil per year.

Of the total budget, two-thirds goes directly to schools as grants, putting much of the government investment back into schools, unlike many other behaviour improvement programmes. This places it firmly in the '£' category, alongside Positive Action and other whole-school approaches as a highly cost-effective form of intervention. By extension, its low annual cost may enhance its appeal for schools with constrained budgets.

¹⁹ £: Very low cost (up to £20 per pupil, annually).
 ££: Low cost (£21–£50 per pupil, annually).
 £££: Moderate cost (£51–£250 per pupil, annually).
 ££££: High cost (above £250 per pupil, annually).



School-led support as a policy lever

Education policymakers and ministries of education frequently discuss policy levers, a term originating in the health sector (Roberts et al., 2008). A policy lever can be defined as any mechanisms or tools used to influence or implement policy changes and achieve specific objectives within a system. The World Bank Institute has articulated five policy levers that can impact service delivery in the education sector: financing, payment, organisation, regulation, and community education, although many others are frequently discussed (Grace et al., 2015).

In education, policy levers can include various strategies such as funding adjustments, regulatory changes, or the introduction of new standards and guidelines. These levers are designed to modify behaviour, guide practices, and drive improvements in educational outcomes.

Autonomy and accountability have been increasingly recognised as central policy levers in education reform, and they are designed to drive improvement and innovation within schools (Barber, Mourshed & Chijioke, 2010; Reaves, 2013; World Bank, 2013). They have been adopted in diverse ways by a wide range of governments (Arcia et al., 2010; Verger et al., 2024).

Autonomy grants school leaders and teachers the flexibility to make decisions tailored to the unique needs of their students and communities. This can encompass curriculum design, resource allocation, the local management of budgets, and instructional strategies – empowering educators to implement context-sensitive solutions. Accountability mechanisms, such as standardised assessments, inspections, and performance metrics, ensure that schools maintain high standards and are held responsible for student outcomes. Together, these levers aim to balance professional freedom with rigorous oversight. However, if schools are left without the right levels and forms of support in such a policy lever environment, there may be unintended consequences (Earley, 2016), such as work intensification and the pressure to perform.

“Finding effective ways to ensure the buy-in of teachers and schools could not only be a key way of enhancing the effectiveness of policy levers (such as autonomy and accountability), but could itself be seen as an effective, if not essential, policy lever.”

Alongside this, it is becoming increasingly clear that the buy-in of teachers may be of critical importance, both at individual school level (for teacher retention) and by extension at system level (Grebing, 2023; Jerrim, 2024). From this perspective, finding effective ways to ensure the buy-in of teachers and schools could not only be a key way of enhancing the effectiveness of policy levers (such as autonomy and accountability), but could itself be seen as an effective, if not essential, policy lever. This may be particularly true when buy-in is achieved through shared practice, and that leads to school improvements that are visible to the participating schools.

Based on the evidence from the Behaviour Hubs programme, we argue that 'helping the best schools to support the rest' is a highly promising policy lever practice, particularly where that help is grounded in the best available evidence. This is not a new practice in the English education system: within the London Challenge (Baars et al., 2014) in the mid-2000s, so-called 'Beacon Schools' supported other schools in London, and the Consultant Leader programme used successful headteachers to coach and mentor other headteachers across London. Within the Consultant Leader programme (and as found in the Behaviour Hubs programme), those providing the support also found themselves growing their practice alongside the schools they supported.

Where the Behaviour Hubs programme takes this further is in grounding support in the best available research evidence, as well as the best existing practice and interpretation of that evidence. This illustrates how evidence can be taken from policy into practice, not only with the support of schools, but with enthusiasm.

“Evidence-informed policymaking may be most effective when mechanisms for systematically allowing the local translation of evidence into policy delivery are identified in advance and planned for.”



Conclusion

Before discussing our research findings overall and making some recommendations for policymakers globally, it is important to return briefly to the relatively unusual approach taken to system reform in England, compared to most of the world, to put the findings in context.

Despite changes in the government, over the past 25 years, education reform in England has generally maintained a consistent direction in terms of its approach. Schools have been (and continue to be) given high levels of autonomy within an inspection-driven accountability framework. This is still the case today, despite the withdrawal of some freedoms that academies currently enjoy.²⁰ English schools have far more freedom than their counterparts in other parts of the world – such as the ability to hire their own staff. It is also important to remember that, in England, the Ofsted inspection framework supports school improvement by leveraging parental choice.

What is becoming increasingly clear is that policy levers like parental choice and high public accountability may not necessarily be effective, unless high-quality support is also available to schools that need it. This is so that they can make the changes they need and ensure that those changes are based on the best available evidence.

As education systems begin to move towards basing their practice on the best available research evidence, mirroring the practice and transformation of outcomes experienced in medicine and healthcare over the last 100 years, the question of how to implement change based on the latest research evidence inevitably comes to the fore. Simply presenting teachers with the evidence is clearly not enough. Firstly, as is the case in medicine and healthcare, that evidence is going to need translation into practice; secondly, particularly where that evidence is new (and may contradict previous beliefs about best practice), the buy-in of teachers will be an essential policy lever. Trying things out and learning from each other, then finding the evidence of what works in practice, is a powerful way of doing this, as this programme appears to demonstrate.



²⁰ Among other changes it has recently been announced that academies in England will no longer be able to offer unique salary scales but will now follow national pay agreements. They will also now need to follow the national curriculum.

Implications and recommendations for policymakers

- » Evidence-informed policymaking may be most effective when mechanisms for systematically allowing the local translation of evidence into policy delivery are identified in advance and planned for. The buy-in of teachers and schools should be seen as more than a nice addition and is central to effective policy delivery. Using the 'best schools to improve the rest' appears to be one of the most effective ways to do this.
- » Using the most effective practitioners to support those in need of improvement ensures that there is a continuing sense of autonomy and shared purpose. This may have particular benefits in high accountability systems such as those with regular high-stakes school inspections; publicly available inspection results drive parental choice in what schools they send their children to, and in turn increase the pressure to improve.
- » Finding ways for schools in need of improvement to learn from the effective practice of other high-performing schools enables buy-in as well as cost-effective policy delivery. Changing practice and making those changes stick is challenging – especially when new evidence emerges that is not in line with current accepted practice. Seeing new evidence in practice and having the support to apply it and adapt it to different contexts may be a powerful way of leveraging change.



References

- Arcia, G., Patrinos, H., Porta, E., & Macdonald, K. (2010). School autonomy and accountability in context: Application of benchmarking indicators in selected European countries. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Baars, S., Bernardes, E., Elwick, A., Malortie, A., McAleavy, T., McNerney, L., Menzies, L., & Riggall, A. (2014). Lessons from London schools: investigating the success. Reading: CfBT Education Trust.
- Barber, M., Mourshed, M., & Chijioke, C. (2010). How the world's most improved school systems keep getting better. McKinsey & Company. www.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10833-011-9175-9. Accessed December 12, 2024.
- Bennett, T. (2016). The school research lead. Reading: Education Development Trust.
- Bennett, T. (2017). Creating a culture: How school leaders can optimise behaviour. Department for Education.
- Department for Education. (2010). The importance of teaching: The schools white paper. London: Department for Education.
- Department for Education. (2020). Behaviour Hubs: Application guidance for prospective lead behaviour schools and lead behaviour multi-academy trusts. London: Department for Education. www.gov.uk. Accessed December 12, 2024.
- Earley, P. (2016). School autonomy and accountability in England: The rhetoric and the reality? In H. G. Kotthoff & S. Moutsios (Eds.), Education policies in Europe: Economy, citizenship, diversity (pp. 149–166). Waxmann Verlag.
- Education Endowment Foundation. (2024). Teaching and learning toolkit. www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit. Accessed December 12, 2024.
- Gibbons, S., Machin, S., & Silva, O. (2006/2007). The educational impact of parental choice and school competition. CentrePiece, Winter, 6–9.
- Grace, F. C., Meurk, C. S., Head, B. W., & et al. (2015). An analysis of policy levers used to implement mental health reform in Australia 1992–2012. BMC Health Services Research, 15, 479.
- Grebing, E. M., Edmunds, J. A., & Arshavsky, N. P. (2023). The relationship between buy-in and implementation: Measuring teacher buy-in to a high school reform effort. Evaluation and Program Planning, 97, 102224.
- Hattie, J. (2009). Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement. Routledge.
- Humphrey, N., Hennessey, A., Ashworth, E., Frearson, K., Black, L., Petersen, K., Wo, L., Panayiotou, M., Lendrum, A., Wigelsworth, M., Birchinnall, L., Squires, G., & Pampaka, M. (2018). Good behaviour game: Evaluation report and executive summary. London: Education Endowment Foundation.

- Hutchinson, G., Churches, R., & Vitai, D. (2008). Together we have made a difference. Consultant leaders to support leadership capacity in London's PRUs and EBD schools. Reading: CfBT Education Trust.
- Jerrim, J. (2024). The link between teacher buy-in and intentions to continue working in their current school, *British Education Research Journal*, 50(3), 1084-1105.
- McAleavy, T. (2016). Teaching as a research-engaged profession: Problems and possibilities. Reading: Education Development Trust.
- McAleavy, T. (2021). Transforming teacher-professional development: A case-study from England. Reading: Education Development Trust.
- O'Hare, L., Stark, P., Orr, K., Biggart, A., & Bonell, C. (2018). Positive action pilot report and executive summary. London: Education Endowment Foundation.
- Ofsted. (2023). Education inspection framework for September 2023. www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework/education-inspection-framework-for-september-2023. Accessed December 12, 2024.
- Reaves, R. V. (2013). The Barber doctrine: Accountability and autonomy for schools to close opportunity gaps. Brookings Institution. www.brookings.edu/articles/the-barber-doctrine-accountability-and-autonomy-for-schools-to-close-opportunity-gaps/. Accessed December 12, 2024.
- Roberts, M., Hsiao, W., Berman, P., & Reich, M. R. (2004). Getting health reform right: A guide to improving performance and equity. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Verger, A., Parcerisa, L., Pagès, M., & Camphuijsen, M. (2024). School autonomy with accountability as a cross-national policy model: Diverse adoptions, practices and impacts. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, 10(3), 167-179.
- West, A. (2023). School choice (and diversity) in the UK since 1944: Continuity, change, divergence and school selectivity. *Journal of School Choice*, 17(1), 15-34.
- World Bank Group Education Global Practice. (2013). SABRE: School autonomy and accountability – Smarter education systems for brighter futures. Washington, DC: World Bank.



To find out more about our research and how EDT is working to improve life chances through education and skills, please get in touch.

Keep in touch

 enquiries@edt.org

 [Education Development Trust](#)



edt.org

Highbridge House, 16-18 Duke Street, Reading, Berkshire RG1 4RU
T +44 (0) 118 902 1000
Printed with sustainably resourced materials.