REPORT

TO THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

Niamh Bhreathnach, T.D.

on

DISCIPLINE IN SCHOOLS

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INTRODUCTION

This Report, on discipline in schools, has been commissioned by the Minister for Education, Niamh Bhreathnach, T.D. In commissioning the work, the Minister was reflecting, not only her own concerns, but was responding to concerns expressed to her by interested parties about the growing evidence of disruption in many schools. The theme under consideration is neither new nor peculiar to Ireland. Many international studies testify to the importance of the topic in other cultures. There is no doubt that discipline has been an issue of concern throughout the history of formal schooling (McManus, 1996). Today the issue is one of major public concern. At one level, discipline in school is linked to the creation of an orderly environment that permits teaching and learning to occur, but, at another more fundamental level, it is centrally linked into issues of social cohesion, justice and equality.

The education system can play a powerful role in countering social exclusion. Where a significant minority becomes excluded, alienated, anti-social or apathetic, there develops a sector of our population which becomes socially and economically marginalised. Students who present with persistent difficulties in school are at risk of school failure and school exclusion. They are then further at risk of joining the socially excluded and marginalised, with all the ramifications and implications that such an outcome holds for society and policy-makers alike. It is with this realisation in mind that this inquiry has been undertaken. It is hoped that a consideration of the issues will increase our understanding of the complexities that are involved, and will point up the way to alleviating some of the current difficulties experienced by schools as they

undertake the task of educating their students, many of whom are very vulnerable. With special reference to the post-primary sector, the Minister wished this inquiry to ascertain:

1. If discipline, or more precisely, the absence of discipline in schools is a national concern;

2. If there are models of best practice in the system from which guidelines could emerge, i.e. are there schools that are coping successfully with threats to their discipline system;

3. What support structures would school staff like to see in place to help create and maintain well disciplined schools.

It is important to consider the issue of discipline as significant for society at large. The frequency of reports in the media and elsewhere of rising levels of disruption in schools means that attention needs to be focused on issues beyond the immediacy of those associated with breaches of discipline to the wider implications for schools and society. Unless indiscipline in school is dealt with constructively and in a spirit of reconciliation, the consequences for society may be grave. Schools today are called on, more than ever, to be major agents of change. Together with parents, they are coeducators of the young. Education is not achieved solely through schooling, but increasingly schools are called on to carry the burden of developing the talents of the young, often without sufficient support from either families or the wider society. This is a considerable undertaking when one considers what education entails —

> The essence of education is *becoming* the gradual discovery of what
> it means to be human, the search for a personal identity, an identity
> which brings individual autonomy within a community structure.
> (Ó Suilleabháin).

The purposes of education are manifold. Apart from the obvious task of preparing individuals to play productive roles in the labour market-place, education also involves the cultivation of the individual's talents and potential; the transmission of the values of the culture; the enhancement of self-awareness as a pre-requisite to effective participation in social, economic, culture and political life; the preparation for citizenship involving a sense of responsibility, a sensitivity to the needs and rights of others, and the requirements of the common good. If schools are to reduce social disaffection and alienation, if they are committed to equal opportunities for all, then they must function as humane institutions — firm but compassionate and dedicated to quality teaching and learning. Schools are entitled to be assisted in their challenging task, not only by central government, but also by the public at large. Discipline in schools is a shared, collective responsibility. It is evident from recent figures that there has been a huge investment from national expenditure into the education system (c.f. White Paper on Education, *Charting Our Education Future*, p.37. But, alongside financial investment in education, schools need a supportive climate to help them to accomplish their difficult task. The national ethos needs to be one of support for schools. The morale of schools is, in part, determined by the level of recognition and affirmation that they are afforded by the media and by society. Morale in schools exerts a strong influence as it permeates through the system and impacts on the beneficiaries of the school system, i.e. the pupils.

As in other countries, where the maintenance of good school discipline has been a major area of concern, an extensive exploration of the issues involved would require a team of researchers or a commission of investigation, cf. Swann Report, 1985; Elton Report, 1989; Tasmania Report 1990; Finn Report, 1991; Melbourne Report, 1992. This Report, however, represents the fruits of a preliminary enquiry by an individual researcher and is, necessarily, more limited than these studies. The objective of this Report is to survey the current situation and make some recommendations for improved action. Of its nature, it does not purport to present a definitive or exhaustive study of the problems. However, it sets out to make a constructive contribution to our understanding of

the current situation, and to provide some useful guidelines on the way forward. It attempts to present the issues with clarity and in a manner that avoids the use of jargon. It focuses very much on practical issues and is supported by a very rich literature. It is recommended that the models of best practice contained within the Report, be studied in conjunction with selected readings from the bibliography. Together they should prove useful and relevant and, in a beneficial way, point up how practice and theory combine to eliminate many of the difficulties associated with disruption in schools.

The structure of the Report is as follows:

Chapter 1 briefly explores the concept of school discipline. It attempts to establish a contextual analysis of the circumstances impinging on school discipline. Linking in to current Irish and international research, it emphasises how multi layered any serious consideration of school discipline must be.

Chapter 2 outlines the methodology pursued in the inquiry.

Chapter 3 deals with the findings. It is presented in a way that includes the varied discussions with the interested partners, and the data from the questionnaire.

Chapter 4 presents the recommendations under a four fold categorisation. These recommendations come from the practitioners at the "chalkface," and from the partners in education. They also draw on the research literature, and many of them are currently in operation in the exemplars of "best practice," which form a central component of this work.

Appendix 1 presents seven case studies. They depict "best practice" schools that are meeting the challenge of creating well disciplined teaching and learning environments. Many of them are in very disadvantaged and troubled neighbourhoods. It is hoped that they will be illustrative of what can be done to allow the primary purpose of schooling to unfold.

Finally, the bibliography has been carefully chosen to include a range of readings that should prove of great value to interested readers.

CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS SCHOOL DISCIPLINE?

The task of considering discipline in schools is a complex one. It is complex because discipline in the school setting is determined, not only by what happens **within** school, but, in a very large part, by what occurs **outside** of school. This chapter outlines the main influences that contribute to school discipline. But firstly, it is appropriate to dwell on what is meant by school discipline.

The school discipline and classroom management literature has been heavily influenced by genres within educational psychology. Chief among these have been the "Science of Behaviour" championed by B.F. Skinner (1968, 1977), William Glasser's "Reality and Control Therapies" (1965, 1969, 1985, 1986, 1990), and the humanist psychology of Carl Rogers (1969). These traditions have proven useful as they have often helped to provide the rationale for, and approach to, student compliance. The most cursory survey of the literature categorised as "discipline" reveals a plethora of classroom management strategies, behaviour modification programmes and counselling packages, each promising student compliance and the restoration of teachers' hierarchical authority. However, these approaches do not always prove useful in developing coherence between the goals of pedagogy and curriculum and the process of school governance. Attention needs to be directed, in a holistic manner, to the cognitive and social development of young people and the processes of school governance. Where school disciplinary processes are predicated exclusively on operant conditioning (behaviour modification), then the educational value of the disciplinary regimen is compromised. Exclusively extrinsic methodologies promote, not the considered development of individual and group behaviour, but rather submission or manipulation.

Other approaches tend to err by being controlling or oppressive. Control can become an impediment to learning and orderliness. Externally applied, devoid of moral or logical force, control may not only impede the improvement of individuals and their community, but like a mechanistic approach, it can frequently interfere with the overall effectiveness of the educational mission of schools. Discipline, in an educational context, must go beyond behaviourism and issues of control. Ideally, it should focus on themes of school organisation, curriculum, pedagogy, respect and how these can combine to establish and create an orderly environment in which quality teaching and learning can occur. The overall aspiration would be to develop an internalised self-discipline, not an externally manipulated regimen. To achieve this, it is worth concentrating on concepts of school ethos and school partnerships. The suggestion that school discipline be cast in a broad framework is not to underestimate the pragmatic need for urgent responses to vexatious situations that arise in schools, but rather to open up the area, and consider the scope for effective practice. It is not productive to focus on intractable pupil behaviour or dysfunctional families. A systemic approach that embraces a broad understanding of the needs of the whole school community is a more meaningful way to consider school discipline. In short, the notion of discipline is best thought of as both an immediate issue for schools in their efforts to preclude or eliminate disruption, and as a long term process that develops the capacity of the school community to achieve its potential. Unless the immediate task of creating and maintaining a harmonious teaching and learning environment is successfully accomplished, the long-term aspirations of the educative process are likely to remain unfulfilled. Order in schools is a prerequisite for success.

INFLUENCING FACTORS

There are a number of factors that combine to influence what occurs in any individual school. Each school has its own unique characteristics and context, and, as anybody familiar with life in schools can testify, there are often large

discrepancies between schools that are geographically located quite close to each other. Each school develops its own ethos, and differences that exist between schools may not always be attributable to the characteristics of the student intake or to neighbourhood factors. The determining factors are more subtle. They depend on how a number of key issues are mediated by the school as an organisation. These key issues include:

- changes in Irish society;
- the increase in family breakdown;
- the role of parents;
- pupil participation and retention rates;
- the culture of schools;
- teacher education;
- school curricula;
- the examination points system.

Successful schools create the capacity to meet the exigencies of each of these influences. They are akin to schools described in the educational literature as "moving" schools. Other schools are apt to feel powerless and overwhelmed, and unable to respond in a way that is effective. These schools are described as "stuck" schools (Rosenholtz, 1989). It is this mosaic of influencing variables that makes the theme of school discipline so multifaceted and so convoluted. This very complexity also means that solutions to indiscipline must be carefully analysed and introduced at a variety of levels.

1. CHANGES IN IRISH SOCIETY

It has been well established that social change in Ireland over recent decades has been of an unprecedented character and has had profound ramifications on many aspects of Irish life. One very obvious area of change pertains to the prevailing attitudes to authority figures. The influence of the church was traditionally very strong in Ireland; today, that is no longer the case. There is a

marked decline in the authority and status of the church. Similar patterns are observable in education. A generation ago there may have been an unwritten law that the teacher was always right; today that notion is no longer viable. The youth culture of today is more assertive, more critical, more questioning, and practices that were easily implemented in school settings a generation ago, indeed half a generation ago, may meet with resistance today. Authority is no longer the automatic right of the teacher — respect must be earned in the day-to-day interactions of teachers with a youth population that makes up its own mind about the granting or withholding of respect and cooperation. Commercial forces appear to collude with the general disregard for authority. It is increasingly difficult for teachers to assert authority in a way in which it was possible up to fifteen years ago. The hierarchical structures are changed, and, to meet this, the educational literature advocates a wider participation of a democratic nature that respects the validity of the contribution of parents and the contribution of students in the school community.

Many schools continue to function with the same sense of continuity as before, but for a great number of schools all is changing, utterly changing. Until the 1970s, it was reasonable to expect that pupils coming into school had internalised norms of behaviour that were compatible with the norms of behaviour within the school. Most of their parents probably espoused a value system, a set of expectations and an orientation to education that chimed with that of the school. Behavioural expectations were reasonably similar in both home and school settings. In saying this, one must not be lured into a false sense of romantic nostalgia for bygone days. Perhaps there never was a golden era in Irish schools. But, where infringements or incidents of disruption occurred, they were not of such gravity, nor of such persistence, as to distract the school from its primary purpose. The perpetrators of unacceptable behaviour were the losers, not the teachers. This similarity, or continuity, in ethos between home and school can no longer be taken for granted. Whereas, in the previous era, schools augmented or enhanced the value system of the home, today the culture of schools may clash with the dominant culture of the

homes of many of its pupils. This situation gives rise to difficulties for teachers and pupils alike. Schools find that they have to redefine their role to cater for the changing characteristics of their pupil intake.

The problem of disaffection in schools seems to be most acute where the pupils come from families that are experiencing multiple disadvantages. The work of Kinder et al (1996) shows that, students who are disaffected, experience their disaffection as **boredom, anger or fear.** Their perception is that disaffection is caused by:

THE INFLUENCE OF PEERS	• status-seeking
	• joining in/blending-in
	• teasing/goading
RELATIONSHIPS WITH TEACHERS	• lack of respect to pupils
	• teacher injustice
	• teacher self-presentation
CURRICULUM CONTENT	• lack of relevance
	• lack of stimulus
	• lack of variety in learning task(s)
FAMILY FACTORS	• parental authentication
	• family problems
BULLYING	
CLASSROOM CONTEXT	• inadequate control and discipline
	• unaddressed individual learning needs

Source: Kinder et al (1996)

Some neighbourhoods have a density of disadvantaged families, but disadvantaged families can and do exist across neighbourhoods. It is too simplistic to attribute disaffection or social alienation *en bloc* to certain neighbourhoods and to overlook their existence in what appear to be trouble free areas. Probably, all schools cater for some students who are marginalised in some way. Nonetheless, the reality is that many large urban areas are school catchment areas that generate low self-esteem. The areas themselves are trapped in feelings of despair. They are imbued with a sense of hopelessness coming from poverty, unemployment and a lack of vision that life could be otherwise. There is a downward spiral of deterioration. For children coming from multiply-disadvantaged homes, research evidence shows that, for them, their circumstantial factors outside of school militate against educational success. (National Commission on Education [1993]; Smith & Noble [1995]; Kellaghan et al [1996]). Many pupils come to school from homes where a number of factors combine to make their adaptation to, and engagement in school very difficult. The pupils cannot, and do not, leave these pervasive influences outside the school door. For some pupils, their lives are very harrowing and bleak. They may come from homes where:

- The adult members of the family have never been employed. They may, in fact, be third generation unemployed. Children in these families are born into low income situations, where, as a consequence, the family is under stress. As a result, there is no disposable income to spend on stimulating school related activities, like buying books or educational resources. Education may be a low priority for families existing on the edge.

- As a result of parental unemployment, the school-going members of the family may seek part-time employment in an effort to offset the economic plight of the family, and/or to fund the lifestyle they wish to pursue. The consequence of this may be neglect of school homework, absenteeism, coming late to school, and a general disregard for the work of the school.

- Mothers in homes where the male adult is either unemployed, or absent, may go out to work as an economic necessity. This may result in mothers being absent in the evenings or the early mornings when children might be expected to get on with homework or to prepare for going to school. Children may be unattended in the home and grow accustomed to unlimited freedom and a total absence of structures.

- There may be a problem in the home with substance dependence – be it alcohol or drugs, or both. Where this occurs, it is unlikely that the parent is psychologically or emotionally available to cater for the needs of the growing child. The corrosive influence of the drug culture that has now taken hold in many neighbourhoods, is a very worrying factor for society today. It is also a new phenomenon, and its destructive influence is a real feature for many schools.

- There may be some involvement in crime or violence, or in abuse, with the pervasive influence of these factors on the developing child in very formative years.

- Housing may be inadequate. Overcrowding may be a feature and, for some children, there may be new persons coming into their lives, e.g. new "fathers," new "babies" that they have difficulty identifying with as members of their nuclear family.

- The environment may be barren and bleak and some families have a sense of being housed in "dumping grounds" where amenities are minimal if not totally absent.

- Health problems may be more likely than in the population at large. These can have associated effects on physical and intellectual development. There is evidence to suggest that there is a real increase in child psychiatric disorder (Rutter & Smith, 1995). Rutter (1991) suggests that poverty, unemployment and family breakdown contribute to this.

- Parents may have poor levels of education and parenting skills. Some may be openly hostile to the work of the school and to teachers and other authority figures. They foster negative attitudes in their children to schooling, and rather than cooperating with the school, they pull against the institution.

- The language patterns in the home may be coarse and vulgar. The interaction between adults and adults, and between adults and children, may be rough and lacking in respect. The decibel levels may be high, so shouting becomes the norm.

- Family disruption is frequent, so many children are suffering loss and anger in great measure.

For schools catering for children from these socially alienating circumstances, the challenges are immense. It is not that schools have not always catered for pupils who were disadvantaged, but today they are exerting greater pressure on the system. If the children yell in school – it is reasonable to assume that they are not yelling at their teachers, but rather yelling for themselves. The societal changes have meant that there is a new kind of adolescent and primary school pupil in our midst. Old methods of intervention no longer are powerful because the needs and home circumstances of significant numbers of our pupils have changed. Curricula today urge the learner to be actively engaged, to question, to seek rationales. Many of today's learners are articulate, confident and challenging. Often their assured questioning and attitude may be perceived as cheeky, but that may not be the intention. A lot of mis-communication can occur that causes hurt and confusion for both teachers and students. When asked to comply with a set of behaviours that the schools deem appropriate, not to say essential, for the successful enactment of the curriculum, some students bridle and object, or totally dismiss the convention. A clash of cultures, varying in degree, is in operation, and structured reflection is needed on the part of schools to come to terms with the changing characteristics of today's students. Yet schools are succeeding, many of them against the odds. They are transforming the life chances of their pupils. Some of these schools are

celebrated in the section describing the models of best practice (appendix I) within this Report.

Schools today are faced with the challenge of evolving a culture that is consonant with their primary purpose. This challenge involves creating an ethos that is respectful of the needs and motives of their diverse student intake, and operationalising this in a way that provides quality educational experiences for all. For many teachers, this entails great personal endeavour. Today, many schools are pushed to their limits to sustain the smooth functioning they have worked so diligently to attain. The vocational commitment and dedicated concern of our teachers are vital forces in influencing the containment and resolution of very volatile, troublesome situations. They deserve and need support to enable them to discharge an increasingly demanding role in an era of tumultuous change.

2. THE INCREASE IN FAMILY BREAKDOWN

One of the features of school life in Ireland today is, that many pupils are coming to school from one parent families or from reconstituted families. Precise figures on these are difficult to come by, but teachers are familiar with the incidence in their own schools. Of course, not all of these pupils present with difficulties in the school setting, but many do. Wallenstein (1983) reports that marital separation and divorce are emotionally comparable to losing a parent through death. The range of emotions is similar. The lives of children of separation or divorce are profoundly changed psychologically, socially and economically. It may be that, in some instances, separation and divorce bring relief from tension and stress and conflict, but family break-up inevitably brings a conflict of loyalties, and adjustment to new roles and new relationships. Teachers report that difficulties with unacceptable behaviour are often found among pupils who have experienced family breakdown. For the children involved, there are a number of psychological tasks that they must resolve in order to grow emotionally (Wallenstein, 1983). These include:

(i)   achieving realistic hope regarding relationships;
(ii)   accepting the permanence of divorce;
(ii)   resolving anger and self-blame;
(iv)   resolving loss;
(v)   the resumption of normal pursuits.

To help them in their grieving and difficulties, they need security and structure. School may be a safe haven and a place of reconciliation for them. It may also be the forum in which they give expression to their anger and loss. When they fail to comply with the structures of the school, their already sad plight is exacerbated, as is the plight of the parent or guardian who has on-going responsibility for them. Their protests within the school may, in reality, represent a protest about how life has dealt with them outside of school. School personnel with responsibilities for the "pastoral" care of these pupils may be their sole advocates. These members of staff often get caught in delicate negotiations between the grieving, but acting-out pupil, and the harassed class teacher whose work is disrupted by the unacceptable behaviour of young persons trying to find their way.

3. THE ROLE OF PARENTS

The White Paper on Education *Charting our Education Future* (1995), in Chapter 9, gives attention to the role of parents in the education system. Reference is made in that section (p.8,140) to the concluding comments from the Secretary General at the National Education Convention (1994) marking the centrality of the role of parents in the education system. The White Paper supports this position. While there appears to be a lot of good will and aspiration in the system regarding cooperation and partnership between home and school, the reality in many cases belies this. The data gathering for purposes of this Report suggests that a sizeable number of schools would like more tangible evidence of genuine cooperation from the home, regarding the implementation of pupil behaviour policies. On the other hand, the National Parents' Council, both

primary and post-primary, would like to see more effective structures in position to enhance communication between home and school. Schools referred to the desirability of parental support. The National Parents' Council referred to the desirability of parental involvement. There seems to be a middle ground between teachers and parents that needs bridging. Much of the data paid tribute to the influence of parental support for the work of the school, and parental support was deemed to be a key variable in the successful implementation of behaviour policies. The National Parents Council primary and post-primary paid tribute to the dedication of many teachers who are tireless in promoting all aspects of pupil welfare. Where good home-school partnerships exist, there appears to be positive outcomes for school, students and parents alike.

Not all pupils are fortunate enough to come from homes where the parenting skills help to launch the pupil into a life of self-discipline. Parents' ideas about child-rearing and the development process make important contributions to the day-to-day environment of children.The following parenting practices have been linked reliably to children's aggression (Perry et al, 1990).

(i)   *Monitoring failures*. Parents of aggressive and delinquent children are less aware of their children's whereabouts, activities, and social contacts.

(ii)   *Parental aggression*. Many aggressive children come from homes in which at least one parent is exceptionally violent.

(iii)   *Permissiveness*. Parents of aggressive children frequently decline to set limits on their children's behaviour and are ineffective at stopping their children's deviant behaviour.

(iv)   *Inconsistency*. Inconsistency both between parents, and within one parent, in disciplinary practices, has been implicated in aggressive development.

(v)   *Rejection*. Highly aggressive individuals often have a history of parental rejection.

Fortunately, the majority of pupils in Irish schools come from homes that are not characterised by inadequate or damaging parental practices. However, key informants for this Report indicate that there are schools catering for considerable numbers of pupils who come from homes where there are serious child-rearing difficulties. The knock-on effect on the life of the children in school is obvious. Parents, like teachers, need support and tangible interventions to help them in their important role. Otherwise, the present precarious situation can only deteriorate.

4. PUPIL PARTICIPATION AND RETENTION RATES

One of the most crucial factors contributing to the complex nature of post-primary schools today is the dramatic increase in pupil participation and retention rates. Thirty years ago the system was catering for a small elite. In a twenty five year period there has been a five-fold increase in participation rates. Current figures indicate that 83% of the post-primary age cohort is completing post-primary education, and it is envisaged that by the end of the decade, the figure will extend to 90%. In 1966, 12,000 students sat the Leaving Certificate. In 1996, the figure was 53,804. The projected figures for 1997 are c.60,000. This remarkable development in extended participation and retention rates has a huge bearing on the nature of schooling today. The student population is very diverse. The system is now catering for a very different clientele from that of thirty years ago. Students are coming from diverse social backgrounds. This heterogeneous group of today varies greatly from the more homogeneous group of former years. They bring different aspirations, different aptitudes, different applications, and, for many schools the experience may not always be positive. The pressure on schools to meet the needs of a very diverse student population is daunting. School size may make it very difficult to provide the range of programmes best suited to the disparate needs of the student population. Where schools are small, the resources simply do not stretch to make possible the introduction of the new range of programmes tailored to meet diverse pupil needs. Where the majority of students are benefiting from the system, the

experience is altogether different, but where there is a tendency to school failure, the problems are intricate.

Another issue for schools today is the challenge posed by the responsibility to integrate successfully pupils with special educational needs into the mainstream. The policy of the state to integrate pupils with special needs is welcome, and is in line with international trends. However, where schools are not adequately resourced and supported to respond to this emergent trend of integration, the situation for all concerned is aggravated. Parents of pupils with special educational needs experience a lot of frustration and personal heartache in their efforts to place their children in mainstream schools. Schools experience equal frustration if they feel that, in the absence of sufficient resources, they are unable to meet the needs of their enrolled students.

The new pressures on schools arising from the diversity of their students should not be underestimated. Schools today are catering for large numbers of very vulnerable young people. Sectors of the public may still think that schools are what they used to be. They are, in fact, very different. The diversity impacts on school discipline. Many of the pupils are reluctant learners who lack motivation and are disengaged. Other students require different pedagogic strategies. They pose very serious challenges for teachers who seek to incorporate them into the work of the school. Their behaviour may be such as to disrupt the work environment for their more industrious, goal-oriented peers. Teachers have a dilemma — that of balancing the demands of a minority who disrupt against the needs of a majority who conform. Skill, patience and tact are required in great measure, to reconcile the competing pressures.

5. THE CULTURE OF SCHOOLS

A new vocabulary is creeping into the lexicon of education. It includes words and phrases like school culture, school ethos, vision, mission etc. It may be that in using these terms there is some ambiguity about what precisely it is that they mean. Yet, there is a tacit agreement among the education community that they represent very influential forces in the life of a school. Recent official documents frequently use these emollient terms and avoid overt reference to school discipline. School culture is now recognised as being a very potent force in determining how schools function. Hargreaves (1992) writes about the two aspects of culture – its *content* and its *form*. The content refers to what its members think, say and do. The form consists of patterns of relationships among the members of the culture. In schools, these patterns are crucial. They may take the form of isolation, "balkanization," competitive groups and factions, or preferably, they may take the form of school members functioning as a **community.** Recent research in the field of provision of educational intervention for "at risk" students advocates the building of a sense of community in schools (Rossi & Springfield, 1995; Kohn, 1996; Schaps, Lewis & Watson, 1996). "Community" has to do with the quality of interpersonal relationships. Research has identified 10 elements that characterise relationships in schools that are communities. These are:

- shared vision;
- shared sense of purpose;
- shared values;
- incorporation of diversity;
- communication;
- participation;
- caring;
- trust;
- teamwork;
- respect and recognition.

(Rossi &Springfield, 1995)

The research suggests that schools that consciously work at developing these elements experience success in minimising challenging behaviour and building the necessary foundations for excellence. Sergiovanni (1994) argues that schools must play a much more vital and central role in community building, in providing care, developing relationships, creating common purpose and fostering a sense of attachment among people to something greater than themselves. He proposes that schools should build community in three senses:

- *Community of kinship* as a unity of being as among family, neighbours or colleagues — where a strong "we" feeling is created in the social group;

- *Community of place* as in "my class," "my neighbourhood," or "my school" — where there is common membership and a sense of belonging;

- *Community of mind* where people bond together through shared goals, values and conceptions of being.

In schools that are functioning as communities, there is a quality about the interpersonal relationships that operate there and these interpersonal relationships are central in determining how a school functions.The Elton report (1989) states that the behaviour of pupils in a school is influenced by almost every aspect of the way it is run and how it relates to the community it serves. The recent work of Hannan et al (1996), in this country, also emphasises the crucial role of interpersonal relationships in schools. In schools with a sense of community, the relationships among adults provide models of behaviour for students. Students feel cared about and respected, teachers share a vision and sense of purpose, and teachers and students together work towards the realisation of those visions and purposes.

Effective leadership is now widely accepted in determining much of what happens in schools. The principal and senior personnel are the major keepers of the vision. They also influence whether or not the school is a "Learning School." The characteristics of a learning school are like the characteristics of learning itself:

- interactive and negotiative;
- creative and problem solving;
- proactive and responsive;
- participative and collaborative;
- flexible and challenging;
- risk-taking and enterprising;
- evaluative and reflective;
- supportive and developmental.

(Holly & Southworth, 1993)

Learning schools work at their discipline in an on-going manner. They learn as they go; jettison what isn't effective and seek to find alternative measures. In doing so, their approach is a learning approach consonant with a learning school. The models of best practice documented in appendix I can be described as"learning organisations."

6. TEACHER EDUCATION

The White Paper (1995) rightly pays tribute to the quality of the teaching force in this country. It acknowledges the tremendous contribution made by teachers to Irish society and celebrates their high international standing. However, the reality is that, for many teachers, the task of functioning optimally is becoming increasingly difficult. Teachers educated within, and trained for a very different post-primary school context may now find the challenges of this very changed situation which exists in many schools very daunting. More than ever, today's teachers need to be very secure and mature in themselves as persons. They may be in the front line of a lot of aggression and anger. They will be called on to reconcile many difficult interpersonal situations. In order to meet the demands of an expanding and increasingly complex role, the teacher of today must become a lifelong learner. The White Paper, in conjunction with the National Education Convention, lends support to the continuing professional development

of the teaching career. It advocates a continuum involving initial teacher education, induction processes and in-career development opportunities — frequently referred to as the three "Is" of teacher education.

The widespread demand for inservice teacher education programmes testifies to the motivation of teachers to be at the leading edge of their profession. The disciplines of sociology, psychology and philosophy can help to develop insights and understandings that are valuable in meeting the needs of a modern school in a period of rapid change. With the advent of new curricula and new modes of assessment, there are also new challenges posed in the areas of teaching strategies and facilitating pupil learning. Teacher education must be sensitive to the needs of the practitioners who are courageously grappling with a role that is ever expanding and ever more demanding. Schools today, like corporations, are feeling the increasing impact of change, and many are in the process of restructuring. If we are to prepare our young people for the next phase of their lives, their learning must be rich and adaptable. It must go beyond surface structure learning to deep structure. It must involve inter- and intra-personal skills with a focus, not only on the academic, but also on the affective. School leavers of today need an education which will help them in critical thinking, problem-solving techniques, evaluating alternatives, making informed judgements, working independently, working in a team, using information technology — to meet the demands of a society that is changing at a rapid pace. Unless there are fundamental changes in teaching and learning, we will have failed the coming generation. Both teachers and teacher educators must respond to the challenges implied in this. Lamenting the bygone days when school life was more straightforward, is not going to move things forward. A systematic and concerted approach to the current challenges is required.

7. SCHOOL CURRICULA

Research evidence shows that the two main reasons why young people are disenchanted with school are:

(i)   a sense of not belonging;
(ii) a curriculum which is perceived to be irrelevant, and boring.

However, while research shows that curriculum may be a causative factor in disaffection, it also shows that it can be a solution to disaffection if tailored to meet the interests and ability of the learner (Kinder, et al 1995).The work of Boldt (1994); Fine 1986; Wehlege & Rutter 1986, shows that student dropouts generally suffer a lack of self-esteem and are frustrated in a school system they perceive cares little about them. More caring teachers and more interesting and relevant courses are identified as two key factors that would keep alienated students in school. There is much to applaud in recent developments in Irish education concerning both the caring, and the curriculum reform dimensions. The recent extension of the provision of teachers in the area of pastoral care and guidance counselling is to be welcomed. The wider availability of courses in university education departments in cognate areas, like school guidance and counselling, is another indicator of the system's concern for student welfare. The initiatives coming via central government's Department of Education programmes like Breaking the Cycle, Early Start, and primary school counsellors are very welcome. Teachers in whose schools they have been introduced speak highly of these initiatives and feel that their impact is already taking hold. Their extension and wider availability are seen as priorities.

Curriculum reform has also been sensitive to the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. Subject areas that may have been perceived as peripheral have been brought in form the cold and are now given new status in this exciting era of curriculum development. Existing curricula in many subject areas have also been reformed and updated. One of the major curriculum reforms

initiated by Minister Bhreathnach, was a complete restructuring of the senior cycle programmes. The introduction of this suite of programmes, e.g. Transition Year, Leaving Certificate Applied, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, not only holds promise for engaging the interests of students in the formal education system, but aspires to promote lifelong learning.

There is increased awareness of a variety of intelligences and the more traditional, narrow view of intelligence comprising linguistic and numerical abilities is replaced by an awareness of, and respect for, multiple intelligences (cf. Gardner, 1983). One of the overarching concerns in the development of new curricula and new programmes is that they might appeal more to the disaffected and engage their interest, thus reducing classroom disruption in some measure. Let us hope this aspiration is fulfilled.

8. THE EXAMINATION POINTS SYSTEM

The points system which now operates to gain access to higher education, has had a backwash effect for some in Irish schools. Teachers find themselves under pressure to tailor their teaching to achieve high levels of success for pupils in terminal examinations. There are, however, pupils and parents who do not wish to be involved in the points race. Teachers who endeavour to meet the educational needs of all their pupils, struggle to adapt their teaching accordingly. This makes heavy demands on teachers' within-school and outside of school life. If they don't succeed, discipline problems arise and overall learning and teaching are jeopardised. Equality of educational opportunity has been difficult to realise in the climate of competition that has influenced much of the teaching and learning in schools. However, the increasing recognition and acceptance of the newer curricula in schools and the introduction of new modes of assessment, hopefully, will cater for a wide range of pupil profiles. This should help to eliminate one of the possible sources of disciplinary problems in schools.

Preceding paragraphs have outlined some of the within-school and outside-of-school factors which influence the teaching-learning transactions that typify life in schools. They touch on a variety of issues which combine to make discipline in schools a very complex and thorny matter. Many schools today must cope on a daily basis with problems not dreamt of even fifteen years (i.e. half of a generation, ago). Some teachers encounter pupils who are totally different in outlook and behaviour from the peer group with whom they themselves attended school, or the students whom they taught in the early years of their career. These teachers may invest large amounts of time and energy in trying to promote learning, only to have their efforts thwarted by indiscipline. Others are more fortunate and report that, with the passage of time, really very little has changed. It is important that all the partners involved in education be made aware of the realities of the work-lives of teachers, especially those in very frustrating, stressful situations. Only then will action be taken to help schools experiencing difficulties overcome their problems.The recommendations in this Report suggest ways that could help.

It is true that the majority of Irish schools are in a healthy state and have no need to re-culture or to call in a range of support measures. A sense of balance is needed in the consideration of school discipline as a national issue.

There are very different school landscapes in the system. Many schools are favourably located, in a context where pupils are motivated and parents are supportive. These schools may not have felt the winds of change. There are some schools less advantaged. Many schools are located in neighbourhoods that are plagued by an accumulation of debilitating forces. Here, some of the schools have responded magnificently to the challenges that serving these neighbourhoods entails. Others are feeling the pressure and are honest enough to admit to the difficulties that they are experiencing. This latter group deserves support and recognition in their efforts to respond to the demands of their unenviable task.

Where the problems are excessive, teachers become despondent and personally frustrated. It is clear that life in a school which is plagued by constant disruption must have a damaging effect on the morale and well-being of teachers and pupils alike. But, any meaningful analysis of the issues associated with school discipline must include a comprehensive look at all the influencing variables. It is not enough to focus on the changing fabric of society or insupportable pupil behaviour. School organisation and teacher behaviour must form a part of any structured reflections on school discipline. Discipline is a shared responsibility. A constructive approach to the promotion and creation of good discipline necessitates sensitive consideration of the many interrelated factors that contribute to it. In particular, a focus on within-school discipline needs to attend to pupil behaviour, teacher behaviour and parental behaviour as all three play an intertwining role in its formation and translation into practice.

THE WAY FORWARD

There is help at hand for schools which are grappling with disruption. As well as cataloguing some of the issues relating to disruption, this Report aims to point up sources of help for schools willing to undertake a radical examination of their situation *vis-à-vis* discipline. There is a body of literature which can suggest the way forward and guide the process of turning difficult situations around. This literature is well grounded in research. It brings together theory and practice. It is recent; it is accessible; it is constructive; and, above all, it is highly relevant to schools in this era of unprecedented change. It can be instrumental in making teaching a research based profession. In order to be at the leading edge today, the profession is richer if informed by research. In particular, this literature provides insights into:

(i)   The management of change;

(ii)   The effective school movement;

(iii)   The whole area of discipline — its nature, its patterns, its effects and its nurture;

(iv)   Classroom management;

(v)   Effective teaching and learning;

(vi)   Links with parents.

A brief selection of the research literature in critical areas is given in appendix II. The examples of best practice document what some schools in today's Ireland have actually accomplished. Some of these schools cater for pupils coming from multiply disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Some are located in areas with a mixed pupil intake, while some are relatively new schools built on green field sites and benefiting from a clear sense of purpose and shared values from day one. These examples are important because the practice and experience in these schools, confirm the validity of the research literature. Considered together, the examples of literature and best practice warrant respect and reflection.

It is clear that schools cannot, of themselves, solve problems which stem from difficulties in the wider society, but schools **can** be powerful agents for change. Schools which are not disrupted by on-going discipline problems and which achieve their potential, can transform the life chances of their pupils while affording professional satisfaction and fulfilment to their staffs.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY OF THE INQUIRY

The main focus of this work is on schools in the post primary sector. Some data have been collected from the primary sector in an effort to establish an overall picture of the state of school discipline. The data for the Report have come from three sources:

1. A questionnaire was prepared for distribution to schools. This document explored the following areas:

   (i)   The level of concern about school discipline;
   (ii)   The nature of the indiscipline in schools;
   (iii) The factors contributing to satisfactory/unsatisfactory discipline;
   (iv)   The preventive measures in operation;
   (v)   The coping strategies used;
   (vi)   The support structures sought.

   Through a network of contacts with practitioners both at primary and post-primary levels, in a variety of different schools and settings throughout the country, the questionnaire was distributed and returned. Many schools used the document at a whole-staff level to focus their joint attention on the issues under investigation. In other schools, individual teachers completed the questionnaire and returned it to the researcher. In total, 250 questionnaires were completed, 150 from the post-primary sector, and 100 from the primary sector.

2. A series of structured interviews took place with representatives of the partners in education. These interviews aimed to get the views of management, unions, parents, teacher educators, the inspectorate, and others with a vested interest in the schooling system. The bodies consulted are listed in Appendix III.

3. There were visits to a selection of 30 post-primary schools affording the opportunity of meeting with staffs or discipline committees to discuss the issues of concern. These schools visited are distributed across the country and their student intake is typical of the social mix that is characteristic of the national intake of students at post-primary level.

Of the 250 questionnaires returned, the primary sector comprised 66% female respondents; 33% male. The post-primary sector comprised 52% female respondents and 48% male. Their age profiles are shown in Table I.

TABLE 1

Age Profile of Teachers who completed the questionnaire

Age	Post Primary				Primary			
	>30 yrs.	30-40 yrs.	40-50 yrs.	<50yrs.	>30 yrs.	30-40 yrs.	40-50 yrs.	<50 yrs.
Female	36%	20%	27%	17%	16%	33%	31%	20%
Male	13%	17%	45%	25%	10%	25%	50%	15%

This combination of an empirical phenomenological approach seemed an appropriate way to collect sufficient data to allow preliminary answers to the Minister's questions. Of course, the work would be enhanced by more extensive field work, by classroom observation, and by exploration of pupils' views, but as an initial inquiry, the scope of the work is such as to permit some useful and very interesting observations. As is, there are no baseline data on the state of discipline in schools in Ireland. This first attempt should pave the way for future research in this important area.

CHAPTER 3

THE FINDINGS OF THE ENQUIRY

1.   THE FINDINGS

The data from all sources are merged in the reporting of the findings. It is worth noting that there was a high level of correspondence between the data collected via the questionnaire and the data that were yielded via the structured interviews with key informants.

1.1 IS DISCIPLINE A *REAL ISSUE* OF CONCERN?

In answer to this question, 64% of respondents in post primary schools and 34% in primary schools reported indiscipline as being a real issue of concern. These figures comprise 70% respondents in urban schools, 43% in schools catering for a combination of town and rural pupils and 91% in designated disadvantaged areas. Corresponding figures in primary schools showed 30% in urban schools, 25% in rural schools and 66% in designated disadvantaged schools. This concern was expressed by 67% of respondents in co-educational schools, 60% in all-boys schools and 55% in all-girl schools. The data from primary schools are 36% in co-educational schools, 60% in all-boy schools and 25% in all-girls schools. An overwhelming majority at both levels considered that lack of discipline was becoming more of an issue in recent years and that this is so, both in the classroom and in the general school environment. The data, however, distinguish between discipline as a concern and lack of discipline as a reality. Schools that are, at present, not disrupted by breaches of discipline, continue to be concerned about its protection. They appreciate that schools are potentially volatile places,

that classrooms are complex learning and social laboratories. There is a sense of foreboding about discipline and a perception that what is not a problem to-day might become one in the future — a future not too far away. For schools already in the grip of indiscipline, the experience is personally harrowing and very depressing. The central finding for this question confirmed that discipline is on every school's agenda as a major issue of concern.

1.2 THE NATURE OF THE INDISCIPLINE

This item on the questionnaire sought information on the level, or nature, of breaches of discipline in schools. The majority of schools, c.80%, reported that, in the main, the indiscipline could be described as low level. However, the data from these schools also show that, on occasions, there may be quite serious breaches of discipline. When these arise, they constitute "defining moments" in the life history of a school, as their management and resolution have a pervasive influence on the internal dynamics of the workings of the school. There is a realisation that discipline is often precariously poised, and the data testify to an underlying tension about the possible escalation of disruption. 20% of the respondents reported that discipline in their schools was of a serious nature. These are schools in which there is indiscipline of a serious and pervasive nature. High level disruption is not an isolated occurrence in these schools, but rather it is a pattern. Respondents in this category were all working in areas of multiple disadvantage. The seriousness of the plight of these schools is a source of major concern.

In general terms, the data for this section of the questionnaire show that:

(i)   In the main, where breaches of discipline occur, they are usually of a "low level" nature;

(ii)   A small number of schools report a rise in serious breaches of discipline;

(iii)   A majority of schools have a small core of pupils who are persistently disruptive;

(iv)   In co-educational schools, the perpetrators of the indiscipline tend to be boys more than girls;

(v)   Indiscipline in schools is found most frequently, but not always, in crisis disadvantaged neighbourhoods;

(vi)   Indiscipline in crisis disadvantaged neighbourhoods tends to be of a serious nature;

(vii) Neither age nor sex of teachers are factors in determining levels of discipline.

The respondents gave the following examples of low level disruption:

- talking out of turn;
- being generally heedless;
- arriving late to school;
- failing to bring along relevant materials;
- engaging in a range of attention-seeking behaviours.

These responses were contributed in equal measure by teachers at both primary and post primary levels. The point must be made that in classrooms where low level disruption is persistent and widespread, while not constituting a major problem *per se*, its effects can thwart the primary purpose of the teacher's role, i.e. to teach, and can, consequently, become cumulatively stressful and frustrating.

20% of the respondents, mostly from the post primary group, considered that the breaches of discipline were of a high level or serious nature. They gave as examples:

- Aggressive, physically violent, dangerous behaviour among pupils;
- Gang fights aimed at inflicting injury, often involving the use of knives or compasses;
- Vandalism and general disregard for school property;

- Open defiance, intimidation and hostility directed at teachers and peers;

- A general attitude of "We can do what we like — who is going to stop us?"

- Drug trafficking both inside and outside the school buildings;

- Various forms of bullying behaviours;

- Use of obscene, totally inappropriate, vulgar language;

- Rough, boisterous horseplay.

While schools experiencing this level of highly disruptive behaviour may not be nationally representative, nonetheless, for those teachers and pupils for whom it is a reality, teaching and learning are extraordinarily difficult, if not totally unachievable.

1.3 INFLUENCES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO LEVELS OF DISCIPLINE

The data gathering explored the origins of satisfactory/unsatisfactory discipline. Respondents were asked to respond in a way which sought their views on within school and outside of school contributing factors.

The data from the **primary teachers** in the survey attributed satisfactory levels of discipline to the following combination of factors:

- early involvement of parents in support of the school;

- class size that allows for a lot of attention to be given to potentially disruptive pupils;

- good teacher-pupil relationships;

- good leadership from the principal;

- high morale among the staff;

- close supervision and monitoring of pupils throughout the school day.

The data from the **post primary teachers** attributed satisfactory levels of discipline in their schools to a combination of the following factors:

- Quality teaching;

- The consistent implementation of a school Discipline Code;

- A set of structures to streamline the handling of discipline issues;

- High expectations concerning pupil behaviour and attainment;

- Meaningful parental involvement;
- Good leadership and communication by the principal;

- A united and dedicated staff with a strong sense of commitment to the pupils;

- A pastoral, caring ethos.

The data from the **primary teachers** in the survey attributed unsatisfactory levels of discipline to the following in-house factors:

- Class size too large;

- Curriculum overload and irrelevance;

- Unsuitable teaching methodologies and materials;
- Negative peer influence;

- Absence of effective sanctions;

- The expectation among pupils that school is about being entertained;

- General overcrowding in the school.

The data from the **post primary teachers** on the same issue were more comprehensive. They are summarised as follows:

- The absence of a clearly articulated, consistently implemented Code of Behaviour, resulting in students being confused about what is and what is not acceptable behaviour;

- The diversity of the student population and inadequate provision to cater for this diversity;

- The negative effects of streaming, leading to the marginalising of some students in the weaker streams;

- The difficulties that arise with first year students who fail to make a smooth transition from primary to post primary school;

- A perception among some students that many aspects of the curriculum are irrelevant and beyond their grasp;

- A range of students with poor self-esteem and lack of confidence, proving difficult for teachers to motivate and engage;

- Absence of student respect for themselves as individuals, for each other, for their teachers and for property. This accompanied by lack of a clear understanding of what **respect** really entails;

- Students who prioritise their own individual needs over and above the

needs of the group – the "me generation;"

- Bullying incidents at school and their pervasive impact;

- Poor communication between school and home concerning worrying student behaviour and a gradual escalation of difficulties;

- Weak leadership within the school;

- Poor staff morale, leading to resentment and apathy;

- Lack of support from senior management in day-to-day coping with disruptive incidents;

- Teachers whose personalities are not suitable for engaging with adolescents;

- Teachers who lack competent classroom management skills and are unable to "hold it together;"

- Teacher workload too heavy to permit investment in individual students who need help;

- Not enough school personnel to allow for satisfactory monitoring throughout the school;

- Overcrowding in schools — student enrolment far in excess of the original numbers planned for.

The data on the out-of-school factors, taken in conjunction with the within-school factors, lead to a comprehensive account of the situation. These are now reported.

Out-of-School Factors Contributing to Unsatisfactory
Levels of Discipline in Schools

In general, the data suggest that difficulties arise because there seems to be a clash of cultures between home and school. The lifestyle and ethos in the homes and neighbourhoods of many pupils are incompatible with what constitutes acceptable norms in the school setting. Unless cultures of home and school are reconciled, breaches of discipline occur. The following factors were repeatedly cited by respondents as negatively influencing school discipline:

- Lack of discipline and structures in the home contrasting with the disciplined and structured environment of the school;

- Low priority given to education and schooling in the home environment;

- Parental attitudes which are unsupportive of the ethos of the school;

- Pupils coming to school from households that are characterised by a total lack of respect for those who live there;

- Pupils coming from households where there is a tendency for members of the household to shout at one another in order to be heard, with the result that the children tend to be raucous and boisterous in other settings;

- Home situations of students marred by the damaging effects of alcohol or other substance dependence; by unemployment, by poverty, by family breakdown, by domestic violence, by crime, by abuse, by illness or by poor parenting skills;

- Poor recreational facilities or infra-structures in many of the school neighbourhoods with a knock-on effect on life in school.

Teachers contending with these powerful out-of-school influences are faced with an enormous challenge in their efforts to establish and maintain an orderly environment within the very different culture of the school. From the students' perspective, it cannot be easy to straddle the two cultures and integrate them into a coherent system.

1.4 PREVENTIVE MEASURES

The next area of focus sought respondents' views on what **preventive** measures they thought effective in protecting against disruption in schools.

School Environment

There was agreement between the respondents from both levels of the profession on measures that were effective. With regard to the school environment, teachers expressed the view that the consistent implementation of an agreed set of rules is essential. They stressed the importance of vigilant supervision and monitoring of all activities within the school areas. Added to that, many reported that the environment is more orderly where students and teachers cooperate in developing a shared sense of pride in their school.

Preventive Measures at Classroom Level

Primary teachers stressed the importance of good preparation and organisation, and they also emphasised the value of developing good interpersonal relationships with their pupils. Many respondents focused on the importance of adapting the curriculum to suit pupil needs. The post primary teachers constantly referred to the importance of a clear explanation of the Behaviour Code at the beginning of the year, and its consistent implementation across the board. They also referred to the importance of the quality of their teaching and their ability to engage with their students in a respectful classroom atmosphere. Teachers from both sectors constantly stressed the importance of parental cooperation for the success of their work.

1.5 COPING STRATEGIES

Teachers' views were sought on effective strategies for coping with disruption when it arises.

Effective Strategies

Responses were similar from teachers in both sectors . The data for this survey item suggest that teachers feel that speaking quietly with an offending pupil after the classroom disruption, is most effective.   It is evident that a continuum of responses ranging from a class discussion on how disruption interferes with teaching and learning through to rolling or permanent exclusions, is in operation. The "punishment" is adapted to fit the crime. Frequently cited strategies included:

* Focusing on positive pupil behaviour;
* Nipping the problem in the bud;
* The withdrawal of privileges;
* Intervention via the discipline structures within the school;
* Involving parents;
* Use of sanctions.

Ineffective Strategies

Teachers from both primary and post primary schools agreed that public confrontation and becoming angry are very ineffective. They also stressed that it is pointless to punish pupils for misdemeanours and not discuss alternative, more acceptable means of achieving pupil goals. In other words, punishment in the absence of an exploration of the issue/s is unlikely to be corrective. Other ineffective responses cited frequently in the data were:

* Punishing the whole class for the misdemeanours of a few;

- Failing to give a student an "out" or a face-saving opportunity;

- Not listening to the student's point of view;

- Keeping difficulties to oneself instead of seeking help from colleagues;

- Being inflexible, inconsistent, or too dogmatic;

- Using idle threats.

The data show that schools that are **proactive** and **pastoral** in their approach to school discipline are in a much stronger position to bring about positive resolutions to breaches that occur. Schools **reacting** to breaches sometimes exacerbate situations and, in the process, cause a lot of stress and hurt to the parties involved.

1.6 SUPPORT STRUCTURES

Finally, the survey asked respondents to indicate what support structures would help with discipline, both around the school and in the classroom.

There are four broad categories of support that a majority of teachers want to see in position in order to bring about more effective discipline in their school. These are:

(i) The clear identification of a set of rules governing conduct in the school, and a consistent whole-school implementation of these rules.

(ii) Increased parental accountability and responsibility concerning their children's behaviour in school.

(iii) Strong, positive leadership within the school.

(iv) The provision of a range of specialist services both within and outside the

school to help manage the extreme cases of disruptive behaviour.

In particular, the post primary responses called for the availability of a service to take care of students who may be temporarily out of control. This resource might take the form of a "cooling off" room supervised by skilled personnel, and it might also, on occasion, take the form of immediate access to a support team of trained people with expertise in working with volatile, angry, disruptive adolescents.

Other supports sought by teachers from both sectors that warrant reporting are:

- A reduction in class size;

- Time to collaborate and discuss with colleagues;

- An extension of the following support structures:

  (i)   Remedial Teachers;
  (ii)   Home-School Community Liaison Scheme
  (iii) School Psychological Services;
  (iv)   Guidance Counsellors, Primary School Counsellors, etc.

- Time for teachers, especially those teachers with "pastoral" responsibility for students (i.e. year heads, form tutors etc.) to devote to pupils requiring their help;

- Added space, and improved recreational facilities;

- A comfortable staff room that is well resourced.

This concludes the findings from the data gathering which formed a central part of this Report.

1.7 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

As indicated earlier, the Minister wished this inquiry to focus on three issues, i.e:

(i)   The state of discipline in schools.

(ii)   The identification of Models of Best Practice.

(iii)   The support structures deemed necessary to help schools cope effectively with their discipline.

These will be addressed separately.

(i)   State of Discipline in Irish Schools

The data from all sources testify that while the majority of schools are not persistently disrupted by pupil indiscipline, there is a growing number of schools experiencing increasing levels of unacceptable pupil behaviour. There is a definite sense of malaise regarding the spread and escalation of indiscipline. Schools that today are reasonably disruption-free are very aware that this satisfactory situation requires a lot of nurturing to be maintained. There is no complacency in the system. All of the key informants clearly indicated that discipline is a serious issue of concern and they welcomed the opportunity to convey these concerns to the Minister. For schools characterised by high levels of indiscipline, the plight of teachers and pupils is very grave. The smooth functioning of the school is thwarted. Teachers are prevented from discharging their professional role and the cumulative toll of working in angry, hostile, apparently futile, situations is personally debilitating and extremely stressful. While, in national terms, the number of schools experiencing pervasive levels of serious disruption appears to be small, there is genuine concern that the number is on the increase. This inquiry is not sufficiently detailed to put an accurate figure on the true extent of seriously disrupted schools. This

preliminary work is flagging the issues, and clearly more scientific, larger scale work is required to set the fuller picture. The problems in disadvantaged areas seems to be especially acute, though within the system there are schools doing magnificent work to curtail the threats posed by serious disruption. When disruptive incidents arise in a school, there is an immediacy about them. They create a sense of urgency, and quick, immediate solutions are sought. Many of the incidents are not amenable to quick, successful resolution. Consequently, teachers dealing on a daily basis with high levels of disruption begin to feel helpless, and no longer in control of their work situations. These same teachers would probably experience high levels of personal and vocational fulfilment were they in different school settings.

Schools can take charge of their own destinies. They need not feel powerless or "stuck." A practical way to begin is to adopt the approach recommended by Watkins (1995). He suggests that schools carry out an examination of difficult behaviour at three different levels, i.e. Organisational, Classroom and Individual. The exploration of issues of concern at each of these levels lead to new understandings which, in turn, leads to appropriate action or intervention. A comprehensive analysis of the discipline difficulties at these three levels may involve focusing on:

- *pupil behaviour*, i.e. individual, group, academic, social, etc.

- *teacher behaviour*, i.e. teaching methods, classroom management, style of responding to breaches of discipline, etc.

- *school behaviour*, i.e. the ethos of the school organisation and its capacity to respond when difficulties arise.

These guidelines from Watkins indicate a useful orientation to a constructive

look at school discipline. The task is not easy, but it may be necessary for schools to protect or improve their existing state. If successful, well disciplined schools could result and have some, if not many, of the following features:

- Strong, positive leadership by the Principal and senior staff.

- A good atmosphere, or spirit, generated both by shared aims and values and by a physical environment that is as attractive and stimulating as possible.

- High and consistent expectations for all pupils.

- A clear and continuing focus on teaching and learning.

- Responsibility for learning, shared by the pupils themselves.

- Well developed procedures for assessing how pupils are progressing.

- Participation by pupils in the life of the school.

- Rewards and incentives to encourage pupils to succeed.

- Teachers handling all, or most of the routine discipline problems themselves.

- A focus on causes of discipline problems rather than symptoms.

- Programmes that emphasise positive behaviours and use preventive measures rather than punitive actions, to improve discipline.

- An emphasis on parental involvement in their children's education, and support for the aims of the school.

  (Wayson, W.W. et al. 1982; National Commission on Education, 1993)

The task for schools undertaking a radical examination of their discipline

requires patience and structured reflection. There are no quick-fix solutions. The research literature points up ways and approaches for those engaged in this long, demanding process. But, more importantly, the situation involves an acknowledgement that improvement, where needed, can come about. A sense of helplessness exacerbates an already troubled situation. Change can be kick-initiated by a core of concerned staff who are committed to a better future for their school. With support and guidance they can accomplish very powerful results.

(ii) Models of Best Practice

The second aspect of the Minister's commissioned inquiry referred to the models of best practice. This involved:

(a) identifying some schools that could be so described;

(b) asking these schools to identify the factors contributing to their success in bringing about their satisfactory levels of discipline.

It does not mean that the schools are totally free from disruption, but, when disruptive incidents occur, as inevitably they do, the "best practice" schools are successful in moving them forward to satisfactory resolution and to getting back on course.

There are, of course, many schools in Ireland that could fit the bill of a "model of best practice." Large-scale research is needed to locate and celebrate them. The schools portrayed in this work have been chosen because they represent a geographical spread and come from differing sectors within the educational system. The names attributed to the schools are fictitious, and hopefully, will not be confused with schools that may, in reality, bear these names. The data from the selected schools are very interesting and very informative. The schools in question share certain common characteristics. They are very wary of being described as "successful." There is an absence of

smugness about their impressive achievement and, far from resting on their laurels, these schools are caught up in a process of continuous improvement. There is excellent leadership in the schools. The quality and nature of this leadership have resulted in a release of energy among the staff that is deployed in a very focused way. Equally importantly, the leadership has nurtured a belief in the schools' potential to succeed. As suggested earlier, a number of the "best practice" schools are located in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. An abundance of energy and commitment is needed just to tread water in schools catering for very troubled neighbourhoods. The schools presented here do very much more.

The schools profiled are, unquestionably, high energy, dedicated, focused, learning organisations. They are in marked contrast to schools that have characteristics that actively militate against improvement. These latter schools have what Kate Myers (1996) refers to as "antithetical characteristics." They tend to blame the pupils and the community for their predicament. They are resistant to change and sceptical about the efficacy of outside intervention. There are feuds and cliques among the staff. Demoralisation is rampant. Would-be effective staff get sucked in to the norms of an ineffective group. Good ideas are met with cynicism – "it wouldn't work here" attitude. Expectations for pupils and for the school as an organisation are low. These "psychological problems" are glaringly absent in the well functioning, healthy models of best practice. The principal and senior staff are visible and accessible. The quality of the personal interactions at all levels is excellent, and there is a participative approach inspired and sustained by the school leadership. Together with their staff, these leaders have built humane schools – schools that are interesting and challenging places in which to work, and schools that are firm and compassionate in their discipline. The leaders have placed their staff in professional growth situations that are personally satisfying, if frequently very demanding. Their joint analysis of their issues of concern is hard-edged, and they apply themselves to getting to grips with progressing them as a matter of urgency. The schools are not static entities but are "moving schools" with a sense of "we can," rather than with a defeatist sense of helplessness. The orientation is positive, confident, proactive, with clear

objectives, none of which are imposed on the staff against their will.

The culture of the schools is collaborative and participative. The notion of the teacher as lone practitioner behind closed doors is not applicable to the schools described. The ethos is inclusive – the staff share ownership, involvement and responsibility with pupils, parents and the wider community. There is recognition of the role of parents as co-educators. Pupils are given responsibility and are very central in the life of the school. This seems to have conveyed trust and has set standards for mature, pro-social behaviour. The physical environment of the school is of major importance in the best practice schools and there is recognition that paying careful attention to this sends signals that affect the self-esteem and work approach of the school community, with a knock-on effect on morale and achievement. Teams within the schools assume responsibility for various aspects of school life that contribute to the overall smooth functioning of the school. The principal coordinates and supports these varied activities, sustains the momentum, especially when the going is rough, through skilled, empathic leadership. Finally, the schools are places of reward and recognition. Staff are valued; their tireless efforts are appreciated and not taken for granted; the pupils are prized and so are their parents. Work, effort and behaviour are treated with respect and there is a continuous focus on renewal – a searching for ways in which to be even more effective and successful.

For a number of schools in question their success has been against the odds. Their current praiseworthy state did not come gift-wrapped or occur overnight. It is a measure of the staff's dedication, commitment, often back-breaking work led by a leader who believed that, together, they could do it. These schools are representative of many such schools up and down the country. This Report welcomes the opportunity on behalf of the partners in education to pay tribute to, and recognise all these excellent schools. Their greatest achievement may be to inspire and offer hope to schools that are desperately trying to come to terms with pervasive indiscipline.

(iii)   Support Structures

The third area of concern set out by the Minister, concerned support structures. There was a concern to gather information on what kind of supports are deemed necessary and appropriate to alleviate problems with discipline. The clear message from the data and the key informants is, that a wide variety of supports is necessary in order to meet the challenges of running a successful, well-disciplined school in an era of such rapid and unprecedented change. The compilation of this Report has been influenced by a realisation of the impact that a series of changes, some dramatic, some subtle, have on school discipline. The changes that schools today are coping with include a changing society, changing pupils, changing curricula, changing teaching methods, changing understandings of what constitutes learning, changing concepts of intelligence, changing employment patterns, changing attitudes to schools and teachers, changing management structures, changing policies. The cumulative impact of all of these changes, many of them occurring simultaneously, are taking their toll on schools. The interested parties are of the view that schools have responded generously to these many changes but in the absence of adequate support, their capacity to sustain them and lead them forward constructively is finite and, in many cases, reaching exhaustion.   The contributions from respondents about supports are reflected in the recommendations section. They range from an extension of the existing support structure that are in place to the introduction of some new measures. Time, reduction in class size, remedial provision, additional personnel, inservice – frequently were singled out as basic to the protection of school discipline.

New measures in the form of support centres with access to specialist teams with a generic set of skills, were suggested as vital to the resolution of discipline problems in some schools. A support centre which came to the attention of the researcher when preparing this report, is staffed exclusively by teachers. The success of this centre, located in a crisis disadvantaged area of Birmingham is attributed to the mentoring system used by the staff. The teachers there work at building good relationships with very troublesome students.

Through these relationships, they help the troubled students to develop their sense of self-worth and to reconstruct their perceptions, not only of themselves, but also of school and authority figures. The centre enjoys high levels of success and is perceived by the 23 schools to which it is available, as a very effective support and intervention structure. The emphasis on relationship building that is the central feature of the programme used by the centre's personnel, finds support in the research literature dealing with the management of difficult pupil behaviour. Good communication and relationships, based on understanding, respect and acceptance, seem to be vital in the successful resolution of difficulties, and the maintenance of a harmonious environment.

The research view on more traditional units for troublesome pupils seems to be that very often they are ineffective. They are not always corrective. They may be seen to pathologise unacceptable student behaviour, and, in a way, serve to collude with it. A centre that is planned as an integral part of mainstream schooling seems preferable to one focussing on withdrawal. The concept of teachers working with teachers and pupils, as in the support centre, has a lot of plausibility. Teachers have high levels of credibility with their peers and they bring to their task rich understandings of the perspectives that are vital to the reconciliation of the presenting difficulties. In-service clearly has relevance and much to contribute in this area. The real expertise required for working with disrupting students resides in the teacher in his/her daily interaction with pupils. Many teachers have the relevant interpersonal skills intuitively; others can be helped to develop them.

The view from the key informants was that the additional measures should be targeted to the areas of most pressing need, but with the caveat that *all* schools require support. While recognising that this is the case, the international literature recommends that, where funds are limited, it is most advantageous to use the limited resources in areas of most pressing need. The data for this inquiry suggest that it is in neighbourhoods of major social deprivation that the needs are greatest, so it would appear to make good sense to prioritise these areas when extending or introducing special measures.

CHAPTER 4

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Recommendations which follow are presented in four broad categories:

- General Recommendations;
- Recommendations for Schools ;
- Recommendations for Teacher Education;
- Recommendations for Interdisciplinary Cooperation.

The long lists of recommendations which follow provides an opportunity to report back to the Minister the requests and suggestions of the key informants consulted during the conduct of this inquiry. The contributors to the data-gathering were anxious that the Minister, central government and the public would accord discipline in school the priority that it warrants. The lists represent the deep levels of concern felt by the partners in education about the important issue of discipline. The detailed lists, itemising the recommendations, have the advantage of catching the specificity of what colleagues at the chalkface perceive as important. Many of the recommendations find support in the research literature and are validated by international models of good practice. On accumulation, the recommendations require extra investment. While appreciating the difficulties that arise for those charged with prioritising fund allocations, the consequences of failing to support adequately and resource schools as they engage in the task of educating an increasingly diverse and dramatically expanded cohort of students, are grave. The issues of social cohesion, justice and equality, referred to in the introduction, are centrally linked to the provision of education for a youth population, many of whom, due to their social backgrounds and outside of school factors, are in the at-risk category.

As the data have already shown, there are schools in neighbourhoods that are in genuine need of extra provision, so the targeted resources ideally should be directed there. But, in so doing, it must be recognised that there are schools in the system that may begin to topple under the cumulative strain of containing their discipline. Up until now, these schools may have coped successfully in the absence of adequate provision, but breaking point may be close, if not already reached, for many schools in the system. Fine judgement and discernment are, therefore, needed in the prudent allocation of scarce resources.

Not all of the recommendations require financial investment. Rather, they require new ways of working, or an adaptation of existing practices. Many of the recommendations are already incorporated into schools which constitute the exemplars of good practice, depicted in the next section. Their implementation in real life situations testifies to their efficacy. Not all of the recommendations are relevant in all contexts. There is a vast array of schools in the system. Not all of the recommendations fit into discrete categories. Many belong in more than one category. Some apply to central government, some to schools, some to local agencies, but, taken as a composite, all impact on a school's level of discipline.

1. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There needs to be more public recognition of the problems that indiscipline creates in contemporary schools, with a view to greater partnership between the involved agencies towards its alleviation.

2. Successful discipline is enhanced where a variety of agencies work in partnership. These include:

    School and parents/guardians;
    School and Boards of Management;
    School and local community;
    School and area partnerships;

School and central government;
School and Teacher Unions;
School and University Education Departments;
School and Agencies responsible for young people.

3. There should be general recognition that the issue of school discipline is complex and multilayered. Consequently, measures introduced to protect discipline or to remediate indiscipline will also have to be on a variety of levels, not all of which are situated within the school context.

There is agreement among the partners in education, and the practitioners in the classroom that a number of initiatives which are already in position are valuable and necessary. The targeted extension of the following interventions are sought:

- the school psychological service, especially at primary level where the provision is currently inadequate;

- the Home-School-Community Liaison Scheme;

- the provision of remedial teachers, to preclude the inevitable failure that accompanies lack of mastery in basic literacy and numeracy;

- guidance and counselling personnel and a return to the more favourable bands of 250:1 in determining their allocation;

- Early Start, Breaking the Cycle, and primary school counsellors;

- availability of school attendance officers, preferably under the aegis of the Department of Eduction.

• Investment should be made in Primary Education as this, not only helps the Primary Education sector, but also is a sure way of helping the Post Primary Education sector.

- Extended investment should be made at Early Start level and in the infant and first classes in disadvantaged schools, as this early intervention helps to prevent a lot of subsequent problems, and is ultimately cost effective.

- Where possible **all** pupils transferring from primary to post primary schools should have basic competence in the skills of reading and number. This will necessitate an increase in remedial provision at primary school level, as well as new initiatives as part of whole school planning.

- Intensive provision for at risk students **within** mainstream education should be prioritised rather than subsequently seeking to cater for early uncertified leavers in programmes like Youth Start, Youth Reach, FÁS, etc.

- Places on these programmes that occur outside formal schooling should be increased and the age of eligibility for admission onto them should be reduced as many, but not all, students respond very favourably to these programmes.

- Further efforts should be made to coordinate the activities of the three government departments, i.e. Education, Health and Justice, which may be involved in pupils' misbehaviour. The present situation is cumbersome and time-consuming.

- Where current local services are not adequate, provision of a range of services to support teachers in their work with very problematic students should be available and readily accessible. These services should include:

  - a recognised system of referral to a support team;

  - the support team to represent a range of expertise; some generic, some specialist, e.g. psychologists, both educational and clinical, psychotherapists; counsellors, community gardai, and other personnel, as the situation warrants;

—   opportunities for close liaison between schools and the specialists who provide the support;

—   On-going communication of an inter-disciplinary nature to ensure continuing teacher involvement once a referral is made.

• Many of the interested parties and key informants expressed the view that careful consideration should be given to the setting up of specialist short-term or interim support centres to meet the very pressing needs created by a minority of pupils, whose extreme behaviour, despite the unrelenting and dedicated commitment of schools, fail to respond, and consequently jeopardise the on-going work and well-being of their teachers and peer group.

• Discussions with relevant parties should be initiated to explore the implications of the introduction of such support centres.

• Class size should be reduced, especially in disadvantaged areas, to enhance teaching and learning and to allow for more teacher-pupil interaction, particularly for schools catering for large numbers of at-risk pupils.

• Whole-school planning should give special attention to a consideration of issues relating to school discipline.

• While recognising that all staff have a pastoral responsibility to students, time and space and appropriate facilities should be made available to allow those teachers specifically charged with pastoral responsibility to effectively discharge their role. The current workload of these teachers is incompatible with the time demands of the responsible tasks which they perform.

• Teacher mobility should be facilitated and encouraged, whereby teachers could experience working in different school cultures and contexts.

- The Department of Education should continue to fund, and make possible, high quality inservice education for teachers and teacher educators.

- Appropriate agencies should provide programmes on parenting and personal development for parents, especially young parents in areas of multiple disadvantage.

- A data bank of research that is of immediate relevance to teachers, especially research aimed at promoting Positive Discipline in Schools, should be made available for practitioners and disseminated through local Education Centres.

- The proposed Regional Education Boards should have statutory responsibility for allocating special measures to schools catering for the disadvantaged.

- Details of school attendance should be carefully monitored and recorded in a central data base. This would help locate children of school-going age who are being "lost" in the system.

- The Department of Education should continue to commission research on Discipline in Schools.

- Future research on School Discipline should:

    — be more comprehensive in scope;
    — include pupil perspectives;
    — represent **all** types of schools.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

- Schools should seek to develop collaborative cultures and norms of collegiality whereby issues relating to discipline can be discussed and shared. In schools where this is already a feature, the problems are minimised.

- School cultures should be such that teachers feel supported in their efforts to establish and maintain an orderly working environment.

- Schools that have successfully re-cultured and turned their discipline situation around, should be encouraged to document their process and disseminate this.

- Schools that have tried to address issues of discipline and perceive that they have failed, should also be encouraged to document and disseminate their efforts, as there is as much to be learned from failure as there is from success.

- A climate of sensitivity and support should prevail that makes it possible for individual teachers to admit to stresses and difficulties in establishing and maintaining order in their classrooms.

- Schools should seek to develop a sense of community where the ethos is one of belonging and support and where the quality of the interpersonal relationships is conducive to reconciliation and conflict resolution.

- School cultures should be such that those who form the school community should be affirmed and celebrated.

- Schools should promote, not only the academic well-being of their students, but also offer care and support. Students who feel cared about and supported, tend to perform and conform in acceptable ways.

- Schools should have in position a behaviour policy or code of discipline that is proactive and is consonant with the ethos of a caring school committed to high quality teaching and learning.

- The Behaviour Policy should represent a consensus of the values and aims of all the stakeholders in the school community, i.e. teachers, pupils, parents, ancillary staff, Boards of Management and the wider community.

- Guidelines and suggested codes on discipline issued by the Department of Education and the Teacher Unions, should be consulted as useful instruments in the formulation of school behaviour policies.

- Where schools have a Mission statement, the Behaviour Policy should be consonant with the philosophy and ethos that inform the school's Mission.

- The behaviour policy ideally should be phrased for all – not just pupils but teachers and parents too.

- The behaviour policy should be positive in orientation and point up how the school seeks to develop positive behaviours in its pupils.

- The behaviour policy should address bullying as a focus of concern.

- The behaviour policy should state clearly what measures or sanctions will ensue when unacceptable behaviours occur.

- Rules, if listed within the behaviour policy, should be:

  - Few and Fair;

  - Simple and Positively stated;

  - Enforceable and Enforced;

  - Developed and owned by all the partners;

  - Discussed and, if necessary and appropriate, taught like academic content.

- The implementation and frequent evaluation of the Behaviour Policy should be a consistent and shared responsibility.

- Due consideration should be given to the legal implications of a School Behaviour Policy in a climate of increasing litigation.

- In short, a school's Behaviour Policy should be a document that is constructed in a way that celebrates the school as a place that is dedicated to quality teaching and learning and that is supportive of the well-being of all who form part of the school community.

- When, and if, it arises that a student is being permanently excluded from a school, efforts should be made, with parental approval, to seek alternative placement for the student in another school, and the period of transfer should be as short as possible.

- Schools should value a range of achievements and successes in their students — both academic and non-academic.

- Schools should recognise that the traditional narrow view of intelligence as characterised by competence in language and number, is no longer current, but is broadened to include recognition of a range of multiple intelligences, e.g. musical, artistic, interpersonal, kinesthetic etc. These aspects of student development should be promoted and prized within the school.

- Schools should seek to minimise the polarisation of students that results from streaming and tracking.

- Schools should recognise that heterogeneous groupings require teaching methodologies that are different from those required in streamed classes. Where teaching methods are not adapted to mixed ability classes, pupil alienation can result and damage self-esteem in the process.

- Schools should seek to manage the transition from primary to post-primary schools in an effort to:

(i)   ease pupil and parent anxiety, and

(ii)   promote pupil commitment to work, and to be happy in their new school.

- Schools should work to develop meaningful partnerships with the parents of their pupils. Two-way communication and cooperation should be developed.

- Schools should hold high expectations for their pupils. These high expectations should be communicated to pupils and their parents.

- Schools should communicate to the parents of their pupils that parental cooperation will enhance the school's work and success with their children.

- Schools should invest a lot of effort into integrating their new intake of pupils into the life of the school.

- Schools should consider introducing their Behaviour Policy, or Code of Discipline, to their pupils and their parents prior to their intake, and seek their cooperation in its implementation.

- Schools should seek to involve their pupils in the realisation of the school's Mission. This may mean allocating a variety of tasks and responsibilities to students and interacting with them in a variety of school related activities.

- Schools should be sensitive not only to the needs of disruptive students, but also to the needs of conforming students who find themselves in situations that are troubling.

- Schools should deploy their Guidance Counsellors and Pastoral Care teachers in roles appropriate to their expertise. While competent in a range of areas related to pupil welfare and growth, the practice of using these staff members to solve serious classroom disruption problems is inappropriate.

- Schools should be clear on the role of the School Psychological Service. Among its many competencies are:

  (i)   The identification of the causes of indiscipline;
  (ii)   Engagement in Case Work;
  (iii) Prevention of indiscipline via Inservice.

  It is inappropriate to involve the Service in the exclusion of pupils from schools.

- Schools should be supported in their efforts to strike a balance between their investment of time in disruptive students and their time investment in pupils who conform.

- Parents and the wider community should recognise that schools have a threshold of tolerance for persistently disruptive behaviour but that there may be occasions when it becomes necessary to exclude a pupil from the school.

- Schools should be supported in their efforts to balance the overall needs of the school community and the needs of the disruptive student and his/her family.

- Schools should teach their pupils the skills of conflict resolution, and schools should involve pupils, where appropriate, in the resolution of discipline issues.

- Schools should try to ensure that the learning environment is attractive, stimulating and safe for all.

- Schools should develop a range of initiatives aimed at developing in students a sense of pride in their school as a place where they belong and where their contribution is valued.

- Schools should consider displaying a variety of student work that represents a range of student activities. Students should be involved in organising and selecting material for these displays.

- Schools should endeavour to give their pupils success rather than failure identities. The influence of failure is pervasive and enduring, while that of success is energising and motivating. Success in school, in any area of accomplishment, should be recognised and nurtured, to build student self-esteem.

- Schools should seek to develop meaningful partnerships with the wider community.

- Schools should consider linking up at-risk pupils with a mentor — somebody of prestige and integrity in the community who would act as a support to a pupil experiencing difficulties in school.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

- Selection procedures for entry into the teaching profession should try to ensure that successful entrants have a range of attributes and competencies that will assist them in a complex and demanding profession.

- Selection procedures for entry into the teaching profession should take into account the importance of a teacher as role model in the lives of learners.

- Preservice teacher education programmes should seek to develop in their students new skills and understandings consistent with the latest research in education and psychology.

- Alongside other core areas in preservice teacher education, attention should be given to:

—   the changing society in which we live and its impact on, and implications for schools;

—   the importance of effective relationship-building with outside agencies, but especially with parents as partners;

—   the development of norms of collegiality and collaboration;

—   the skills of classroom management as a proactive, positive approach to ensure high quality teaching and learning;

—   the skills of conflict resolution;

—   the psychology of adolescence and middle childhood;

—   the impact of information technology and its potential to enhance teaching and learning;

—   the importance of continuing to be a life long learner with an on-going commitment not only to teaching but also to learning;

—   the development of respect for educational research literature which informs professional development and growth.

—   a commitment to teaching as a research based profession and the promotion of the teacher as a lifelong learner.

• Both preservice and inservice education should focus on teaching methodologies suited to new curricula and sensitive to the wide variety of learners in any class of pupils.

• High quality inservice teacher education should become a feature of teachers' professional development.

- Inservice eduction should be provided at transitional times in a school's life history, e.g. amalgamation, changing from single sex to co-educational etc., i.e. when the school fundamentally alters its character.

- The themes addressed in inservice teacher education should be in line with the perceived and articulated needs of the teaching profession.

- Inservice should be provided on a whole-school basis when the themes are of generic interest to the school.

- While acknowledging that all teachers may assume a pastoral role, inservice education of an appropriate nature should be provided for those teachers within a school specifically charged with pastoral responsibility for students.

- Consideration should be given to joint Inservice training involving teachers and personnel from allied agencies working with young people, in an effort to enhance understanding of their complementary areas of expertise.

- Consideration should be given to the formation of a cadre of trainers-cum-facilitators to help schools embark on the development of positive approaches to discipline and the resolution of existing difficulties. Preferably, the cadre should consist of skilled teachers who have credibility with their peers. Suitable training should be provided for the cadre to equip them to work effectively and to become important change agents.

- Where schools feel that they may lack the capacity to effectively address their difficulties with discipline, an outside facilitator should be considered, to assist in the strategic planning and implementation phases of any new initiatives aimed at turning the situation around.

- Principals should ensure that newly appointed teachers and substitutes are introduced to the school's behaviour policy, and, ideally, these new appointees should have the support of a designated experienced colleague to act as a mentor in their settling in period. The relationship should be based on mutual respect, trust and openness.

- Consideration should be given to the compilation of a Handbook of Best Practice for use in schools. This resource could be used to focus discussion, and build consensus on effective approaches to school discipline in the unique context of each school.

- Opportunities should be created for schools of similar and differing characteristics to network and share their lore on effective strategies in the area of discipline. The real expertise resides in teachers and their creativity, and virtuosity in dealing constructively and successfully with discipline issues should be shared and garnered.

- Inservice should be made available for teachers experiencing difficulty in classroom management.

- For teachers wishing to observe each other teach, schools should try to accommodate peer observation and inter-classroom visitation as a means of professional development.

- In view of the importance of the leadership role exercised by school principals, inservice education of an appropriate nature should be provided to assist them. This is especially relevant for Principals new in post.

- Inservice provision for principals of schools should include input on managing pupil behaviour.

- Local education centres should continue to provide high quality Inservice on themes related to discipline and should ensure that all schools in their catchment area are aware of their availability.

- Time and funding should be made available for Colleges of Education and University Departments of Education to continue new emphases in line with the changing needs of teacher education programmes.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY COOPERATION

- There should be general acknowledgement that there are some behavioural problems that are not amenable to within-school intervention. Therefore, structures need to be put in position to facilitate an interdisciplinary approach to the positive resolution of these problems.

- Schools should be familiar with the range of support services that exist in their locality for helping at-risk students and students who are permanently excluded or who drop out of school.

- A directory of local services for youth, and containing information in agencies working with youth, should be compiled and distributed to schools.

- Teachers charged with responsibility for student support should, as a starting point, make sure that they know their colleagues in other helping agencies. Effective inter-agency and multidisciplinary work is enhanced where good interpersonal relationships exist.

- Efforts should be made to clarify or minimise the use of professional jargon as it may block communication and a real understanding of issues.

- Measures should be taken to ensure that support services are available quickly to schools in response to their requests.

- Every effort should be made to have the schools' position represented and their views sought when critical decisions are being made by outside agencies concerning their students.

- A Case Conference involving school representatives, parents, support agencies currently working with, or likely to work with the referred student, may form part of the intervention process. Time should be made available to allow school representative/s to attend and fully participate in such joint interdisciplinary meetings concerning a student.

- Care should be exercised concerning confidentiality of information, yet progress should not be obstructed because of the withholding of vital information. Permission should be sought and obtained in writing from the student's parents/guardians, permitting teachers to share information that will help to progress a student's situation.

- Inter-agency measures should be taken, to identify and provide for the students who are at risk of being lost to the education system i.e.

  (i) pupils who fail to make the transfer from primary to post-primary schooling;

  (ii) pupils who drop out pre Junior Certificate;

  (iii) the uncertified leavers who drop out on completion of the Junior Certificate.

- Provision should be made for unruly children who are out of the control of their parents.

FINAL REMARKS

It is the best of times and the worst of times to be a teacher in Ireland right now. The best, because of the immense privilege that it is to work with a cohort of talented young people who will be influential in a variety of spheres in the next millennium. The best, because of the excitement and buzz that there is in Irish education at present. The worst, because of the intrusion of society's ills into many classrooms. The worst because of the consequent deterioration in the teaching and learning situation. This Report has drawn attention to the difficulties which are experienced in schools and has sought to identify the main contributory factors.

High quality schooling, which has always been a feature of Irish society, is now more than ever required to provide for the well-being of the young in our society. It is vital that the public at large appreciates the potential that our school system holds for influencing the life patterns of the young and vulnerable. To neglect to cater for their well-being within a sensitive and stimulating school environment is to sow the seeds for serious social ills down the road. Schools cannot assume total responsibility for the well-being of the nation's future. An African proverb suggests that – it takes a whole village to raise a child – in other words, the nurturing of the young is a shared responsibility. Schools are powerful agents of socialisation. Schools that are pupil-centered, that are for the pupils, have an unparalleled opportunity to make a difference in the lives of many.

Of central concern in the preparation of this Report was a wish to assure teachers and schools experiencing difficulties that their difficulties are not insoluble. Ways have been found to overcome problems with disruption and to turn apparently intractable situations around. It is realistic to aim to minimise disruption and to create an orderly environment conducive to quality teaching and learning. It is probably unrealistic to seek to totally eliminate disruption. Schools that feel the need to change, can change. This requires a serious investment of

time, energy and painstaking work on the part of staffs, led by a committed and energising principal and underpinned by appropriate support. To those engaged, or about to engage in a process of change, the road ahead may be long and arduous, but the gains to all who make up the education community, and indeed to society as a whole, will be incalculable, and well worth the investment.

APPENDIX 1

MODELS OF BEST PRACTICE

The schools profiled in this section have been identified and included because they provide an excellent opportunity to show what can be accomplished. It is worth noting that the models concretise much of what the partners in education deemed necessary for the development of smooth running schools. Care has been taken to choose schools which are distributed nationally, and, in particular, a number are located in very disadvantaged neighbourhoods. They are succeeding against the odds. Further research is required to trace the process and the journey of these schools in reaching their current "best practice" status. The schools profiled supplied vast amounts of data, and what is presented here is an attempt to give a sense of the individual schools with particular reference to the structures and practices to which they attribute their satisfactory discipline. Some editing was needed to reduce the supplied profiles, but what follows are the original accounts given in the words of the schools themselves. It is hoped that justice has been done to these schools and that, in the data reduction, no important facets have been omitted.

MOUNT SESKIN COMMUNITY SCHOOL

SCHOOL PROFILE

In 1982, Mount Seskin Community School was started from the Mount Seskin Junior School. Facilities at that time were few, with just one room serving as a classroom, a Science Lab and an Art room. The Science Department had no equipment, and a camping stove was used as a Bunsen Burner. At Art time, newspapers had to be spread over the floor and desks before class began. Home Economics had to be taught in the Family Resource Centre.

During the School's second year in existence, all students had to be taken by bus to another local Community School. The first convoy of buses left from various points around the Parish at 8.30 a.m. and the last buses arrived back at 4.30 p.m. The mad driving around the roads of Mount Seskin, the endless supervision, the shrill sounds of whistles (every teacher had one) had to be experienced to be believed!

The site for Mount Seskin Community School was blessed in October 1982. Covering 11 acres, it cost the Department of Education £312,000. The school building itself, took up 1.5 acres, about the size of a football pitch. The Department of Education paid £2,400,000 to finish the school. By September 1984 the students and staff of Mount Seskin were encamped in a magnificent new building.

Friday, April 26 1985 marked the official opening of the school by the then Minister of Education, Mrs. Gemma Hussey.

Today, Mount Seskin Community School has made its mark as a highly regarded and progressive Community School which provides an excellent standard of education for students of all abilities.
We do this by promoting:

- A climate of mutual respect;
- An excellent standard of curriculum;
- High and realistic expectations for our students'
- Partnership between the home, school and community.

Our motto is *putting young people first*. We have an enrolment of 600 young people in our school.

BACKGROUND FACTORS OF MOUNT SESKIN

There is no focal point in the area and most of the shops in the neighbourhood shopping centre have closed. There is no Health Centre in Mount Seskin itself. There are high levels of unemployment and welfare dependency with subsequent social problems such as drug abuse and juvenile crime. All housing in the area is local authority.

Summary Indicators of Disadvantage

The Mount Seskin area has an overall deprivation score of 10. The factors contributing to this are:

- 45% with no education other than primary or less;
- only 3.1% with 3rd level education;
- 40% of earners semi and unskilled manual;
- 72% of principal earners are unemployed;
- 78% of principal earners have income of less than £150 per week;
- 26.2% are lone parent households;
- Average gross income is £123.26 per week;
- 82% are dependent on social welfare.

Staff

There are 60 Teaching Staff in Mount Seskin. All staff members receive continuous In-Serving training in the school, so they are constantly reviewing their teaching methods so as to provide students with the most up-to-date education available. We also have an ancillary staff of 2 secretaries, 2 caretakers, 1 housekeeper and 9 domestics.

Supports for Students

Mount Seskin aims to provide a supportive and caring environment where students are encouraged to maximise their potential.

- *Tutor System* — each class is assigned a tutor who promotes their students' personal development and monitors progress.

- Career Guidance.

- Counselling.

- School Chaplaincy.

- Bereavement Groups.

- Home-School Liaison.

- Assertiveness Training.

- *A.C.E. Programme (Accessing College Education)* — UCD has linked with Mount Seskin to introduce our students to Third Level Education while they are still in school. They provide trips to universities, talks from college lecturers and opportunities for students to view college and student facilities.

- Special Junior Certificate school programme.

- Mount Seskin/YMCA Peer Educational Programme for senior cycle students.

- *I.B.E.C. — Business and Education Links Project.* Nestles have chosen Mount Seskin as its link school. The project will offer our senior students:

  (a) CV Preparation Advice;
  (b) Interview Techniques Programme;
  (c) Business Experience through a Junior Management Programme.

- *UCD Outreach Programme* — UCD offers free grinds to our 6th year students from February to April in all exam subjects.

- *Clinic Support* — Mount Seskin is working in partnership with a local Clinic to help students who are finding it difficult to cope with teenage years.

- Free Supervised Study for 6th and 3rd year students.

- *Remedial Education* — Two full-time remedial teachers and a resource teacher.

- *Students Council* — to be established this year.

- *D.S.S. Programme* — A school-based programme specially designed to cater for the social and personal development needs of our own students. Drugs Awareness and Relationships in sexuality form part of its programme.

- *Key Project* — Mount Seskin engages youth.

- *Mount Seskin Youth Service* — Personal development programme.

- *School Incentives Programme* — to reward hard work and positive behaviour.

- *Extra Curricular Activities* — Gaelic Football, Soccer, Basketball, Badminton, Track and Field Activities, Swimming, Outdoor Education Programmes, Choir, Speech and Drama, Young Adult Leadership Training, Environmental Group, Debating Computer Club, School Magazine, Educational Tours, Photography Club, Wildlife Club.

From the very beginning, sporting activities have been an important part of the fabric of Mount Seskin. Later, all students took part in an Outdoor Education Programme and all second years learned to swim. Since 1985, fifth year students have travelled to Recess in Connemara for a four day adventure holiday. The school choir is nationally renowned. Hundreds of students, accompanied by teachers, have travelled to France, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Russia, Scotland and Spain.

Mount Seskin has also enjoyed visits by the U.S. Ambassador, Jean Kennedy-Smith; Liam Brady and international groups from Japan, Africa and other E.C. countries. On Monday, October 7, 1991, President Mary Robinson visited the school to join in the tenth anniversary celebrations. More recent times have seen the development of Adult Education Programmes and increased parental involvement. Mount Seskin has its Parents' Association in place, and now looks forward to the future as we get ready to meet the new challenges of changing Curricula.

Discipline

In Mount Seskin we adopt a positive approach to discipline. Each year group is run by a Year Head who monitors and supports the students with a strict but fair approach to behaviour. Discipline and all school rules are based on respect for yourself, others and property. **BULLYING IS NOT TOLERATED.**

The Tutor/Year Head System

The system is fully developed at Mount Seskin and works well. Basically, each class group has its own tutor who is responsible for a number of duties pertaining to that class. The main ones are:

(i) calling the register, collecting absence notes and writing up each day's attendance sheet;

(ii) encouraging proper use of the journal, signing it each week and checking that it has been signed by the parent;

(iii) encouraging high standards of punctuality, attendance, behaviour and neatness in the students;

(iv) instilling a sense of belonging among students in the tutor class by getting to know them as individuals.

The tutor is aided in his/her duties by the Year Head and the Assistant Year Head. It is their responsibility to coordinate the tutor's work. Meetings are held between Year Head and tutors to discuss other issues such as reports, exam fees and parent/teacher meetings. The tutor may request confidential information about a student's background or family difficulties in an attempt to understand him/her better. Good communication between tutor and Year Head is the key to success. The Assistant Year Head will operate a Lates detention once every two weeks (three lates in two weeks = detention).

Tutors, or indeed any staff, may check registers or the office for students' phone numbers. However, contact with home should be made with the knowledge of the Year Head. Parents are generally cooperative when contacted about their child's absences, attitude to work, lack of study or behavioural difficulties. Letters may also be sent home regarding same. It is important to appreciate that the role of the tutor is predominantly pastoral as opposed to disciplinary. Serious offences

committed by students are really the responsibility of the Year Head. However, it is good practice to keep the tutor informed. Each tutor is provided with a Tutor Handbook at the start of the year which lists the duties of the tutor.

Guidelines for New Appointees

It is wise for a new teacher to seek help with a difficult class, from the very outset. Pupils will not see this as a weakness. Rather, they will know that you have a standard, which you are prepared to insist on. The class should feel that it is their responsibility to reach your standard rather than drag you down to theirs.

While it is extremely important that you are seen by students to take control, you should continue to call in the Year Head until the matter is resolved. However, you must remember three things:

(i)   *you* must be the one to point out their misconduct and your dissatisfaction of it, in front of the Year Head and not expect him/her to pick up the pieces for you. If this happens, students will display good conduct in his/her presence and revert back to old ways when he/she is gone;

(ii)   losing your temper is counter-productive. Students enjoy seeing out of control teachers and so may continue to repeat the offences to achieve the desired effect;

(iii)   You must be fair or you will alienate students who were previously on your side. Never punish an entire class for the misbehaviour of a few.

Students are happiest when boundaries have been firmly set for them and they have a fair routine to adhere to. Each classroom has a laminated sheet entitled "General Classroom Rules" to which the pupils' attention is frequently drawn. Our school Rules and their rationale, provide a discussion point and contributes to the development of student self-discipline.

SCHOOL RULES

Rules are not invented by teachers just to torment pupils or to make life miserable ... a little common sense will show that they are there to safeguard ... therefore we expect:

1. **That you come to school every day and arrive on time. This means:**
   - That you attend school everyday unless it is absolutely unavoidable;
   - That if you miss school you bring in a note or a Doctor's Certificate;
   - That if you must leave school during the day, you get permission and sign out;
   - That if you are unavoidably late, you bring in a note;
   - That you arrive at all classes on time and not delay.

   Because:
   - Time missed is hard to make up;
   - The school is entitled to an explanation;
   - The school is responsible for you during the day;
   - Out of courtesy;
   - It wastes your time, the teachers' time and class time.

2. **That you do your best to work both in class and at your homework. This means:**
   - That you listen to the teachers;
   - That you don't disturb the class;
   - That you do your homework each night, written or oral;
   - That you always carry your journal and take down your homework in it;
   - That you get it signed weekly by your parents and class teacher.

   Because:
   - The teacher is only trying to help you;
   - It is unfair to others who wish to learn;
   - It is a back-up to the work done in class;
   - It helps you remember what you have to do;
   - It lets your parents see how you are getting on.

3. **That you come in properly prepared for your subjects. This means:**
    - That you have the proper pens, books and copies;
    - That you carry them in a schoolbag;
    - That you bring any special equipment needed.

    Because:
    - It only wastes time if you haven't got them;
    - It prevents loss and keeps books from becoming tattered;
    - It is impossible to do the subject without them.

4. **That you come to school in uniform, clean and tidy: This means:**
    - That you don't drag in mud or dirt;
    - That you wear suitable clothing in changeable weather.

    Because:
    - It prevents dirtying the school;
    - It means not sitting in wet clothes or missing class.

5. **That you have respect and consideration for other students. This means:**
    - Being helpful and treating others with good manners and respect;
    - Not picking-on or bullying others;
    - Not fighting;
    - That you don't push and shove your way around;
    - That you respect their property.

    Because:
    - Like you they are entitled to this;
    - This causes fear, hurt and misery;
    - It can cause serious injury;
    - This too, can lead to accident or injury;
    - You would expect the same.

6. **That you respect the instructions of your teachers. This means:**
    - That you are courteous and respectful to them;
    - That it applies especially when accompanied by teachers outside the school.

    Because:
    - Everyone is entitled to this;
    - It makes the outing more enjoyable for all.

7.   **That you act in a proper manner around the school. This means:**
 –   Not smoking in or near the school;
 –   Walking in an orderly way between rooms along the routes specified;
 –   Waiting quietly in line before entering classrooms;
 –   Taking your break in the manner and area specified;
 –   Carrying your bag at breaktime.

 Because:
 –   It is unhealthy and dangerous;
 –   It avoids confusion and accident
 –   It is safer and helps with supervision;
 –   You won't lose it.

8.   **That you are tidy and careful with school property. This means:**
 –   That you don't break, damage or deface school property;
 –   When using equipment or books, returning them tidily after class;
 –   Taking pride in the appearance of the school and avoiding litter.

 Because:
 –   Others have to use it and it is expensive;
 –   To facilitate other users;
 –   No one likes messy surroundings.

Researcher's Note

It is the combination of a wide variety of structures and programmes, plus the dedicated commitment of a highly motivated staff led by a very energetic, dynamic principal that has contributed to Mount Seskin's success against the odds.

Mount Seskin School
Spring 1997

Oak Park Post Primary School

School Profile

Oak Park College is a 650 pupil, co-educational secondary school in a prosperous Midlands industrial town. The school, which was built in the early eighties, is under one roof with all classrooms at ground floor level. The pupil population spans the entire ability range. All social classes are represented. There is a slightly disproportionate number of disadvantaged pupils. Approximately 25% of parents claim to be unemployed. About 20% of parents are separated or single parents, or in second relationships. The school does not have disadvantaged status.

General Aspects of School Policy Supportive of Good Pupil Behaviour

- good relations within the staff and between staff, pupils and parents;

- consultations with teachers on all issues pertaining to school policy and practice;

- an induction programme for new, temporary and substitute teachers;

- a curriculum provision which offers a wide range of subjects and allows pupils to exercise the maximum amount of personal choice; a guidance counsellor and remedial teacher;

- a Home School Links Person;

- timetabled programmes in Pastoral Care;

- a wide range of extra curricular activities with a strong emphasis on pupil involvement and responsibility in all aspects of school life;

- an active Parents' Council which is informed and consulted on aspects of school policy and practice;

- a Board of Management which is kept well informed of developments in the area of discipline and is very supportive;

- ample time devoted to considering the needs of disadvantaged pupils;

- good quality communications with parents and pupil through meetings, newsletters, parent teacher meetings, assemblies, intercom;

- well maintained internal school environment;

- a desire to maintain a good profile in a competitive environment.

SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF SCHOOL POLICY HELPFUL IN ACHIEVING GOOD PUPIL BEHAVIOUR AND IN THE MANAGEMENT OF DIFFICULTIES

Problem Analysis

- Focus on teaching and learning — good discipline seen as essential so that good teaching and learning can take place;

- Involvement of all staff including office staff, caretakers, cleaners and lunchtime assistant. This creates a climate of ownership;

- Research:

(a) what the literature has to say;

(b) what is happening in the school — flashpoints, vulnerabilities, majority of pupils very well behaved, behaviours of minority identified.

- Search for continuous improvement.

Policy Formulation

- Focus on agreed core set of behaviours which every teacher insists on in every classroom;

- Focus on training pupils, especially First Years into the expectations the school has of them;

- Effective sanctions for management of misconduct — detention.

Implementation

- Allocation of resources — plenty of time for discussion, analysis and evaluation. Staff appointed to manage problems at Year Level. Only very serious cases referred to Vice-Principal;

- Visibility and Persistence of staff, particularly at start of the day, at class change times — along with the occasional campaign to strengthen our monitoring;

- Strategies devised to deal with persistent offenders — black lists;

- Initiatives have had immediate and visible payoff — traffic flow is improved as is the overall order throughout the school;

- Focus on disruptive individual pupil, not on whole group. Focus on the behaviour not the person;

- Positive focus — incentives and rewards — video, film, draw, prizes;

- Immediacy of Action. Complaints are dealt with on the same day in most cases.

REVIEW

All aspects of pupil behaviour are regularly monitored and reviewed. Where changes are considered necessary, these are implemented quickly. These factors which we have collaboratively developed in response to a perceived need for improvement in our discipline, are working very satisfactorily for us.

Oak Park School
Spring 1997.

Scoil Dóchais Senior Primary School

School Profile

Scoil Dóchais began in a green field site in a totally new Dublin suburb in April 1980. It began with one teacher. Today the senior school alone has thirty two teachers and 596 pupils. The area is one of crisis disadvantage. 28% of the children come from lone parent families; 67% come from families in which there is unemployment, and, at present, 1,252 children from the area are in the senior primary school profiled here and its feeder junior school. 47% of the suburbs population are under the age of 15 years. In Scoil Dóchais, senior primary, there are 19 mainstream class teachers, 4 teachers of the mentally handicapped pupils; 2 teachers of the Travelling Community pupils; 1 learning support teacher; 1 Teacher Counsellor; 1 Home-School-Community Liaison teacher; 1 Project class teacher and 2 teachers above quota with different responsibilities as need arises.

The catchment area of the school for the mainstream classes is the local parish. The vast majority of the pupils come from the Scoil Dóchais Junior School. Pupils travel by bus to the special classes; 92% of the pupils in these classes are from the local school population. The children from the Travelling community also come by bus. They live in halting sites dotted around the area. The school's motto is "every child is valued" and the philosophy that underpins the ethos of the school is that it is "better to light a candle than to curse the darkness."

The Principal in post has been part of the school community since its inception. The difficulties confronting Scoil Dóchais are many and varied, but, over the years, we have devised structures, and introduced a range of support programmes that have led us to a position of strength. Here follows a reasonable detailed account of the measures we have taken to meet the challenges posed to a school like ours in an area of great deprivation.

CODE OF DISCIPLINE

In deciding on a code of discipline, it was deemed very important to keep in mind the fact that the behaviour expected in school may differ from that accepted at home. We see training in socially acceptable behaviour as an integral part of our curriculum. Our aim that the pupils enjoy school is proving to be the greatest asset in the area of discipline. Each member of staff is consistent in enforcing the code of discipline throughout the school and each teacher, therefore, has an important role to play in this area. The ethos of the school sets the tone of discipline of the school.

ATMOSPHERE AND TONE OF THE SCHOOL

We believe that:

1. The general atmosphere of the school shows evidence of good discipline.

2. The school has a sense of purpose understood by teachers, parents and pupils.

3. The pupils should be happy and courteous.

4. There should be good relationships among the staff.

5. There should be good relationships between the staff and pupils.

6. There should be good relationships between staff and parents.

7. There should be good relationships between the pupils.

8. Teachers, parents and pupils have a pride in their school.

DISCIPLINARY FRAMEWORK

1. There is staff agreement regarding implementation of code of discipline.

2. Parents are aware and supportive of the school's code of discipline.

3. Principal and staff give satisfactory support to colleagues in disciplinary matters.

4. The pupils know the rules of the school.

5. The pupils are aware of the Principal and staff's attitude to discipline.

6. The staff recognises that there are different codes of acceptable behaviour in the home, the school and the playground.

IMPLEMENTATION OF CODE

1. There is a reward system for good behaviour.

2. There is a punishment system for unacceptable behaviour.

3. Discipline is enforced consistently.

4. Incidents of unacceptable behaviour are noted in a Discipline notebook.

5. Children's behaviour is discussed with parents.

6. Teachers' are aware of circumstances which may affect a pupils' behaviour.

7. There are sufficient outlets for "letting off steam."

8. The Principal deals strictly, but fairly, with any pupil a teacher feels necessary to send to the office.

9. Pupils are given an opportunity to justify their behaviour.

10. Parents are informed regarding continual unacceptable behaviour.

11. If, and when necessary, the Department of Education's guidelines on suspension are followed meticulously.

12. The Principal visits classes regularly to encourage good behaviour, praises well-behaved pupils and takes note of unacceptable behaviour.

13. In all cases, justice is tempered with mercy.

PROGRAMMES IN POSITION

In Scoil Dóchais we have a range of programmes that are very effective in supplementing our standard curriculum. Apart from our involvement in the Health Promoting School Project, we have established very viable links with the under Community. A local partnership has helped to fund a "project class" and the pupils in this class will be followed longitudinally to chart their educational progress. Some children are involved in a locally based project, run by Barnardos. Each year, approximately twelve children attend the project one day per week. This is an initiative of Barnardos aimed to help children and families under stress. We also have an Art Therapist who visits the school two days each week. This enrichment programme is also of great value in helping us to cater for those of our pupils who may have some degree of emotional disturbance. Other features of our educational provision include:

Circle Time Sessions

Circle Time is a pleasant, comfortable time, when the class comes together for thought, enjoyment and self congratulations. Problems can be discussed openly, either a whole class problem, or an individual one, and solved with the participation of the whole group. The emphasis is on help and not blame.

The class may congratulate itself on achievement either as a whole or individuals. Praise and rewards can be handed out by any members of the class. Skills of listening, looking and thinking are highlighted in circle games.

Topics for discussion can cover anything, i.e. school work, classroom behaviour, rules, yard time, coming to and from school, interests, news, feelings etc. Discussion is controlled, which makes it difficult for children to just complain, tell tales. The onus is put on the individual to solve problems rather than just voice them. Children learn to recognise anti-social behaviour and its effect on others.

The aim of circle time is to motivate the children into a willingness to share thoughts and feelings in a safe environment and to initiate a collective responsibility for the promotion of self-esteem and positive behaviour.

Golden Rules

Golden Rules are drawn up with the children in the initial circle time sessions. These rules outline the explicit behaviours that show respect and caring towards one another. They also incorporate physical safety measures. The Golden Rules are then displayed in the classroom.

Our Golden Rules

Do be gentle	—	Don't hurt anyone
Do be kind	—	Don't hurt anyone's feelings
Do listen well	—	Don't shout out
Do work hard	—	Don't waste your or other peoples time
Do look after property	—	Don't damage it
Do be honest	—	Don't cover up the truth

Golden Time

Golden Time is a regular half hour slot of free time, during which the children can choose a "special" educational activity. Golden time is seen as a reward for all children who uphold the Golden Rules.

Self-Esteem Groups

Enhancing the self-esteem of children is now acknowledged as a key factor in the promotion of more positive relationships, learning and behaviour within the classroom. With this in mind, children with low self-esteem are taken in small therapeutic circles. Here, the children can experience success and are given praise, recognition and affection.

Rainbows Programme

This twelve week support programme is run in the school to help children who have suffered a loss through death or separation. It helps them to grow into healthy, responsible and emotionally stable adults. To survive emotionally from a loss, children need time and guidance to mourn their loss. The group offers acceptance , understanding and exploration of the child's coping skills.

Communication and Conflict Resolution

When communication breaks down, conflict is often the result. Unresolved conflicts often result in hurt feelings, lost friendships, increased anger and frustration, and, sometimes, physical violence. The teacher-counsellor, as part of his/her role, acts as a mediator and helps the children to resolve any problems which may arise. Each child is given a chance to explain his/her side of the story, uninterrupted. The children are helped to find a solution that meets the needs of everyone involved.

Parents Involvement in School

In Scoil Dóchais the parents of our pupils make a very significant contribution to the life of our school. There is a large group of parents who are involved in the following projects:

- Helping in the classroom (Art & Craft, Scrabble, Chess, Sewing).

- Helping run our library facilities.

- Paired Reading.

- Savings Scheme.

- Transfer programme from 6th class to 1st year post primary.

- Positive attendance drive.

- Programme for Talented Youth (Run in conjunction with Dublin City University and St. Patrick's College of Education).

- Core Group (Working party with Home-School-Community Coordinator).

Parents Helping in the Classroom

Parental help and involvement in the classroom only takes place when:

(a) Teacher requests assistance and is comfortable with it.

(b) Parents are given training and ongoing evaluation is undertaken.

(c) Parents selected are suitable and are fully aware of the need for confidentiality and understand that they are there to assist, and the teacher is responsible for discipline.

There are positive benefits to parents helping in the classroom:

(i) It allows teachers to undertake activities with their class with the assistance of other adults which alone would be more difficult, e.g. clay work in art and craft, teaching of scrabble to a large group etc.

(ii) It provides opportunities for parents to share their talents and skills with teachers, children, e.g. Parents teaching patchwork.

(iii) It helps raise the self-esteem of parents and consequently has a positive knock-on effect on their children.

(iv) By involvement in their children's school, parents are beginning to take a greater interest in their children's education as well as a greater understanding of how schools work and the many demands on schools.

(v) It helps promote Partnership between home and school.

Courses and Classes for Parents

The following classes are on offer to parents to help them deal with their children's behavioural problems:

- Parenting Courses: (a) Assertive Parenting.
  (b) Parenting Teenagers.

- "Parents under Stress" Support Group.

- "Parenting for Prevention Against Substance Abuse" — Community Against Drugs.

- Personal Development.

- Parent and Toddler Group.

The second type of classes on offer to parents strive to meet the educational needs of parents, as well as raising the awareness of their own capabilities, to enhance their children's educational progress. Examples of these include:

- Basic English.
- Help your child with Maths/Irish etc.
- Computers and Word Processing.

Other classes on offer to parents are of a leisure type. They help promote the self-confidence and self-esteem of parents and, hopefully, in turn, have a knock-on effect on their children's behaviour.

It is this array of programmes, together with sensitive teaching in an atmosphere of care and respect, that helps us ALL to reach our potential in Scoil Dóchais.

Scoil Dóchais
Spring 1997.

GAIRM SCOIL COIS ABHANN

SCHOOL PROFILE

Our School is a medium-sized Vocational School in a large Provincial Town. We have c.600 pupils — 60% of whom are boys; 40% girls. On average, 20% of our pupils require remedial help. The school has a catchment area of between 6 and 10 miles radius. It covers an urban and rural region. There are 17 feeder schools in the area; 5 in the urban area and 12 in the rural area. At present 44% of the students in the school are from the urban area and 56% from the rural area.

SOCIO ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

An examination of parents' occupations, where recorded, provides some useful information. Only 5% of students come from a professional background. 57% of the students' fathers are in the skilled, unskilled or self-employed category. The unemployment figure of 28% reflects the unemployment rate of the area as a whole. A figure of 10% in the farming category is surprisingly low, since 56% of the students come from the rural area. The 5% deceased and 5% uncategorised, reflects the findings of the Parish Survey regarding single parent families. 23% of mothers work mostly in domestic and factory work. 30% of students in the school come from housing estates in the town and surrounding areas, where there is between 50% and 70% unemployment.

A TEAM APPROACH

The present Principal, who is new in post, is endeavouring to build on the work of his predecessors. He sees the further developing of a team approach and the greater involvement of the staff as the only way forward in these challenging times:

- The involvement of the "A" Post Holders as a senior management team has continued and is being further developed.

- Subject Departments have been developed and strengthened.

- Tutor system has been successfully introduced.

This greater involvement has been the source of several new and successful initiatives. We work as a team because "none of us is as smart as all of us." This has struck a chord with the staff. We have great morale. Two senior teachers (with over 25 years' experience) recently commented to the Vice-Principal that they loved coming to work. There is a definite increase in activities. We have a new equestrian team; the school band defunct for many years, has been revived on Saturday mornings. We have whole-school assembly at the start of each term. We use this to remind staff and students of **why** we are here and what **we** have to do as a school. There is an atmosphere of trust and respect where people's opinions are heard and given scope, and where problems are dealt with.

Parents

Parental involvement is vital. We have an active supportive Parents' Council. Parents are welcomed in the School. We are in the process of developing a Parents/Visitors' Reception Room. Parents are also actively involved in our Communications Programme. This Programme has had a great impact. Several parents mentioned how it has helped relations with their children. One parent chose not to move from our town to another because of the Programme.

The Curriculum

If the Curriculum suits the needs, aptitudes and interests of the students, discipline becomes self-discipline in a desire to achieve. This is an area on which we have work to do. We do have one programme of which we are very proud. We initiated a Programme for our First Year Students with low reading ages. We met with all their parents individually, and then in a group, before the children came to the School, to explain that their children needed extra help to catch up so that they could achieve more and stay longer in School. This has had a **huge** impact on behaviour. These students, in previous years (last year included), would have regularly been a source of misbehaviour. This has changed dramatically for the better. Four students from one class who had not done well in the reading test at entry have achieved the highest grades across the board in their Christmas class tests.

Student Involvement

We have a Student Council and each member represents a class. The Class Representative meets her class regularly and returns to the Council with their suggestions/complaints. These suggestions/complaints are acted upon as far as possible. We have given a "grant" to the Council to enhance school facilities. Members of the Student Council organise events in the School, e.g. a Basketball league; Peace petition; a Raffle for Chernobyl children. They also organise the queues in the canteen at lunchtime.

General Remarks

The School has a Pastoral approach. We emphasise, when speaking to large and small groups of pupils, the value of the school community as a whole. We use the term *in loco parentis* as a guiding light when speaking to pupils, emphasising that the staff are here to look after and educate them and that the staff have high expectations for cooperation and enthusiasm for learning. An Award Scheme to reinforce and reward effort and good behaviour has been a

great success with pupils, teachers and parents. This Scheme has had a very significant impact on behaviour. The Principal has also emphasised the value of celebrating success. All students' successes are publicised within and outside of the School, and the involvement of teachers is highlighted. The value of extra-curricular activities in developing good teacher/pupil relations is highlighted. The staff involved are openly congratulated on a regular basis.

When problems arise, the Principal deals firmly but fairly. He emphasises two pet hates — bullying and being lied to. There are two punishments — one if the truth is told and another if the pupil lies. If a pupil lies, there is a fundamental breakdown in the teacher/pupil rapport, and there is little or no hope of preventing a recurrence of the misbehaviour. A pupil who owns up, on the other hand, has taken responsibility, which is the first step in preventing recurrence of the misbehaviour. Pupils must also learn that there are consequences to misbehaviour. Young people, in general, have a finely-tuned sense of justice, and so it is important that the punishment fits the "crime." It is the Principal's experience that even when given a severe punishment, the student who understands and says "thank you" will rarely, on leaving, misbehave in such a way again. The Principal emphasises the role of parents. Their support is actively sought. In the event of persistent misbehaviour, parental support in dealing with the problem is sought. It is expected of parents that they share with the pupil some of the responsibility for resolving the problem.

OVERVIEW

- Good teacher/pupil rapport, with teachers concerned for pupil welfare.

- A majority of teachers who deal with incidents of misbehaviour in their own classes.

- Curriculum which suits the needs of pupils, e.g. Communications Programme, and a belief in people and the power of Education.

- A Principal who looks after the School community, who pulls all the strands together, and communicates across the board.

- Involvement and leadership encouraged and developed in staff members.

- Involvement of students in the running of the School.

- A hard-working Principal/Vice-Principal.

- The involvement of staff in the running of the School.

- An Award Scheme which rewards effort, achievement and contribution to School life. Effort and success celebrated "en famille."

- The stability afforded by low staff turnover (often seen as a disadvantage).

- The investment of care and effort into the building and grounds.

Gairm Scoil Cois Abhann
Spring 1997.

Árus na n-Óg

School Profile

Árus na n-Óg is a co-educational, multi-denominational, non-selective school with a comprehensive curriculum. The school is located in a suburb of a large city. The school was established in the seventies and the area is one of mixed private and local authority housing, with a population of approximately 16,000 people. Unemployment is high and reaches over 40% in some areas. Socio-economic conditions are poor and job opportunities in the area are negligible. The current population of Árus na n-Óg is approximately 600 pupils. The staff are mostly permanent wholetime teachers, with an equal balance of male and female. Most have been in the school for the past 15 years or more. The school has two additional Resource Guidance/Remedial teachers arising from our designated disadvantage status.

Árus na n-Óg is managed by a Board of Management involving parents, trustees and teachers, under the terms of the Deed of Trust for Community Schools. The facilities at Árus na n-Óg are excellent and the parent body have been very supportive of the school, not least in providing finance to maintain standards of equipment, etc. The school is fortunate to have excellent sports facilities.

Enrolment policy gives priority to students living in the immediate locality and no pupil is excluded from Árus na n-Óg because of lack of ability. Liaison with the main feeder schools, of which there are three, is operating at a very effective level. A Guidance Counsellor, Remedial Teacher, First Year Head

and Principal, work closely with 6th Class teachers and visit Primary Schools each year. It is significant that the same people have been involved with enrolment for several years and the same person has been First Year Year-Head for a number of years also. This continuity is important in building trust and keeping both parties well informed of developments. Primary teachers and Principals are regularly invited to Enrolment Review Meetings in Árus na n-Óg. In addition, all parents of families with no previous contact with the school are interviewed as part of the enrolment process. The result, then, is that in September of each year pupils commencing their education at Árus na n-Óg are easily inducted into the school climate. It is a priority also that each student begins with a clean sheet and is aware that a new a start is being made.

Fundamental to many aspects of school life is the school climate as experienced by teachers, pupils, parents and visitors. It is reflected in the level of our staff morale and the quality of relationships between pupil and pupil, between pupil and teacher and between teacher and teacher. It is not just the Code of Discipline, the rules, the sanctions that are in place, it is that feeling of security and caring which exists and is perceived. It is something which we built up over years of openness and sharing of challenges and developments among staff; an understanding among parents of their role and their acceptance as primary educators and the general attitude of students to our school and the quality of student life in the school. It has its source in leadership, primarily by the Principal, and also by the staff in their respective roles and duties. School Leadership is vital to achieving successful school climates where students and teachers can learn, teach and work in relative calm, where conditions and resources are conducive to growth, understanding and development, and where people are appreciated. The concept of ongoing change must be a key element in the successful Principal's mind and a climate of participation has been established among staff which involves choosing people with leadership qualities to tackle issues that arise. This participative, collaborative school culture is vital to the success of our school. Successful school features that we have evolved include:

- Staff participation in educational decision making;
- Diffused leadership among staff;
- Clarity of mission/vision;
- Achieving a high degree of consensus;
- Maintaining the momentum;
- Earning Staff trust through openness;
- Ensuring that the school is an outlet for all talents.

SCHOOL ORGANISATION IN ÁRUS NA N-ÓG.

We believe that good school organisation requires two complementary elements, a Pastoral Care Structure and a Code of Discipline to support the timetabled curriculum and the teaching-learning process which is the primary business of the school.

THE CARE STRUCTURE AND SCHOOL ORGANISATION

Pastoral Care is often mystified or is made to seem intangible and difficult to deliver. In Árus na n-Óg pupils are formed into classes/groups within each year group. A Class Teacher is assigned to each class group and a Year Head to each year group. Regular meetings of Class Teachers are held to monitor academic progress and the behaviour and personal development of pupils. We see Pastoral Care as a genuine concern for the growth, development, and well being of pupils which seeks to:

- Encourage respect for person and property
- Support the subject teaching
- Help pupils with decision making
- Prepare them for educational choices
- Enhance their personal lives.

The philosophy, or ethos, of Árus na n-Óg might be summarised here with reference to our Mission Statement e.g. *our school is a school which endeavours to provide a positive caring environment where good personal relationships and mutual respect are the cornerstones.* A school climate where caring and teaching go hand in hand is fundamental to achieving a successful school. All caring involves a teaching element and all teaching involves a caring element. Our Pastoral Care structure hinges around Class Teachers and Year Heads. These are the people who guarantee the delivery of care and who ensure that each pupil's needs are met in the day to day life of the school. We find that a regular weekly meeting of the Care Team is a most useful forum where an overview of the school climate is discussed. Each Year Head reports on current issues and, where appropriate, useful advice may be provided by the Guidance Counsellor, the Chaplain or the Remedial Teacher. This meeting also provides clarification and guidance from the Principal and Vice-Principal. The Care Meeting is essential for sharing information, seeking guidance and support and exchanging good practice or strategies that work in meeting the discipline or care needs of pupils. It also ensures that the Principal is well informed when meeting with parents about disciplinary matters that arise, and allows support to be given where needed, either to an individual teacher or to the class or year teachers.

THE CODE OF DISCIPLINE

The Board of Management at Árus na n-Óg was the authority responsible for ensuring that a fair and efficient Code of Discipline was drawn up in consultation with staff, pupils and parents. The Principal is responsible to the Board for the implementation of the Code. Here are some excerpts from our Code:

School Regulations for Pupils

1.   Attendance and Punctuality at all times is essential.

2.   School Uniform as specified must be worn at all times.

3. Attentiveness and full cooperation with teachers in and out of class are essential.

4. Smoking by pupils in the school building or in the school grounds is prohibited by law.

5. Pupils must never behave in a manner which would damage the reputation of the school.

6. The use of abusive or obscene language, gestures or rudeness is forbidden.

Procedures for Dealing with Unacceptable Behaviour.

The Board of Management reserves the sole right to impose an appropriate sanction in cases of unacceptable behaviour. Each case is dealt with in an appropriate manner following consultation and discussion. Every effort is made to resolve incidents in a positive manner.

Bullying clearly runs counter to the school philosophy of promoting the ideals of care and respect. It is instilled in our pupils that nobody has the right to make another feel uncomfortable by any action or by any use of language. The Tutorial classes and Religious Education programmes are among the curricular areas where the school encourages good relationships and respect and sets out to counteract bullying behaviour. As a matter of policy, we encourage disclosure of information where instances of bullying occur or are suspected. Pupils are made aware that since bullying is an affront to human dignity and a violation of personal freedom, disclosure is proper and necessary.

Rewards and Incentives

We in Árus na n-Óg believe, that encouragement is vital to success and achievement in young peoples' lives. As already stated, the vast majority of our pupils are happy, well adjusted people who have a keen desire to acquire the skills, the knowledge and the ideas that the comprehensive curriculum at Árus na n-Óg has to offer.

Many instances occur each year where classes or groups are rewarded for their attitudes and good behaviour. Our Awards system is designed to acknowledge good positive characteristics in our pupils, and each year certificates with appropriate citations and trophies are presented to many pupils. Year Heads may award prizes for achievement, improvement or significant performance as appropriate.

Academic achievement in Certificate Exams is also recognised and rewarded. Overall, the best incentive we can give to young people is to encourage and facilitate the achievement of good examination results, keen involvement in sport or other activity and the practice of a healthy lifestyle.

Conclusion

We are a happy, hard working school committed to the youth population that we serve. Sometimes the challenges that this entails stretch us beyond comfortable limits, but we certainly never get bored. For this we are grateful!

Árus na n-Óg
Spring 1997.

An Ré Nua Senior Primary School

School Profile

This school was built in 1979 on virgin green fields in a totally new Dublin suburb. It is a beautiful building, but the actual design has been one of the factors that has led to a lot of vandalism — low roof, low windows, flat roof in the centre of each block of classrooms. This has caused a lot of frustration over the years. We cater for 430 pupils. We have two special classes, a Teacher Counsellor, a Home-School-Community Liaison teacher and a remedial teacher.

Our children and families came from settled suburbs and the inner city, leaving behind, for the most part, the extended family, for the first time in their lives. The early years were upsetting for pupils and teachers. A majority of the children had also come from single sex schools and this was their first time in a co-ed school. It was clear from the beginning that classroom teaching and discipline would be different from the schools we came from. Five of our original staff came from settled schools. We embarked on a campaign seeking solutions to our problems and have continued to do so through the years. Until we adopted Discipline for Learning, our problems seemed to continue and escalate.

Employment in the Area

Some recent "Partnership" figures show:

- 1633 lone parents in the area;

- Unemployment among heads of households in local authority housing up to 73%.

It can also be asserted that in the (unlikely) event of an improvement in unemployment figure nationally, without very specific positive discrimination in favour of this area, the picture will always be twice as bad as that for the country as a whole.

- 54.1% of the labour force have only primary or lower secondary education.

This last point can be borne out by the examination results and reports from our second level school. All these facts led us to put on paper just what it was like teaching in a disadvantaged area in 1989 (cf. the accompanying documentation).

Our journey through the years was tough and frustrating in many ways. Since the beginning, we have had 144 staff meetings and from the minutes of these meetings it can be seen that discipline was always high on the agenda. But, as a staff, we kept searching until, at last, we found an answer in a new radical approach to behaviour management, namely: — Discipline for Learning.

Discipline for Learning is a planned strategy that encourages and rewards effort, work and social behaviour. It is predicated on the belief that behaviour is learned, so it follows that acceptable behaviour can be taught. We now teach acceptable behaviour like we teach academic content. The programme is owned and implemented by staff, parents and pupils alike. We have **all** taken control and responsibility for the strategic implementation of Discipline for Learning and for the charter and agreement that form part of this approach.

Through the years, all the emphasis and attention was given to behaviour and sanctions. Over the years, despite what we thought at the time, our procedure had three main faults:

(i)   lack of consistency;
(ii) lack of rewards for good behaviour;
(iii) children did not know where they stood in relation to Discipline.

"Discipline for Learning" has given us a charter for the school based on:

(a)   Rules;
(b)   Rewards;
(c)   Sanctions.

Another integral part of the scheme is a total change in our approach to behaviour. We look for two good behaviours before we check one bad behaviour. In other words, our approach is positive first and foremost.

In Discipline for Learning, children have to make choices, having learned all the information on the Rules, Rewards and Sanctions. They now choose their behaviour clear in the knowledge of the consequences that will follow.

How "Discipline for Learning" came about in our School

1.   Learning about it through Home/School/Community links as a successful approach in other schools to the resolution of serious indiscipline.

2.   We got the full backing of the Board of Management, both moral support and financial support.

3.   The whole staff agreed "to go for it."

4.   An Inservice Day which introduced the beginning of the process.

5.   Sub-committees were formed from all the staff, to work out **our own** Rules, Sanctions and Rewards, and finally agreed through consensus.

6.   All parents input was sought through meetings and discussions and changes were made accordingly. Ancillary staff were also involved.

7.   A whole week was spent in teaching the Rules, Sanctions and Rewards and the finer points which lay behind them.

8. We had an official launch at Assembly with the Chairperson, teachers, pupils and parents.

As Principal, my role has changed in a delightful way. I now have the role of praising, thanking and presenting awards to all the children for their good behaviour. All this has been a tremendous benefit to me personally. We can now fully concentrate on teaching, and so improve on the numbers who stay on in full time education. The staff too, are experiencing a complete change. There is a learning atmosphere now, and a pleasant, attractive environment. We have a sense of ownership of our Discipline for Learning.

The children are learning, maybe for the first time, in many cases. They can make a choice to behave or not to behave, and live with the consequences either good or bad. This can only be good training for them.

OUR PERCEPTIONS IN 1989 — PUPILS

1. Some children (families) need intervention help, prevention services, because of Poverty, Inadequacy, Alcohol abuse, Sickness, Neglect, Mismanagement, One-Parent families or Unemployment.

2. The plight of these children appears to get worse year by year as they are further deprived.

3. They then become alienated bit by bit from society.

4. There is discontinuity between home and school in matters of discipline, respect and motivation-to-learn. This leads to enormous problems for teachers, child and other children.

5. Verbal and physical violence seem to be a dominating feature of their daily lives.

6.   These children have apparently no care, no happiness, or no love in their lives **at all.**

7.   Boys end up in prison or institutions, become alcoholics, addicts, unemployed and live in poverty.

8.   Girls become victims of a male dominated culture. They experience violence, end up in institutions and poverty.

9.   Marriage, and the cycle is then repeated and becomes worse.

10.   These children, who are at risk, are identified in the lower grades — but nothing can be done, or is being done for them and so teachers are under tremendous pressure due to their misbehaviour, lack of motivation and lack of respect.

OUR PERCEPTIONS IN 1989 — TEACHERS

1.   Find it very difficult having a number of very disruptive children in their classes:

   (i)   They cannot teach these children to any extent;

   (ii)   They cannot give the other children the time and expertise they deserve;

   (iii)   They have tremendous guilt feelings about their work.

2.   Curriculum not geared or suited to the children — class too large.

3.   Training of teachers doesn't prepare them for disadvantaged areas.

4.   There is continuous disruption/abuse or fear of abuse.

5. Discipline procedure not working.

6. In spite of preparation painstakingly made, the class programme is never complete because of the on-going disruption.

7. Job satisfaction is very low.

8. Property, bags, clothes, cars are under threat of vandals or of being stolen during working hours in school.

OUR PERCEPTIONS IN 1997

1. All the children are learning much more.

2. Children's self-esteem has improved.

3. Less bullying and violent behaviour.

4. All children are much happier in school.

5. Less stress and tension in school and staff room.

6. Less suspensions.

7. Good behaviour now being recognised and rewarded.

8. All parents much happier and 100% behind our school and the new scheme.

9. Children all capable of making informed "choices."

An Ré Nua Senior School
Spring 1997

THE BRAMBLES COMMUNITY COLLEGE

SCHOOL PROFILE

The Brambles Community College is situated in a large provincial town renowned for its scenic beauty. It caters for a student population of c.430 with a ratio of 2 boys for every girl It competes for its students with two single sex voluntary secondary schools in the town. Traditionally, students with high academic ambitions tended to go to the local secondary schools. The numbers in The Brambles increased when the school moved from its old Vocational School building to a modern, well-equipped school which is now ten years old. Since that time, The Brambles has maintained its competitive edge. Many of the students do not attain points for admission to third level education, but the students have a good work ethic related to the tourist industry which is a big feature of the town in which The Brambles is located. The involvement of students in week-end and holiday work does take its toll on homework completion. There is a good mix of students in the school, both in terms of academic ability and socio-economic background — 20% of the students require remedial provision. The Principal and Vice Principal are in post now for six years. They were both staff members of The Brambles before taking up their new roles. There are 29 staff members with a mixed age profile. There are concerns that the student numbers will fall over the next few years in line with national demographic patterns.

DISCIPLINE AT THE BRAMBLES

The current satisfactory state of discipline is the culmination of a long process of consultation involving teachers, parents and students. The orientation is positive, and discipline is perceived as enhancing the life of the school community rather than curtailing any student exuberance. The class teacher is encouraged to deal, when possible, with discipline issues and not to rely on referring these upward or outward. Good behaviour from ALL is prized and recognised. Rewards are more a feature than sanctions. The implementation of the Codes in the spirit of flexibility and humanity, bearing in mind the diversity of the student population. Good judgement is exercised, and where sanctions must be imposed, The Brambles does not shirk its responsibility. Principles of individual and natural justice influence the management of pupil behaviour at The Brambles. The school likes to make very clear the parameters that are acceptable. This makes for a secure, safe environment at our school. Our discipline policy is under constant review and we aim to be pro-active, rather than reactive. So far, so good. We are not hampered in our work and we feel that we have a pleasant teaching and learning environment at The Brambles.

Some excepts from our brochure and Teachers' handbook will give a fuller sense of our College.

SCHOOL OBJECTIVES

1. To cherish all pupils equally so that they will be given every opportunity to succeed and to overcome any difficulties experienced on the journey through school.

2. In some instances, school will be home and home will be school. Consequently, it is vital to establish a caring school climate where pupils can acquire independence and can develop spiritually, physically, artistically, academically and socially.

3. To create a school environment that is conducive to learning and to the development of the whole person.

4. To motivate pupils to achieve their full potential.

5. To assist in the development of community spirit, by endeavouring to fully develop the interests and aptitudes of our pupils in extra curricular activities.

6. To project the school as a servant of the community by:

    (a) providing a sound post primary education;
    (b) providing a comprehensive Adult Education Programme.

Everyone in The Brambles Community College can succeed. We expect our students to:

1. Attend regularly and punctually.

2. Take an active interest in their studies and work hard both in class and at home.

3. Contribute to school life by taking an active part in school events and activities.

4. Be well behaved and mannerly at all times. Also in and travelling to and from school.

5. Respect their classmates, teachers and the school.

DISCIPLINE

the highest standards of discipline are maintained in the school.. We have evolved a comprehensive code which is widely acclaimed. It has the full support of the Brambles Community College Parents' Council. The code is designed to help all students benefit fully from our educational programmes. We rely on the cooperation of parents to maintain our high standard of discipline. A copy of the Discipline Code is given to students when the enrol.

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

We maintain a high standard of discipline so that all students can benefit from our courses. If there is unacceptable behaviour, we operate the following corrective measures:

1. The teacher fills in a demerit card.

2. When there are 3 demerit cards, the student is called before the Staff Discipline Committee.

3. Parents are notified when a student receives another card. Parents meet the Staff Discipline Committee when one further card is recorded. Two more cards can lead to suspension.

4. Counselling service is provided for students to improve their behaviour.

5. Students with a record of misbehaviour will not represent the school on teams or outings.

School Rules

1. Good manners are expected of students at all times.

2. Only those who go home for lunch will be allowed out of the school grounds at lunch time.

3. Cycling is not allowed in the school grounds. Students must use student entrances at all times. Car Park is out of bounds for all students.

4. Coats or jackets may not be worn in classrooms. Anyone who interferes with students' property, school bags, books, coats, bicycles, etc., will be punished severely.

5. Students must use the bins, for litter.

6. Boys or girls who use the wrong toilets will be punished severely.

7. A note explaining your absence must be handed to the teacher calling the roll when you return from being absent.

8. Place chairs or stools on top of desks at the end of last class each day to facilitate cleaning of classrooms.

9. Each student must be dressed neatly in full school uniform at all times including school outings.

The Following Will Not be Tolerated

-   Any act which endangers the health, safety and welfare of others in the school.

-   Disrespect for teachers at any time.

- Lack of punctuality.

- Abuse of school furniture and equipment.

- Fighting in the school or at the bus stops.

- Smoking.

- Offensive language.

- Chewing gum in any part of the school.

Ní thagan ciall roimh aois.

The Brambles Community College
Spring 1997.

APPENDIX II

RECOMMENDED READINGS

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

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APPENDIX III

Representatives of the following groups were consulted in researching this Report:

1. Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools.
2. Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland.
3. Catholic Primary School Managers Association.
4. Conference of Religious of Ireland.
5. Department of Education Inspectorate.
6. Discipline Committees in a number of post primary schools.
7. European Schools Headteachers' Association.
8. Home-School-Community Liaison Scheme.
9. Institute of Guidance Counsellors.
10. Irish Association of Pastoral Care in Education.
11. Irish National Teachers Organisation.
12. Irish Vocational Educational Association.
13. Juvenile Liaison Officers.
14. National Centre for Guidance in Education.
15. National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.
16. National Parents Council (Primary).
17. National Parents Council (Post-Primary).
18. Schools Accommodation Board.
19. Schools Psychological Service.
20. Secondary School Principals' Association of Ireland.
21. Secretariat of Secondary Schools
22. Teacher Education Centres.
23. Teacher Education Personnel.
24. Teachers Union of Ireland.
25. Youthreach Personnel.

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