Dept. of Educational Research *Yo Dunn*
Lancaster University

New Labour's evolving discourse on exclusion from school: mere political rhetoric or promoting educational inequality?

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y.dunn@lancaster.ac.uk

Dept. of Educational Research *Yo Dunn*
Lancaster University

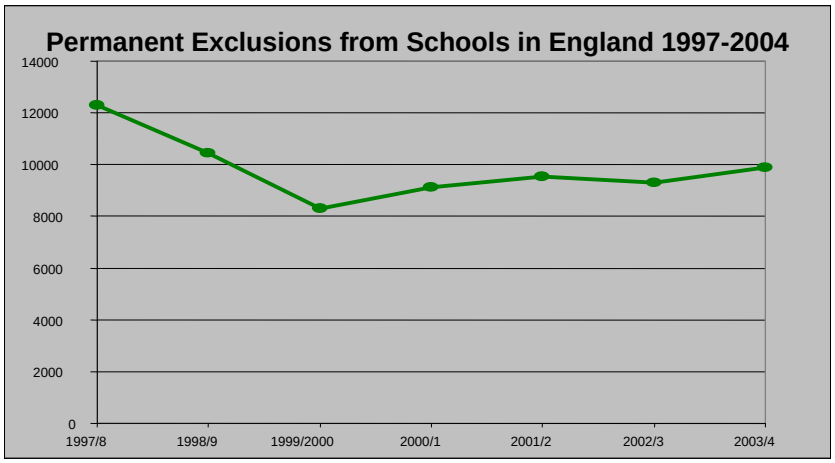
Introduction

Since Tony Blair's government first came to power in 1997, a number of writers have drawn attention to conflicts and tensions within New Labour discourses on issues of inclusion and exclusion. The discourse of social exclusion has been subjected to particular scrutiny. Ruth Levitas (1998) sees New Labour's version of social exclusion as embedded in three distinct and conflicting discourses, which she labels redistributionist (RED), social integrationist (SID) and moral underclass (MUD). RED refers to a traditional left-wing redistributionist discourse concerned with structural inequality and disadvantage. SID has the 'third way' priority of equal access to employment at its core, surrounded by concerns about educational standards. MUD, on the other hand, "centres on the moral and behavioural delinquency of the excluded themselves" (Levitas, 1998, p.7). Even as early as 1997, Levitas argues, New Labour's concept of social exclusion had moved away from RED towards a combination of SID and MUD.

More recently, and building directly on Levitas' analysis, Davies (2005) has argued that New Labour's view of social inclusion has become similar to membership of a social club in which the poor are required to pay a high price for entry, in personal responsibility and risk taking, whilst the rich are exempt from the obligations of membership. Both analyses view New Labour's version of social exclusion as deeply intertwined with neo-liberal economic theories and argue that this combination promotes social inequity.

Why study exclusion from school?

There appears to be scope for the investigation of these issues within the field of education policy generally and in the area of school discipline and exclusion from school in particular. Recent analyses of other education policies have suggested that inequality in the education system is increasing, for example, Taylor, Fitz and Gorard's (2005) recent analysis of the impact of increased secondary school diversity on socio-economic segregation. Issues of social justice and inequality are central to exclusion from school. Although the numbers who experience formal exclusion from school are small, it is well established that they are disproportionately members of marginalised groups: boys, black children, traveller children, children with special educational needs, looked-after children, poor children and other disadvantaged groups (Audit Commission, 1996; Daniels *et al.*, 2003; Department for Education and Skills, 2004b; Hayden, 1997; Jordan, 2001; OFSTED, 1996; Osler & Hill, 1999; Osler *et al.*, 2001; Social Exclusion Unit, 1998; Wilkin *et al.*, 2005; Wright *et al.*, 2000). While official statistics suggest rates of exclusion fell during Labour's first term in office, a steady rise has been occurring since that time (see fig. 1). Certainly there have been no further falls. Even according to the conservative official figures it is still the case that almost 10,000 children, the vast majority of whom are already marginalised in other ways, continue to be permanently excluded[1] from schools in England each year.



Data drawn from (Department for Education and Skills, 2004c, 2005a)

fig.1 The trend in recorded levels of permanent exclusion from school 1997 to 2004

[1] I have only included data on permanent exclusions since data on fixed term exclusions has only recently begun to be collected and no trend is yet apparent.

The contribution of Critical Discourse Analysis

This paper, therefore, asks what relationship there might be between these trends in the practice of exclusion and tensions in the discourses surrounding exclusion policy. In exploring this question, I have drawn heavily on Critical Discourse Analysis (hereafter CDA) and particularly Norman Fairclough's approach (Fairclough, 2001, 2003). Taylor (2004, p.435) has criticised the lack of "fine grained linguistic analysis" of education policy to date and argued that CDA is a potentially powerful tool for educational policy analysis because it has the capacity to show how language works in policy texts. Indeed recent work on the marketisation of education (Pearce, 2004) has demonstrated the effectiveness of CDA in revealing significant shifts in discourse over time.

I have previously argued, based on analysis of secondary sources, that a significant shift occurred in New Labour's discourse on exclusion from school between 1997 and 2004 (Dunn, 2004). The current study, therefore, strengthens my analysis of shifts in government discourse on exclusion by applying CDA to primary sources from the period in question.

Methodology

Chilton (2004, preface) has argued that

> "Rhetorical practice, in the form of public relations and 'spin', fuelled by the media explosion, is now more centre stage than ever."

Press notices – the most formal means of transmission of information from government to media – thus seemed an appropriate source of data for analysis. Press notices are frequently used by the current government to make policy announcements, sometimes issuing them before announcing new policies in the House of Commons in contravention of British political convention. Thus, press notices can be seen as of greater significance in communicating government policy under the current government than may have been the case under previous administrations. An additional factor in this choice was the brevity of such texts facilitating analysis by a sole researcher in the course of a limited project.

Three press releases were selected from roughly equal intervals across the period 1997-2005: "Morris Reveals Ambitious New Plan To Cut Truancy and Exclusion from School" dated 29th July 1998[2] (hereafter referred to as Text 1)(Department for Education and Skills, 1998b), "New Measures Will Tackle Violent Pupils And Parents And Help Promote Good Behaviour: Estelle Morris" dated 9th July 2001 (hereafter referred to as Text 2)(Department for Education and Skills, 2001) and "'Walking Tall' – More Support For Schools To Tackle Bad Behaviour" dated 18th November 2004 (hereafter referred to as Text 3)(Department for Education and Skills, 2004d). These particular press releases share the common strand of being released simultaneously with the annual 'Statistics on permanent exclusions in maintained schools'. Consequently they have some degree of equivalence and comparability.

I was initially attracted to Fairclough's (2001; 2003) framework for CDA as it is particularly accessible for non-linguists, using a minimum of discipline specific language and assuming little prior knowledge of semantics or grammar. Additionally, prior work using this framework (Fairclough, 2000; Taylor, 2004) has demonstrated its usefulness in critical analyses of neo-liberal discourses. In practice, I found this approach particularly applicable to the study of a limited number of texts in their social and political context by a sole researcher for at least four reasons. Firstly, I found Fairclough's focus on intertextuality[3], recontextualisation[4] and emphasis on locating texts within wider social events particularly well-matched to the study of social policy, its transmission to public and professional audiences via the media and its relationship to educational practice. Secondly, this approach foregrounds the critical nature of CDA, concerning itself with construal of difference, inequality,

[2] See Appendix 1 for the full text of all three Press Notices.
[3] Fairclough (2003) uses 'intertextuality' to refer to the presence within a text of elements of other texts (potentially containing other voices) which are related to in a variety of ways including being assumed, rejected or engaging in dialogue with. For example the current study discusses the intertextual relations between the Press Notices and statistics quoted in them.
[4] 'Recontextualisation' is the term Fairclough (2003) uses to describe how elements of a text are appropriated by and relocated in the context of other texts. In the current study the concept is used to describe the relationship between the Press Notices and subsequent newspaper articles.

justices and whose voices are being heard. Thirdly, the use of Hallidayan systemic functional linguistics[5] was helpful in illuminating relationships between grammatical and semantic structures and discourse. Fourthly, I found Fairclough's explicit consideration of relationships between discourse and value systems particularly well suited to the analysis of political discourse. Unfortunately, the constraints of space limit the analysis included here to just some sections of Fairclough's framework.

Social Events and Text Networks

Making explicit the relationships between texts and their social context is the key strength of CDA. Accordingly, an essential preliminary stage of analysis, before delving in to the texts themselves, was to consider the wider social events surrounding them. In particular their relationships to other texts on which they drew or which later drew on them. In order to explore these relationships I created what I term 'text network diagrams' for each of the three texts[6]. These draw on Fairclough's (2003) notions of 'genre chains'[7] and intertextuality in addition to examining the social events surrounding each text. A brief summary of these key events and connections for each text is provided here.

Setting the target – Text 1

Text 1 was the first policy announcement on exclusion after the 1997 general election. Its release was co-ordinated with a speech by Estelle Morris (then school standards minister) to the Professional Association of Teachers[8] and at least one Radio interview (BBC News, 1998) on the same subject. Its central focus was the announcement of a target to reduce exclusions and truancy by one third by 2002. Although not explicitly referenced in the Press Notice, the target was drawn from a report published some two months earlier by the Social Exclusion Unit (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998).

The immediate results of the Press Notice in terms of newspaper articles were three articles (and a minor reference) in the next day's newspapers. In line with the tone and emphasis of the press notice, all three articles gave prominence to wide variations in the levels of exclusion between different LEAs as evidence that overall levels were unnecessarily high. All three also characterise high levels of exclusion[9] as a source of 'shame' or 'bad'. While this interpretation is not explicitly present in Text 1, its presence in all three articles supports the conclusion that the overall effect of Text 1 created that impression.

In the longer term, explicit commitments given in Text 1 seem to have led to concrete attempts to implement the policy to reduce exclusions through changes to legislation and the allocation of resources. For example, Text 1 promises parenting orders which became law under s.8 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. It also plans an Autumn conference with LEAs to set individual targets. This took place and was accompanied by an announcement of additional resources to assist LEAs in meeting the target (Department for Education and Skills, 1998a).

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[5] According to O'Donnell (2005) "Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a theory of language centred around the notion of language function. While SFL accounts for the syntactic structure of language, it places the function of language as central (what language does, and how it does it), in preference to more structural approaches, which place the elements of language and their combinations as central. SFL starts at social context, and looks at how language both acts upon, and is constrained by, this social context. … SFL grew out of the work of JR Firth, a British linguist of the 30s, 40s, and 50s, but was mainly developed by his student MAK Halliday."

[6] Copies of the full diagrams are available from the author on request.

[7] Fairclough (2003) uses 'genre chains' to refer to the way in which different genres are linked together in the course of a regularly recurring social practice. For example, the transmission of policy announcements from White Paper, via Press Release to newspaper articles and TV news items. 'Genre chains' are seen as involving "systematic transformations from genre to genre" and changes in them are viewed as "a significant part of social change."
Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing Discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. (London, Routledge).

[8] Text no longer available but referred to in the Press Notice

[9] often inaccurately referred to in the press by its older label 'expulsion'

Policy tensions? – Text 2

Text 2 was issued shortly after New Labour's second election victory in 2001. Unlike the other two texts, it does not appear to have been based on a speech but to be an example of a Press Notice serving as an announcement of government policy (a common practice under New Labour as I indicated earlier). The lack of attempts to promote this particular policy announcement may contribute support to my contention that it contains a significant shift in policy to which the government did not wish to call attention.

Additional support for this view is found in text 2's lack of a sense of policy history. There is very little reference made to prior policy on exclusions/behaviour/discipline despite being issued at a time when the Labour government had been in power for some four years. The earlier target to reduce exclusions is obliquely referred to (text 2, line 26) (and claimed to have been achieved (text 2, line 27)) but there is no direct reference to the target nor to the source documents which set it, that is Text 1 and the Social Exclusion Unit report mentioned earlier (Department for Education and Skills, 1998b; Social Exclusion Unit, 1998). This seems surprising where a target has successfully been met, usually something a government would wish to highlight. In addition, detailed references to other texts commonly occur in the editor's notes of DfES Press Notices and the omission of explicit references to these texts may thus indicate a wish to discourage detailed comparison of current policy with previous policy. I will return to the issue of the relationship between the texts and statistics showing the levels of exclusion later.

Of the six newspaper articles on this topic which appeared the day after Text 2 was released, four focussed on the strengthening of support for head teachers to exclude, an aim which had been a prominent theme of Text 2. The other two, however, focussed on what was termed 'anger management for infants', an emphasis which it seems unlikely the (unidentified) author of the press release intended to promote. This split response does, however, suggest that there may be some discord within Text 2 between a discourse promoting exclusion and a conflicting discourse promoting a qualified form of inclusion, an issue which I will revisit later.

In the longer term the proposals set out in Text 2 also led to concrete policy implementation efforts. However, unlike those following the publication of text 1, the focus of some of these changes appears to be to support and promote the use of exclusion, a complete reversal of policy goals. For example, changes to the exclusion appeals process limiting the scope for appeals were put into place in new guidance issued in 2003. A consultation on extending the use of parenting orders was launched on the same day as Text 2 was issued and ultimately they were extended to cases of exclusion and truancy in s.18-24 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003.

Of those proposals which seemed more focussed on a form of inclusion some, such as those on early intervention, teacher training and inter-agency co-operation, appear to have achieved very limited practical effects on the ground. However they were published as promised in the 'Schools achieving success' White Paper later in 2001. A few proposals, however, did have a notable if probably unintended impact. Firstly, the proposal for admissions forums to become mandatory was followed up by a consultation exercise and ultimately implemented in the Education Act 2002. Secondly, the promise to introduce a requirement on LEAs to provide full-time education for excluded pupils was implemented in Guidance issued in 2002. Together these changes created pressure on schools and LEAs to place excluded pupils back into another school (since school places are considerably cheaper than alternative forms of education such as Pupil Referral Units) as quickly as possible following their exclusion. This pressure led to some unintended consequences. Many excluded children were placed with little planning where there was room. This tended to be in unpopular schools, primarily those with poor exam results and/or poor inspection outcomes and invariably located in deprived areas, a practice which, at least in perception, worsened the problems of already struggling schools.

Clear as MUD – Text 3

Text 3 was issued six months before the recent (2005) general election. It was released on the day the Charles Clarke (then education secretary) gave a speech to the National College for School Leadership's conference for new heads (National College for School Leadership, 2004) which was also accompanied by the requisite interview on Radio 4's today programme (BBC Radio 4, 2004). Text 3 makes a few specific references to existing education policies. For example, 'Foundation partnerships' (line 17) is drawn from the 5-year strategy for education published in July 2004 (Department for Education and Skills, 2004a). Generally, however, Text 3 appears to contain a mishmash of proposals

which appear to be more closely related to issues which had been prominent in the media over the preceding year than to the wider education policy context. For example, the issue of children carrying knives in school rose to prominence in the media following the publicity surrounding the murder of Luke Walmsley in November 2003. Similarly, during 2004 the NASUWT issued repeated press releases advising their members to refuse to take school trips creating regular press coverage of the issue.

Overall, both argumentation[10] analysis and consideration of the grammatical structure of text 3 indicate that it is considerably lacking in coherence and cohesiveness in comparison to the previous two texts. It seems likely that this lack of logic and clarity in the grammatical and argumentation structures reflects the timing of its publication. The imminent election may have created a need to 'mop up' issues likely to be raised during the campaign.

Given that it raises so many issues which had already been prominent in the media, it is perhaps unsurprising that text 3 generated the largest immediate response in terms of newspaper articles. A total of nine articles were published the following day, of which two focus on the proposal to change the admission arrangements for previously excluded pupils (Text 3, lines 14-16). A further six focus on knives and one covers both topics. It would be easy to dismiss this out of proportion emphasis on 'knife culture' by attributing it to the excesses of the press. However, as the rest of this analysis will demonstrate, Text 3 is itself deeply imbued with discourses of violence, authoritarianism and the demonisation of children.

It is more difficult to assess as yet whether the actual proposals contained in Text 3 will have a significant impact on the practice of discipline in schools. On new powers to search children for knives, the promise of co-ordination with the Home Office led to a Home Office Press Release on the issue in December 2004 (Home Office, 2004). However, the proposed legislation was dropped as a result of the general election. While the Queen's speech of 17th May 2005 included a promise that "A bill will be introduced to give police and local communities new powers to tackle knives, guns and alcohol-related violence." (HM The Queen, 2005) it is at present unclear whether this will include the promised powers for teachers to conduct searches[11]. A consultation process on proposals for a national investigation process into allegations against teachers was initiated on the same day as text 3 was issued and this was an issue during the election campaign. However the issue was not mentioned in the Queen's speech and as yet it is unclear whether any new process will be implemented.

However, some proposals contained in text 3 appear never to have been intended to result in any concrete measures. A good example is the "Statement of Expectations for pupil behaviour" which schools "would be asked to adopt" (line 24). This 'statement' has no legal force – it is not legislation or even departmental guidance. No mention is made of LEAs who form a layer of governance between schools and central government and would have to be involved in any real policy change. The 'statement' itself includes both re-statements of existing law (e.g. "no knives or other weapons should be brought onto school premises" (text 3, line 92) when this is already illegal) and extremely general and uncontroversial advice on behaviour management that is already common practice (e.g. "there should be consistently applied rewards for good behaviour and sanctions to deal with misbehaviour" (text 3, line 87-88)). Thus, the 'statement of expectations', whilst appearing to be a policy proposal and/or implementation, is in fact merely political rhetoric designed to give the impression that the government is being tough. Its only purpose seems to have been to produce favourable press coverage – an objective that was achieved. In most articles the 'statement', despite its lack of legal force, was recontextualised predictably as "New Rules for Schools" (e.g. Garner, 2004).

Distancing from the statistics

Finally, comparison of the social events surrounding the issuing of the Press Notices provided one other significant finding. Text 1 (1998) was issued as a co-publication with the Statistical First

[10] In taking this approach I have drawn on Fairclough's (2003, p.81-82) adaptation of Toulmin's (1958) argumentation analysis to break down the generic structure of the key arguments in texts.

[11] A recent Home Office press release on the Violent Crime Reduction Bill (Home Office, 2005) includes proposals to raise the minimum age for the purchase of knives to 18 but makes no mention of new search powers. Taken in combination with currently ongoing work of the 'expert group' set up to advise the DfES on new measures on behaviour and discipline in schools, it seems likely that these proposals have in fact been dropped, at least for the time being.

Release giving the exclusion statistics for the previous academic year. This suggests that the levels of exclusion were to be seen as significant and a cause for concern. By 2001 (text 2), there is a passing mention of the level of exclusions in the main text combined with a brief summary of the statistics in an Editor's note which directly refers the reader to the full Statistical Release. By 2004 (text 3) no mention of the level of exclusions is made in the main text at all and, while there is a brief summary in the Editor's notes, this time there is no reference at all to the full statistical release. I would suggest that this pattern provides a clear, if probably unconscious, signal to the reader that the government is becoming less concerned about the level of exclusion – perhaps tacitly providing permission to schools for the exclusion rate to rise once again.

Discourses, Assumptions and Representations

Turning to the analysis of the texts themselves, there are further indications of significant shifts in the dominant discourses, underlying assumptions and ways in which different groups of social actors are represented. I focussed on examining the changing representations of parents and children.

Parents

Some degree of authoritarianism or, as Levitas (1998) terms it, moral underclass discourse has been evident in New Labour's discourse on parents since the advent of 'New' Labour (Dunn, 2004). Argumentation analysis (Fairclough, 2003, p. 81-83) and consideration of the value assumptions (Fairclough, 2003, p.55-61) being made in each of the texts reveals considerable stability over time in the assumptions being made about parenting (see fig. 2). Texts 1 and 2 assume (a) that it is a legitimate role of the state to intervene in and regulate relations between parents and children and (b) that regulating parenting will change the behaviour of children. Text 3 includes only one mention of parents (as potential aggressors). However it seems likely that this is due to the general lack of coherence of text 3 rather than a shift in value assumptions since a more recent (post-election) Press Notice on this topic returns to the familiar 'parental responsibility' theme (Department for Education and Skills, 2005b).

Text 1 (1998)	Text 2 (2001)	DfES (2005)
"A key parental responsibility is that of ensuring that children attend school regularly and turn up on time." (lines 12-13)	"I propose to extend Parenting Orders so that they can be used to make parents take responsibility for the behaviour of their children in school." (lines 46 - 47)	"what more could be done to ensure that all parents take responsibility for their children's behaviour in school?"

fig.2 The stability over time of the discourse of parental responsibility

There is, however, some subtle hardening of this discourse into demonisation of a particular group of parents over time. For example, text 1 from 1997 contains the clauses "Rights go hand in hand with responsibilities." (Text 1, line 11) and "Parents who need help with parenting will get it." (Text 1, lines 16-17). While these are paternalistic and interventionist, the authoritarian overtones of the discourse are less pronounced than is the case later. This is borne out by the terms co-located[12] with 'parents'. In Text 1, 50% of references to 'parents' are co-located[13] with 'responsibilities' and the remainder relate to parenting orders. In Text 2, while 'responsibilities' is still a common association (38%), 62% of references to 'parents' are now co-located with 'violence' or 'misbehaviour'. In text 3, while there is just a single reference to 'parents', it is with the adjective 'aggressive'.

[12] Fairclough (2003) uses 'collocation' to refer to patterns in which words occur in proximity to each other in a frequency greater than that of alternative descriptors.

[13] The use of co-location data must be treated with caution since the most reliable analyses of co-located terms (e.g. Fairclough (2000)) are generally computerised analyses of a large corpus. However given that the conclusions are supported by other sections of the analysis and that the shift between 1997 and 2001 is so dramatic – I believe it is justified to draw conclusions from the co-locations here despite the very small number of occurrences of each term.

At the same time, this particular group of parents – the 'irresponsible' – are also progressively disempowered. Analysis of the ways in which social actors are represented in the texts (fig. 6 in Appendix 2) indicates that while parents are classified as a generic group in 1997, they are further passivated in 2001. By 2005, it is schools that have rights and the disempowerment of parents (that is of those parents whose children are seen as misbehaving) is complete:

> "schools have every right to expect parents' full support , not challenge, when it comes to discipline – at home and in school." (Department for Education and Skills, 2005b).

Children

The representations of, assumptions about, and discourses around children have undergone an even larger shift. A substantial shift in values is apparent in assumptions made about the fundamental relationship between schools and children as expressed through the view taken of the consequences of exclusion (see fig. 3).

Text 1 (1998)	Text 2 (2001)	Text 3 (2004)
Being in school will "give thousands of children a better chance in life." (lines 4 – 5)	Excluding some children is in "the interests of the school community" (lines 11 – 12)	Limiting readmission of excluded pupils is a "means to tackle bad behaviour and raise standards in our schools" (lines 57-58)

fig.3 Changes over time in the view taken of the consequences of exclusion

This shift is reflected in the terms co-located with the words 'children' and 'pupils'. When these terms are broadly grouped into 'positive', 'neutral' and 'negative' associations, the shift from 1997 to 2001 becomes very apparent (see fig. 4).

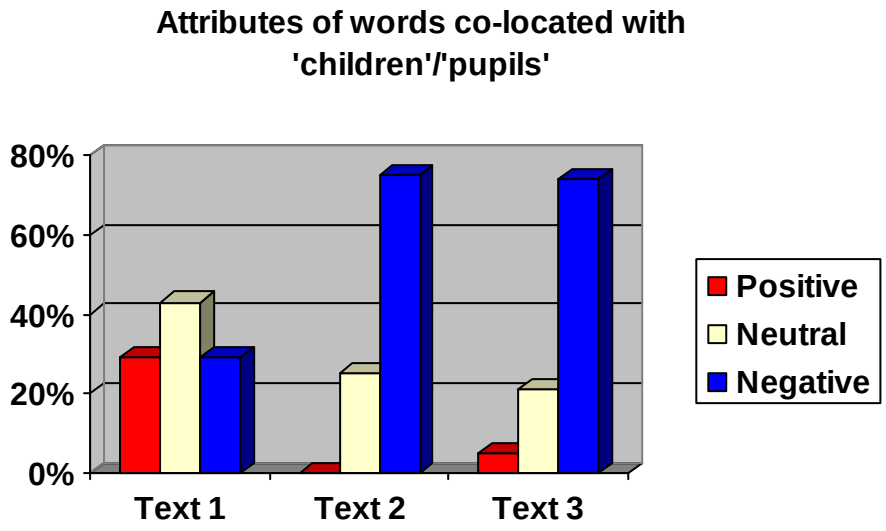

fig. 4 The change in the types of words co-located with 'children' and 'pupils'

When considered in terms of 'in-groups' and 'out-groups' (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p.56) the representation of 'children' makes a clear switch as children are increasingly demonised. Text 1 (1998) had been concerned that geographical inequalities in the use of exclusion were unfairly keeping children out of education (lines 18-20). However by text 2 (2001) this concern about the treatment of children has been replaced by a significant discourse of violence in which children are the perpetrators. It emerges in text 2 (2001) and dominates by text 3 (2004).

The predominately paratactic[14] grammatical relations between clauses in all three texts serve to background difference by equating clauses, becoming what Fairclough (2003) terms 'hortatory report'. That is:

> "descriptions with a covert prescriptive intent, aimed at getting people to act in certain ways on the basis of representations of what is." (Fairclough, 2003, p.96).

However, in texts 2 and 3 these features are taken to extremes as classroom disruption is continually equated with violence. For example, the paratactic structure of the phrase "violent or persistently disruptive pupils" (text 2, line 32) implies equivalence. Equating pupils who persistently disrupt classes with those who commit violent acts suggests that violence is much more common than is actually the case and fuels a moral panic. Later in text 2 parataxis is again used to imply that 'anti-social behaviour', 'harassment of staff or pupils', 'trespass', 'assault' and 'public disorder' are equivalent by including them as items in a list (Text 2, lines 54-55)(Fairclough, 2000, p.161-162). All of the above behaviours, including disruption, are being grouped together and characterised by the headline as meaning the same as "violent pupils" (text 2, line 1).

By text 3, the seriousness of the behaviours under discussion is significantly increased as the concern becomes "violent offences such as carrying an offensive weapon and serious actual or threatened violence against another pupils or a member of staff." (Text 3, lines 62-63). However, the use of paratactic relations between clauses, particularly lists, continues to equate 'violent offences' with the 'unacceptable' standards of behaviour found by Ofsted in a minority of schools, where in fact these mostly consist of low-level classroom disruption.

What does remain consistent over time, however, is the passivation and disempowerment of children. Like parents, children are consistently classified as a generic group. This limits their ability to resist the increasing demonisation described above. In Fairclough's (2003, p.201) words

> "Generic representations contribute to the hegemonic universalization of a particular representation"

This process is assisted in texts 2 and 3 (that is post-2001) by the consistent use of the word 'behaviour' without an associated person. Thus "promote good behaviour" (Text 2, line 15) and "tackling poor behaviour" (text 3, line 40) are used without an explicit statement of whose behaviour is being talked about. I would suggest that this depersonalised construction is a grammatical metaphor[15] (Fairclough, 2003) which makes it easier to demonise the children whose 'behaviour' is implicitly being referred to. This lack of agency is necessary because children as a group generally provoke caring and protective responses. Very many of the readers (voters!) of the text (and especially its recontextualisation in newspaper articles) will be parents and will have children. If the 'behaviour' was personalised to 'tackle children's poor behaviour' with 'children' still represented as a generic group it would risk the reader identifying their own children with the groups being demonised. Thus the depersonalisation reduces the risk that the reader will feel the demonisation is directed at their children and increases the ability of the reader to see the children being demonised as 'other'.

Problems and Solutions: Promoting inequality?

Having established that these three press notices progressively shift 'other' children and 'irresponsible' parents into more demonised identities over time, the question now arises as to whether

[14] Grammatical distinctions between the ways in which clauses are related to each other can be made in terms of parataxis, hypotaxis and embedded clauses. Parataxis describes clauses which are in a relation of equivalence, often joined by a conjunction such as 'and' or included as elements in a list. Hypotaxis describes clauses in a subordinate relationship and embedding describes a clause which functions as an element of another clause. According to Fairclough (2003) paratactic relations serve to background differences by making entities appear equivalent.

[15] Fairclough (2003) makes use of Halliday (1994)'s extension of the concept of metaphor to grammar. He argues that a common example of this is that of processes being represented as entities. Thus, I am arguing that, in texts 2 and 3, a child behaving in a certain way (a process) is being metaphorically represented as the (depersonalised) entity 'behaviour'.

this shift is 'merely' rhetorical or whether it actually promotes inequality by encouraging the practice of exclusion.

In all three texts semantic relations[16] between longer sections of text are predominantly arranged in the 'problem → solution' formulation, which Fairclough (2003, p.91) has identified as pervasive in policy texts. However there is a significant shift between the texts in what and who are identified as the 'problem' and what is proposed as the 'solution'. In 1998 (text 1), while parental irresponsibility is identified as a problem, the solution is seen as the provision of help for parents, albeit with some compulsion. The main focus, however, is on the problem of exclusion from school **as absence from education**. The solution is seen as keeping children in school. The chosen means to implement this solution is to set a target to reduce exclusions.

By 2001 (text 2), the problems and solutions are in greater conflict. On the one hand the problem of 'violent pupils' is paired with the 'solution' of making it more difficult to win an appeal against exclusion and more parenting orders. A slightly more rehabilitative focus is evident in the limited policy goal of "putting disruptive pupils back on track" (Text 2, line 60) but this is seen as achievable through exclusionary measures aimed at individual children such as increasing places in Learning Support Units and Pupil Referral Units. Similarly, the solution to a problem identified as 'poor behaviour' (Text 2, line 23) is seen as psycho-social interventions targeting individual children: "it is about helping them get control of their emotions" (Text 2, line 86 – 87).

In the 2004 text (text 3) it is extremely clear that the problem is being identified as 'bad behaviour'. However there is ambivalence over whether it is the behaviour of parents or pupils which is being addressed. In particular, the clarity which is present in text 2 about the possibility of either parent or pupil being an innocent party (Text 2, line 55) is absent here. As a consequence of the overall lack of coherence in Text 3 (discussed earlier) the 'solution' being proposed is vague and unfocussed, particularly in relation to responsibility. For example the construction: "In every local area, there should be … arrangements to offer …" (Text 3, line 97, 100) begs the questions – What arrangements? Who is responsible? When should it be done? The only clear 'solution' proposed is to give head teachers the power to search pupils suspected of carrying knives.

These shifting concepts of 'problem' and 'solution' are clarified by colour coding the texts in terms of Levitas'(1998) three discourses of social exclusion (see fig. 5). Thus using the framework I outlined at the beginning of this paper as an evaluative tool to illustrate the value commitments of the author(s) (Fairclough, 2003, p.173). This powerfully illustrates the shift. In 1998, all three discourses are visible but redistributive concerns predominate, especially at the all important beginning and end of the text. The reason for text 2's (2001) conflicted problems and solutions now becomes apparent as a schism between social integrationist discourse on the one hand and moral underclass discourse on the other. Finally, the rise of neo-conservative moral underclass discourse is clear as by 2004 it virtually eclipses alternative perspectives.

Conclusion

Fairclough (2001) recommends asking whether the social order in some sense 'needs' the problem under consideration. In the case of exclusion from school, New Labour's rhetoric is now constructing the 'problem' as one of bad behaviour by individual children requiring a 'solution' of discipline and zero tolerance. This focus avoids questions about whether something might be wrong with the structures of schooling if schools are unable to meet the needs of so many children. Ultimately it avoids discussion of the reality that embracing neo-liberal economics requires that some children must fail educationally in order to become the low paid, flexible workers that efficient market economies depend on. Thus, I would argue the recent shift in New Labour's rhetoric on exclusion from school from redistributive concerns about equal access to schooling to neo-conservative victim-blaming (Blyth & Milner, 1994) has its roots in the more fundamental shift from redistributive to neo-liberal economic policies.

The clear shift which has occurred in New Labour's discourse on exclusion from school cannot help but influence the practice of exclusion. Just as the anti-exclusion, target setting rhetoric of 1998 led to a (recorded) fall in exclusions, so it seems inevitable that the rise of a neo-conservative

[16] that is relations of meaning, rather than grammatical relations.

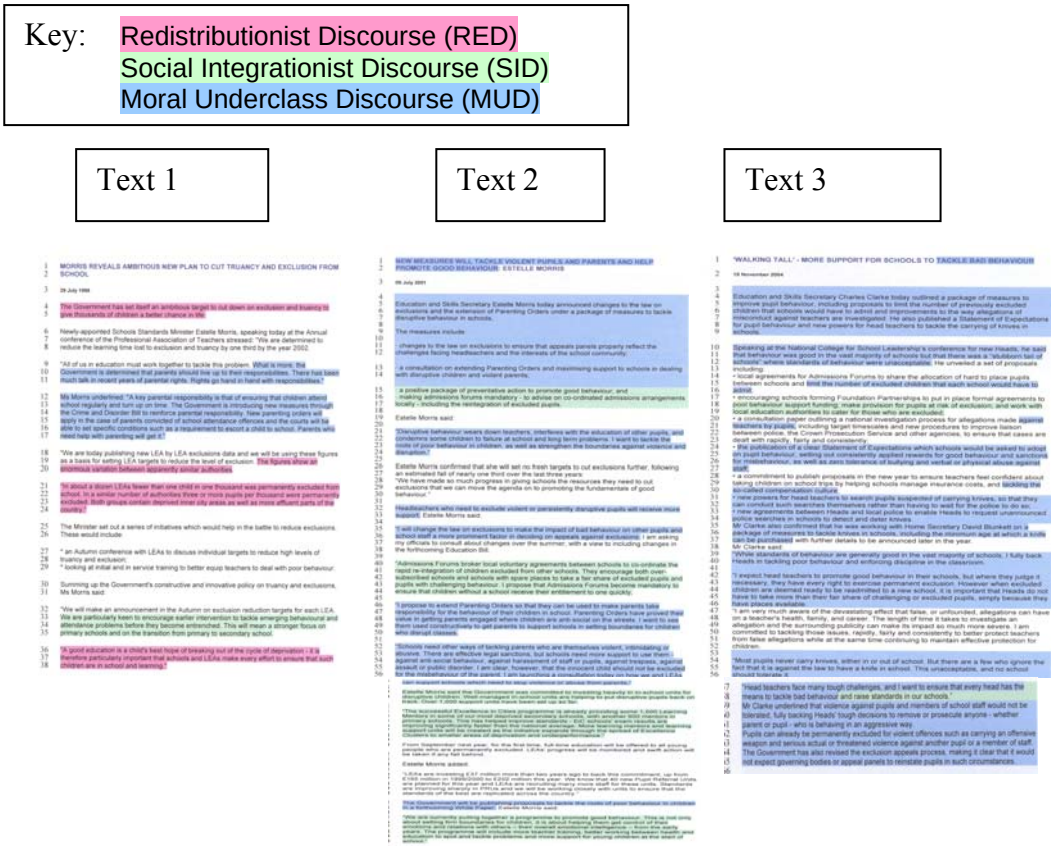

fig.5 The Press Releases colour coded in terms of Levitas' (1998) three discourses of social exclusion

authoritarian discourse on school discipline will continue to encourage its use. Whilst marginalised groups remain so over-represented amongst the excluded, rising exclusions will inevitably promote educational inequality.

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Appendix 1: The 3 Press Notices

MORRIS REVEALS AMBITIOUS NEW PLAN TO CUT TRUANCY AND EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOL

29 July 1998

The Government has set itself an ambitious target to cut down on exclusion and truancy to give thousands of children a better chance in life.

Newly-appointed Schools Standards Minister Estelle Morris, speaking today at the Annual conference of the Professional Association of Teachers stressed: "We are determined to reduce the learning time lost to exclusion and truancy by one third by the year 2002.

"All of us in education must work together to tackle this problem. What is more, the Government is determined that parents should live up to their responsibilities. There has been much talk in recent years of parental rights. Rights go hand in hand with responsibilities."

Ms Morris underlined: "A key parental responsibility is that of ensuring that children attend school regularly and turn up on time. The Government is introducing new measures through the Crime and Disorder Bill to reinforce parental responsibility. New parenting orders will apply in the case of parents convicted of school attendance offences and the courts will be able to set specific conditions such as a requirement to escort a child to school. Parents who need help with parenting will get it."

"We are today publishing new LEA by LEA exclusions data and we will be using these figures as a basis for setting LEA targets to reduce the level of exclusion. The figures show an enormous variation between apparently similar authorities.

"In about a dozen LEAs fewer than one child in one thousand was permanently excluded from school. In a similar number of authorities three or more pupils per thousand were permanently excluded. Both groups contain deprived inner city areas as well as more affluent parts of the country."

The Minister set out a series of initiatives which would help in the battle to reduce exclusions. These would include:

* an Autumn conference with LEAs to discuss individual targets to reduce high levels of truancy and exclusion;
* looking at initial and in service training to better equip teachers to deal with poor behaviour.

Summing up the Government's constructive and innovative policy on truancy and exclusions, Ms Morris said:

"We will make an announcement in the Autumn on exclusion reduction targets for each LEA. We are particularly keen to encourage earlier intervention to tackle emerging behavioural and attendance problems before they become entrenched. This will mean a stronger focus on primary schools and on the transition from primary to secondary school.

"A good education is a child's best hope of breaking out of the cycle of deprivation - it is therefore particularly important that schools and LEAs make every effort to ensure that such children are in school and learning."

Editor's Notes
This press notice relates to England
1. The statistics on permanent exclusions in maintained primary, secondary and special schools between 1994 and 1997 are attached.

NEW MEASURES WILL TACKLE VIOLENT PUPILS AND PARENTS AND HELP PROMOTE GOOD BEHAVIOUR: ESTELLE MORRIS

09 July 2001

Education and Skills Secretary Estelle Morris today announced changes to the law on exclusions and the extension of Parenting Orders under a package of measures to tackle disruptive behaviour in schools.

The measures include:

· changes to the law on exclusions to ensure that appeals panels properly reflect the challenges facing headteachers and the interests of the school community;

· a consultation on extending Parenting Orders and maximising support to schools in dealing with disruptive children and violent parents;
· a positive package of preventative action to promote good behaviour; and
· making admissions forums mandatory - to advise on co-ordinated admissions arrangements locally - including the reintegration of excluded pupils.

Estelle Morris said:

“Disruptive behaviour wears down teachers, interferes with the education of other pupils, and condemns some children to failure at school and long term problems. I want to tackle the roots of poor behaviour in children, as well as strengthen the boundaries against violence and disruption.”

Estelle Morris confirmed that she will set no fresh targets to cut exclusions further, following an estimated fall of nearly one third over the last three years:
“We have made so much progress in giving schools the resources they need to cut exclusions that we can move the agenda on to promoting the fundamentals of good behaviour.”

Headteachers who need to exclude violent or persistently disruptive pupils will receive more support. Estelle Morris said:

“I will change the law on exclusions to make the impact of bad behaviour on other pupils and school staff a more prominent factor in deciding on appeals against exclusions. I am asking my officials to consult about changes over the summer, with a view to including changes in the forthcoming Education Bill.

“Admissions Forums broker local voluntary agreements between schools to co-ordinate the rapid re-integration of children excluded from other schools. They encourage both over-subscribed schools and schools with spare places to take a fair share of excluded pupils and pupils with challenging behaviour. I propose that Admissions Forums become mandatory to ensure that children without a school receive their entitlement to one quickly.

“I propose to extend Parenting Orders so that they can be used to make parents take responsibility for the behaviour of their children in school. Parenting Orders have proved their value in getting parents engaged where children are anti-social on the streets. I want to see them used constructively to get parents to support schools in setting boundaries for children who disrupt classes.

“Schools need other ways of tackling parents who are themselves violent, intimidating or abusive. There are effective legal sanctions, but schools need more support to use them - against anti-social behaviour, against harassment of staff or pupils, against trespass, against assault or public disorder. I am clear, however, that the innocent child should not be excluded for the misbehaviour of the parent. I am launching a consultation today on how we and LEAs can support schools which need to stop violence or abuse from parents.“

Estelle Morris said the Government was committed to investing heavily in in-school units for disruptive children. Well-managed in-school units are helping to put disruptive pupils back on track. Over 1,000 support units have been set up so far.

"The successful Excellence in Cities programme is already providing some 1,500 Learning Mentors in some of our most deprived secondary schools, with another 900 mentors in primary schools. This has helped improve standards - EiC schools' exam results are improving significantly faster than the national average. More learning mentors and learning support units will be created as the initiative expands through the spread of Excellence Clusters to smaller areas of deprivation and underperformance."

From September next year, for the first time, full-time education will be offered to all young people who are permanently excluded. LEAs' progress will be monitored and swift action will be taken if any fall behind.

Estelle Morris added:

"LEAs are investing £37 million more than two years ago to back this commitment, up from £165 million in 1999/2000 to £202 million this year. We know that 40 new Pupil Referral Units are planned for this year and LEAs are recruiting many more staff for these units. Standards are improving sharply in PRUs and we will be working closely with units to ensure that the standards of the best are replicated across the country."

The Government will be publishing proposals to tackle the roots of poor behaviour in children in a forthcoming White Paper. Estelle Morris said:

"We are currently pulling together a programme to promote good behaviour. This is not only about setting firm boundaries for children, it is about helping them get control of their emotions and relations with others – their overall emotional intelligence – from the early years. The programme will include more teacher training, better working between health and education to spot and tackle problems and more support for young children at the start of school."

Editor's Notes
This press notice relates to England

1. The changes proposed by the Secretary of State are to the legislation governing exclusion appeals (School Standards and Framework Act 1998, section 67 and Schedule 18 as amended) and to the guidance on exclusions given by her from time to time (currently in Circular 10/99 as amended). They are:
· to introduce a requirement for the appeal panel to balance the interests of the excluded pupil against the interests of all the other members of the school community;
· to make clear in legislation that the remit of the exclusions panel consists of giving a fresh rehearing to the facts of the case. It is proposed to legislate that that a full and fair hearing before the panel cures any defects in prior procedure. This will avoid the possibility of appeals panels reinstating pupils on a 'technicality' (or a series of 'technicalities') relating to prior procedure, when on the merits of the case the exclusion was justified; and
· to require that a majority of members of appeals panels have direct experience of school management. The current guidance within Circular 10/99 only advises that a teacher may sit on the panel. The proposed change goes further than this. The panel should have a majority of independent people with direct experience of school management in education, (for example serving or former headteachers, members of a school management team.).
2. Parenting Orders are available under s8 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. They impose requirements on parents to help them bring up their child in a way that minimises anti-social or offending behaviour. They have been nationally available since June 2000. They are made by criminal courts, magistrates courts acting in civil cases, and family proceedings courts. The Order may include attendance at counselling or guidance sessions to help a parent cope better with a child's challenging behaviour, and to help set and enforce sensible boundaries of discipline. It may also include other requirements. For example parents may be required to

ensure their child attends school or a homework club, avoids contact with disruptive children, avoids certain areas, is home at night or attends anger management or similar courses.
3. The forthcoming White Paper on secondary schools will detail a programme of work to support schools in setting high expectations of behaviour and strengthening the emotional intelligence of pupils. The programme will be developed to meet four goals: I) early intervention to promote good behaviour and to help young children who have problems with the basics of concentrating and co-operating; ii) good training for teachers, learning support assistants and all adults in schools in managing behaviour, excellent classroom practice and working with parents and other services; iii) encouragement for parents to take responsibility for their children's behaviour; and iv) better co-operation between school and other services – including the health service.
4. The statutory Code of Practice on School Admissions, published in April 1999, says that local education authorities, foundation schools and voluntary aided schools should set up local Admissions Forums. Admission Forums broker voluntary agreements locally on school admission arrangements, between different admission authorities and between interested parties. In particular, they can play a central role in protecting the interests of vulnerable groups, such as children who have special educational needs and groups of children who, because of their circumstances, may be seeking a school place outside the normal admission round when available places have already been allocated.They provide the means for all key local partners involved in making admissions arrangements to ensure that the arrangements meet the best interests of parents, and that schools take their fair share of pupils who have to move for whatever reason. The proposal to make them mandatory will be subject to consultation.

5. The Targeted Standards Fund grant, to tackle poor behaviour, is up from £17 million in 1997 to £174 million this year. An additional £11.25 million is available to secondary schools to enable electronic registration to be installed. From April 2001 the Children's Fund and Connexions Service will provide further money making at least £600 million over the next 3 years to support a range of initiatives for young people, including tackling truancy and exclusion.
6.There are now over 300 Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). Since 1997 the number of teaching and support staff at PRUs has increased by nearly 600 and the number of pupil places by over 1,000. A third of PRUs already offer full-time provision and from September this year two -thirds of local authorities will be making full-time provision for excluded secondary pupils. Ofsted's latest annual report indicated sharply improving standards at PRUs.
7. Official figures show that there has been a drop in annual permanent exclusions from 10,400 in 1998/99 to an estimated 8,600 in 1999/2000 – an 18 per cent decrease and nearly a third less than the peak of 12,700 in 1996/97. The Government's target for 2002 is 8,400. Final figures are due out in a DfES Statistical First Release on 19 July. The Secretary of State has said that she is satisfied that the level of permanent exclusions reached is sustainable and has confirmed that no fresh targets will be set.

CLICK HERE FOR CONSULTATION ON EXTENDING THE USE OF PARENTING ORDERS

Contact Details
Public enquiries: 0870 000 2288, info@dfee.gov.uk

Press Notice 2001/0300

'WALKING TALL' - MORE SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS TO TACKLE BAD BEHAVIOUR

18 November 2004

Education and Skills Secretary Charles Clarke today outlined a package of measures to improve pupil behaviour, including proposals to limit the number of previously excluded children that schools would have to admit and improvements to the way allegations of misconduct against teachers are investigated. He also published a Statement of Expectations for pupil behaviour and new powers for head teachers to tackle the carrying of knives in schools.

Speaking at the National College for School Leadership's conference for new Heads, he said that behaviour was good in the vast majority of schools but that there was a "stubborn tail of schools" where standards of behaviour were unacceptable. He unveiled a set of proposals including:

• local agreements for Admissions Forums to share the allocation of hard to place pupils between schools and limit the number of excluded children that each school would have to admit;

• encouraging schools forming Foundation Partnerships to put in place formal agreements to pool behaviour support funding; make provision for pupils at risk of exclusion; and work with local education authorities to cater for those who are excluded;

• a consultation paper outlining a national investigation process for allegations made against teachers by pupils, including target timescales and new procedures to improve liaison between police, the Crown Prosecution Service and other agencies, to ensure that cases are dealt with rapidly, fairly and consistently;

• the publication of a clear Statement of Expectations which schools would be asked to adopt on pupil behaviour, setting out consistently applied rewards for good behaviour and sanctions for misbehaviour, as well as zero tolerance of bullying and verbal or physical abuse against staff;

• a commitment to publish proposals in the new year to ensure teachers feel confident about taking children on school trips by helping schools manage insurance costs, and tackling the so-called compensation culture;

• new powers for head teachers to search pupils suspected of carrying knives, so that they can conduct such searches themselves rather than having to wait for the police to do so;

• new agreements between Heads and local police to enable Heads to request unannounced police searches in schools to detect and deter knives.

Mr Clarke also confirmed that he was working with Home Secretary David Blunkett on a package of measures to tackle knives in schools, including the minimum age at which a knife can be purchased with further details to be announced later in the year.

Mr Clarke said:

"While standards of behaviour are generally good in the vast majority of schools, I fully back Heads in tackling poor behaviour and enforcing discipline in the classroom.

"I expect head teachers to promote good behaviour in their schools, but where they judge it necessary, they have every right to exercise permanent exclusion. However when excluded children are deemed ready to be readmitted to a new school, it is important that Heads do not have to take more than their fair share of challenging or excluded pupils, simply because they have places available.

"I am very much aware of the devastating effect that false, or unfounded, allegations can have on a teacher's health, family, and career. The length of time it takes to investigate an allegation and the surrounding publicity can make its impact so much more severe. I am committed to tackling those issues, rapidly, fairly and consistently to better protect teachers from false allegations while at the same time continuing to maintain effective protection for children.

"Most pupils never carry knives, either in or out of school. But there are a few who ignore the fact that it is against the law to have a knife in school. This unacceptable, and no school should tolerate it.

"Head teachers face many tough challenges, and I want to ensure that every head has the means to tackle bad behaviour and raise standards in our schools."
Mr Clarke underlined that violence against pupils and members of school staff would not be tolerated, fully backing Heads' tough decisions to remove or prosecute anyone - whether parent or pupil - who is behaving in an aggressive way.
Pupils can already be permanently excluded for violent offences such as carrying an offensive weapon and serious actual or threatened violence against another pupil or a member of staff. The Government has also revised the exclusion appeals process, making it clear that it would not expect governing bodies or appeal panels to reinstate pupils in such circumstances.

Editor's Notes
This press notice relates to 'England'

1. The Department for Education and Skills has been closely examining the issue of allegations of misconduct with the principal professional associations. Key concerns include the possibility of being falsely and maliciously accused, the length of time it can take to resolve cases, and resulting publicity. The proposals announced today, published at http://www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations/index.cfm will be taken forward in consultation with the professional associations, police and Crown Prosecution Service to establish:

• local panels for schools to use to carry out independent disciplinary investigations;
• target timescales for dealing with incidents speedily – most of them in days rather than weeks or months;
• new procedures to aid better decision making built on close cooperation between agencies;
• guidance from ACPO to the police on observing anonymity until a charge is made;
• better and quicker information sharing with police; and,
• closer liaison between police and the Crown Prosecution Service on criminal investigations.

2. The statement of expectations which schools would be asked to adopt on pupil behaviour is as follows:
In every primary and secondary school:
• there should be clear standards and expectations set out in the school's behaviour policy, agreed and understood by pupils, parents and staff;
• there should be consistently applied rewards for good behaviour and sanctions to deal with misbehaviour;
• there should be no tolerance of bullying, and there should be protection and counselling for victims;
• there should be no tolerance of verbal or physical abuse against staff;
• no knives or other weapons should be brought onto school premises;
• schools should have a readily available range of alternative facilities within schools and outside to deal with persistently disruptive pupils;
• the school's duty is to ensure that, if pupils are off site at lunchtime, they are not causing trouble to the local community
In every local area, there should be:
• co-ordinated specialist support for schools, offering early intervention for pupils with more severe behaviour problems;
• arrangements to offer alternative education packages (eg PRUs, Skillforce) for those pupils for whom a wholly school-based education is inappropriate or who would benefit from a period out of school;
• incentives for groups of schools working together to develop high quality alternative provision for their pupils;
• arrangements to ensure that there is adequate support for schools receiving challenging pupils and that no school should be required to take more than its fair share of such admissions;
• a local agreement to ensure that all schools are supported by and are contributing to this overall package.
Across the system, there will be:
• inspection through Ofsted to ensure schools' and Local Authorities' provision matches the standard of the best.

3. The measures announced today will build on the Government's sustained strategy to improve pupil behaviour in schools and ensure that the unruly or violent behaviour of a

minority of pupils does not disrupt the education of the vast majority of pupils who want to learn and succeed at school in a safe environment.
• 10,000 learning mentors are now helping individual pupils overcome behavioural problems in schools;
• 17,000 children at risk of exclusion are receiving intensive support from more than 100 specialist Behaviour Education Support Teams;
• 370 police officers under the Safer Schools Partnership are now working with pupils, teachers and the wider community to keep children in school and out of trouble;
• 450 specialist Pupil Referral Units are providing places out of school for unruly pupils where they can continue their curriculum without disrupting the classroom.
4. Official figures show that pupil behaviour is improving in schools, with the number of permanent exclusions down almost 25% on their 1996/97 peak of 12,700. And appeals are also down - of the 7.5 million pupils in England, only 209 pupils were reinstated last year as the result of a decision by an appeals panel.

Contact Details
Public Enquiries 0870 000 2288, info@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

Press Notice 2004/0196

Appendix 2: Figure 6

Representations of Social Actors

			Classified, not named		Participant, Activated	
	Absent	Backgrounded	Generic	Passivated	Named	Not named
Text 1		Teachers Schools	Parents Children LEAs	Children	The Minister Estelle Morris The Government	
Text 2		LEAs Teachers	Teachers Headteachers Schools Other pupils Children	Teachers Schools Other pupils Excluded/disruptive pupils Parents (mostly)	Estelle Morris	Headteachers
Text 3	LEAs		Excluded Children Schools Teachers	Excluded Children Schools Teachers Police/CPS Children/Pupils (mostly)	Charles Clarke David Blunkett The Government	Headteachers (under governmental gaze) Children/Pupils (occasionally, as negative stereotypes)

fig. 6 Variations in the ways in which different groups of social actors are represented in the texts