



Submission to Review on Inclusion Based on the Research of the Educational Disadvantage Centre 2009

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Key Themes

- 1) Transition and children with special needs in designated disadvantaged schools
- 2) Alternatives to suspension
- 3) Systems level interventions for speech and language/literacy development
- 4) Bullying prevention and intervention
- 5) Mental health and early intervention
- 6) ADHD: Cognitive behavioural work with parents and in schools

Ballyfermot

Primary schools: 342 questionnaire responses (180 girls, 162 boys)

Focus groups: 20 focus groups 9 boys focus groups

– 11 girls focus groups

Post primary schools: 173 questionnaire responses

Focus groups: 12 focus, as well as a consultation meeting with one student council

Blanchardstown

Primary schools 230 questionnaire responses¹

Post primary schools: 162 questionnaire responses²

SICCDA

Primary Total: 242 questionnaire responses

16 Focus Groups

5th and 6th Classes across 7 primary schools

Post primary Total: 342 questionnaires,

7 Focus Groups

1st yr, 2nd yr, and 5th yr across 3 post primary schools:

¹ Plus a further 80 responses from 6th classes in additional Primary School

² Plus a further 70 responses from 1st year classes in additional Secondary School

Transition and children with special needs in designated disadvantaged schools

Children with general learning difficulties can often have poor organisational skills making it difficult for them to cope with the huge organisational changes in their school day at post-primary school. Coping with timetables, extra teachers, homework and moving around classes can be anxieties for a number of these students. Based on a qualitative 2003-2004 study on transition from primary school to post-primary school with eight students, three boys and five girls Maunsell et al concluded³:

- There is a need to examine the possibility of transferring some primary school practices into post-primary school for a period in first year e.g. mixed ability teaching, a small group of teachers responsible for all subject areas, arranging a 'homebase' for first-years, etc.
- This could also extend to visits from post-primary teachers to the primary school, especially for those children with special needs. This would also provide a post-primary teacher with the opportunity to get valuable information on the individual students.
- Another recommendation is developing roles for a student liaison officer that would work for both the primary school and post-primary school in particular with this target group. This person could help prepare students in sixth class for the transition and would be a familiar person to support them once they reach post-primary school, thus adding an element of personnel continuity to the young person's overall school experience.
- A re-structuring of pedagogical and assessment practices at second-level was recommended by Naughton (1997)⁴ in order to lessen the experience of discontinuity for the first year student.
- According to Eccles et al. (1993)⁵ there are higher standards in judging students competence at second-level. It was found that first year students generally received lower marks in secondary school house exams than they had received in primary school. No corresponding decline, however, was found when these students were administered standardised achievement tests. Such changes in grading practices can dent the self-esteem of first-year students. It is evident from this research that greater links between first and

³ Maunsell, C., Barrett, V., & Candon, M. (2007) Primary to Post-Primary: Perceptions of Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Downes, P & Gilligan AL (eds) Beyond Educational Disadvantage. Dublin: IPA

⁴ Naughton, P. (2003) Primary to Second-Level Transition Programmes: Rationale, Principles and a Framework. *Oideas*, 50, pp. 40-65.

⁵ Eccles, J.S., Midgley, C, Wigfield, A, Miller-Buchanan, C, Reuman, D, Flanagan, C and Mac Iver, D. (1993). Development During Adolescence: The Impact of Stage-Environment Fit on Young Adolescents' Experience in Schools and in Families. *American Psychologist*, Vol.48, No.2, 90-101.

second level schools are required to promote dialogue between teachers on the nature and purpose of their educational endeavours and to transfer information about students that is necessary for successful educational planning.

Alternatives to suspension

Downes, P, Maunsell, C & Ivers, J (2006) *A Holistic Approach to Early School Leaving and School Retention in Blanchardstown: Current Issues and Future Steps for Services and Schools*. Dublin: BAP

Suggestions for alternatives to suspension in secondary schools made by a range of local services strongly resonate with recommendations made at a national in-service of School Completion Programme⁶ to 'improve the climate for teaching and learning in classrooms'. A more holistic strategy must embrace not only extra-school supports and services.

'Suspensions are a waste of time': A More Holistic Approach to Behavioural Issues

A range of service providers raised the issue of the need for alternative strategies in secondary school to that of suspension:

- *'we need a time out room in the post primary school as most of our target students hang out in the assembly hall if they have been asked to leave class', there is a need to do 'constructive work' with them*
- *'a more practical approach to bad behaviour'*
- *'Eliminate suspensions and work towards dealing with issues alternatively'*
- *'time out for certain students (e.g., perceived as being at risk) to engage in more tailor built programmes i.e., students with poor attendance records who may also have substance use issues either themselves or within their families or peers'*
- *'more engagement with relevant services/providers, time out and off site education, tailor made programmes, small target group work i.e. substance users'*
- *'develop a model of withdrawal/return' 'creative ways of school retention to Leaving Certificate'*

These points echo somewhat the criticism of 'suspension' noted in Forkan's (2005)⁷ research in Blanchardstown:

⁶ School Completion Programme Support Unit (2005). School Completion Programme: Guidelines towards best practice

⁷ Forkan, C. (2005). *Where is the final dividend? Traveller culture, institutional practices and societal expectations: The education of Traveller children in Blanchardstown, Dublin*. Blanchardstown Traveller Development Group.

‘being suspended and “kicked out of school” was a dream come true...in many cases they were out of school more often than in it, which was exactly what they wanted...It was suggested that instead of suspending an individual, the school should punish them by keeping them in school and making them do the work they should be doing’

- ‘Requirement for alternative needs based individual curriculum with elements of Youth Work approach’
- ‘Requirement of a room/area of school devoted to difficult students with professionals delivering extra support in anger management/personal development/core subjects. Time and space sanctioned for this work’
- ‘alternatives to suspensions/expulsion/reduced timetables such as restorative justice practices/one to one small group tuition/circle time etc’
- As noted already with regard to developing opportunities for at risk pupils to develop practical skills, another SCP (2005)⁸ report cites as an example of good practice from the Dublin North Region a social and personal development programme that includes a garden for time out for disruptive students during school time, as well as being available during lunchtime and afterschool.
- Potential concerns from schools may be that a time-out room is ‘worthless’ as ‘if students are merely removed, a situation very rapidly develops where some students will deliberately misbehave, so that they can join their friends in the ‘sin-bin’ ’ (O’Brien 2006)⁹. However, if the students are positively engaged in the time-out room and are involved in individual behavioural contracts with a range of sanctions as well as incentives and emotional supports, the above objection can be overcome. The time-out room is not to do nothing, as a ‘sin-bin’ implies.
- A SCP (2005)¹⁰ report cites as an example of good practice from the Dublin North Region a social and personal development programme that includes a garden for time out for disruptive students during school time, as well as being available during lunchtime and after school – a model which may be transferable to schools in Blanchardstown
- Potential concerns from schools may be that a time-out room is ‘worthless’ as ‘if students are merely removed, a situation very rapidly develops where some students will deliberately misbehave, so that they can join their friends in the ‘sin-bin’’. However, if the students are positively engaged in the time-out room and are involved in individual behavioural contracts with a range of sanctions as well as incentives and emotional supports, the above objection can be overcome. The time-out room is not to do nothing, as a ‘sin-bin’ implies.

⁸ School Completion Programme Support Unit (2005). School Completion Programme: Guidelines towards best practice

⁹ O’Brien, B. (2006). Deal with discipline and Minister could gain a high place. *Irish Times*, April 11, 2006.

¹⁰ School Completion Programme Support Unit (2005). School Completion Programme: Guidelines towards best practice

Downes, P & Maunsell, C (2007) *Count us in: Tackling early school leaving in South West Inner City Dublin: An integrated response.* Commissioned by the South Inner City Community Development association.

Beyond suspensions:

- It is a concern that suspension appears to be used as a strategy in at least one primary school.
- There is a need to resource alternative strategies to suspension from school, including a supervised time out area in every school for children and young people with disruptive behaviour.

Interviewed early school leavers also raised the issue of the need for alternatives to suspension at second level:

- *“Suspension is stupid, just gives them a break”*
- *“Getting sent home for 3 days isn’t punishment”*
- *“Sit outside the door for hours”*

- One service provider suggests that: *“suspension used a lot, need to put something in place if suspended, not much endeavour to keep them in school”*.

A Key Worker for youth at risk of early school leaving: The need to develop alternative strategies to suspension

- There is evidence from the accounts of pupils and students that there are isolated teachers who contribute to an extremely negative experience of school for them. Teacher-student relations were the dominant theme emerging from accounts of early school leavers. Across a range of focus groups there was consensus among the groups praising almost all teachers in their schools and consensus regarding a small minority of individual teachers being overly authoritarian. It is clear that schools need mechanisms:
 - to provide support to these isolated teachers who need more support in changing from a highly authoritarian teaching style,
 - to provide an outlet for pupil and student perceptions of being treated unfairly, both for minor complaints and more serious ones.

A keyworker for young people most at risk of early school leaving can help:

- develop alternative strategies to suspension of the young person, in conjunction with the school,
- play a key role in the implementation of the Individual Education Plan and career strategy for the young person,
- discuss student perceptions of being treated unfairly in school, act as a mediator between student and the school, including challenging the young person’s perceptions of being treated unfairly, where necessary,

- provide support to the student if (s)he falls behind the class or misses school and then feels it is too difficult to catch up,
- facilitate the most at risk young people in accessing the range of local services and facilities,
- provide a protective role to prevent young people getting involved in the role of ‘being a gilly’, i.e., storing drugs for dealers,
- play a key role in minimising substance abuse by the young person,
- offer social, emotional and instrumental approach to the young person.

It is envisaged that such key workers become part of the proposed multidisciplinary team as part of the proposed community based Psychological Service focusing on prevention and early intervention.

The key workers, in collaboration with the schools, need to set clear targets:

- to eliminate suspension from school as a strategy at primary school level,
- to phase out suspension from school as a strategy at secondary school level.

This attempt at developing an individual plan for the student at second level:

- seeks to remedy the situation (noted by Forkan 2005)¹¹ that some students do not realise the consequences of early school leaving,
- can incorporate issues of the effect of part-time work on the students’ study habits and school performance within part of this career plan.

The key worker can also have a potential role in informal discussions with pupils at later primary level of their future career plans and dreams. Even if pupils change their views over time regarding specific careers, the opportunity to reflect on the costs and benefits of varying careers as well as clarification of important features of careers e.g., opportunity to help others, chance for choice and initiative in the workplace, variety within the work, salary levels, contribution to the local community and opportunity for travel, could help student motivation in the future and resonates with the State’s Lifelong Learning Strategy (2000).¹²

¹¹ Forkan, C. (2005). Where is the final dividend? Traveller culture, institutional practices and societal expectations: The education of Traveller children in Blanchardstown, Dublin. Blanchardstown Traveller Development Group.

¹² DES (2000). *Learning for Life*. White Paper on Lifelong Learning. Stationery Office. Dublin

Systems level interventions for speech and language/literacy development

Downes, P. (2004) 'Present and Future Psychological Support Services for Ballyfermot. Dublin: URBAN

Downes (2004) found in his survey:

- *Gaps in local psychological support services in Ballyfermot exist regarding availability of counselling for those in late primary and the 12-15 age range, while there is a need for more family therapists and speech and language therapists.*

The need for facilitation of parental involvement of treatment for their children

Previous programmes in Clondalkin (e.g. A.P.P.L.E¹³, April 1997-July 1999) involved parents in the treatment of their children, and developed a role for four parent co-workers regarding speech and language interventions (McSkeane 1999)¹⁴. Similarly, according to Mary Fanning, Principal Speech & Language therapist in the Ballymun clinic and Mater child guidance centre, the view of the parent as co-therapist is a central feature of their intervention models. In contrast, there is a lack of facilitation of parental involvement in the treatment of their children for speech and language in Ballyfermot.

In Britain, parental involvement in early intervention programmes for children with developmental difficulties is now in widespread practice (Guralnick 1997)¹⁵. In the words of Glogowska & Campbell (2000)¹⁶:

Speech and language therapists working with children routinely deliver treatments using parents and carers, transferring skills and knowledge to equip them to deliver therapy at home (p.391-2)

Citing Ward (1994)¹⁷ and Gibbard (1998)¹⁸, they observe that some speech and language therapy services in Britain are now specifically targeting their resources at teaching parents the language facilitation techniques to implement with their children.

¹³ Area Partnership Programme for Language Enrichment

¹⁴ McSkeane, L. (1999). Area Partnership Programme for Language Enrichment (A.P.P.L.E). Clondalkin Partnership Programme

¹⁵ Guralnick, M.J. (ed.) (1997). *The effectiveness of early intervention*. Baltimore: Paul Brookes

¹⁶ Glogowska, M. & Campbell, R. (2000) Investigating parental views of involvement in pre-school speech and language therapy. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, 35, 391-405

¹⁷ Ward, S. (1994). *The validation of a treatment method for auditory perceptual disorder in young children*. London: WILSTAAR

Similar developments have also occurred in the US where a movement has occurred from an individualized, isolated service delivery model in the clinic or treatment room to client-based intervention taking place in a wider variety of settings involving not only the clinician and the child but others in the child's environment or social system, i.e., family members and other professionals (Andrews & Andrews 1986). In the words of Kelly (1995)¹⁹ in the US context:

The impetus for this change has come, at least in part, from our realization and acceptance that others are impacted by and have impact on the child's development. The desired changes in speech, language and fluency behaviors are best served by expanding our treatment teams beyond the clinician-client partnership (p.101)

Kelly (1995)²⁰ also emphasises the need, if possible, to involve fathers as well as mothers in the child's speech and language development, as for example, she observed that fathers tend to interrupt their child's utterances more than mothers, and produced nearly double the number of words, syllables and morphemes than mothers (of children who both do and do not stutter) in their interactions with their child.

Glogowska & Campbell's (2000)²¹ review of the fears of parents in their initial meetings with speech therapists offers a guide for best practice in overcoming such fears but also *the implication that such fears are arguably even greater in the context of educationally disadvantaged parents*. Glogowska & Campbell note the needs of some parents:

- to have an opportunity to discuss their ideas with the speech therapist especially during the early phase of their involvement
- to be actively involved in intervention with their own child rather than simply in assessment; they cite the complaint of one parent ““But we didn't really ever do anything... 'cos I didn't have any set things that I was supposed to be doing with him””²².
- for *ongoing* support from the speech therapist or professional, so that the parent would not simply feel left to 'get on with it' without ongoing guidance
- for adequate time and suggestions about activities to accomplish the large role in treatment to be given to parents prior to their intervention role
- for the speech therapist to communicate explicitly to the parents their active
- role in the speech therapy of the child

¹⁸ Gibbard, D. (1998). Making words work. Bulletin of the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, 558.

¹⁹ Kelly, E.E. (1995) Parents as partners: Including mothers and fathers in the treatment of children who stutter. *Journal of Communication Disorders*, 28, 93-105

²⁰ *ibid*

²¹ Glogowska, M. & Campbell, R. (2000) Investigating parental views of involvement in pre-school speech and language therapy. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, 35, 391-405

²² *Ibid* p. 400

- for more information about what progress entails, about appropriate communication levels with regard to their child's age

Other lessons from the A.P.P.L.E model in Clondalkin which would be important to incorporate within a programme involving parental intervention include:

- developing a programme specifically for young mothers where there is a high concentration of young, first-time single parents
- train more parent co-workers
- run the parents groups at convenient times for the parents i.e. not the mornings and to include evening times²³

design promotional materials which are accessible to people with a low level of literacy.

- In school clusters onsite speech and language therapies, as in Familiscope, Ballyfermot:
- Working with parents of children with speech and language difficulties to develop the treatment skills of parents. A central assumption of such model is the parent as co-therapist
- These parents would be of children in early start programmes and up to 1st-2nd class
- Being available to these parents on an ongoing basis to support their intervention with their child
- Working with resource teachers and learning support teachers in particular
- to up skill them regarding speech and language interventions for the children
- Supervising parents sharing of their speech and language treatment skills with other parents – language intervention skills are especially transferable
- Contributing to the evaluation of the sound-field amplification systems through assisting with monitoring the speech and language progress of the participating classes and control groups
- In exceptional, rare, cases, working directly with individual children.

²³ See also Pitcher (1995, p.14) on the difficulty for working parents in the U.S to attend school meetings during the day Pitcher, H.A. (1995). Improving the communication skills of developmentally disabled students (ages 14-22) through parental/family involvement. Ed.D Practicum Report: Nova Southeastern University

Downes, P, Maunsell, C & Ivers, J (2006) *A Holistic Approach to Early School Leaving and School Retention in Blanchardstown: Current Issues and Future Steps for Services and Schools*. Dublin: BAP

Downes and Maunsell (2007) recognised “*the need for a more holistic approach to behavioural issues, for increased family support services and supports for students with emotional and behavioural problems, for improved collaboration between schools and local services and the need for early intervention – particularly regarding speech and language, and emotional support*”.²⁴

A consistent theme emerging from interviews with service providers is the need for increased focus on early intervention, while early intervention is also key to language development.

Downes, P & Maunsell, C (2007) *Count us in: Tackling early school leaving in South West Inner City Dublin: An integrated response*. Commissioned by the South Inner City Community Development association.

- A literacy programme Phonographix provides promising evidence of gains for pupils (Mullan 2007)²⁵ and is a programme that local schools could seek to engage in. Phonographix is based on the simple insight that letters are pictures of sounds, has been found not only to be a powerful remedial device, but also a preventative classroom technique. Decoding or word-knowledge is an essential skill that children with reading difficulties need to be taught. By the same token the skill of teaching decoding is one that needs to be learned by teachers. There is a need for dissemination of the Phonographix approach to schools (Mullan 2007)²⁶.

²⁴ Downes, P, Maunsell, C & Ivers, J (2006) *A Holistic Approach to Early School Leaving and School Retention in Blanchardstown: Current Issues and Future Steps for Services and Schools*. Dublin: BAP p. vii

²⁵ Mullan, Y., (2007). Professional development and raising literacy levels: A case study. In Downes, P & Gilligan, A.L. (eds) *Beyond Educational Disadvantage*. IPA. Dublin

²⁶ *ibid*

- Quinn (2007)²⁷ has noted the high numbers of magazines rather than books read by parents in North Inner City Dublin and suggests that this is a resource for reading that teachers can work with, rather than focusing on the absence of books in the home. Quinn (2007)²⁸ argues that getting children to identify the reading done by members of their extended family as well as getting children to articulate their personally experienced benefits from reading a book can improve motivation to read.

²⁷ Quinn, S., (2007). "Only brainy and boring people read". In Downes, P & Gilligan, A.L. (eds) *Beyond Educational Disadvantage*. IPA. Dublin

²⁸ *ibid*

Bullying prevention and intervention

Downes, P. (2004) 'Present and Future Psychological Support Services for Ballyfermot. Dublin: URBAN

- Relationships have been found between bullying others on a frequent basis and conduct disorders and poor global self-esteem (see O'Moore et al 1997)²⁹. Thus *interventions seeking to develop students' self-esteem are clearly complementary to approaches which directly tackle issues of bullying*. The need for such interventions clearly emerges from the frequent references to themes of bullying across the different schools though with quite a range in the levels of bullying even between different classes in the same year
 - Questionnaire and focus group responses revealed extremely variable levels of prevalence of bullying – not only *very large degrees of variation within the same school but also between different classes in the same year in the same school*
 - One Home-School Liaison teacher emphasised the need to support children who are dyspraxic and that they may be targeted for bullying. Another identifiable group of children named by pupils as being at risk of bullying are children who are overweight
 - An important theme emerging from some responses is *the link between being bullied and not attending school*:
 - "I would be absent because sometimes I get bullied" (5th class, M, Q)
 - "No-one will end up in school if they keep getting bullied" (6th class, M, FG)
 - "Yes I was absent I was being bullied" (5th class, M, Q)
 - "One of my friends is being bullied. They can go to a teacher...If I didn't go to school it would probably be because someone was bullying me" (6th class, F, Q)
- What would make you want to go to school more often?**
- "If there was no bullies around" (5th class, M, Q)
- If you had the possibility not to go to school, would you?**
- Yes because I am bullied" (5th class, M, Q)

Downes and Maunsell concluded that *a psychology service to improve the school environment regarding bullying, self-esteem, teacher-pupil interaction, as well as provide emotional and social support, will clearly impact in a beneficial way on school attendance if it is both broad based and targeted to specific individuals and families who are most at-risk* (p 22)

²⁹ O'Moore, A.M. and Hillery, B. (1989). Bullying in Dublin Schools. *The Irish Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp 426-441.

- Developing activities in a community setting to complement the school based groups run in the schools by the childcare/youth workers on themes such as bullying, peer support, substance abuse, self-esteem, anger management.

Downes, P, Maunsell, C & Ivers, J (2006) *A Holistic Approach to Early School Leaving and School Retention in Blanchardstown: Current Issues and Future Steps for Services and Schools*. Dublin: BAP

- Developing Proactive Approaches to Bullying: Disseminating *within* the School of those Successful Strategies for Prevention and Intervention regarding Bullying

Child centred research across primary schools in Ballyfermot highlighted that pupils perceived bullying to be a major problem and frequently raised this issue in questionnaires even when not directly asked about bullying itself (Downes 2004)³⁰. A notable minority of pupils drew an explicit link between not attending school and this being due to being bullied (Downes 2004)³¹.

The key role of the class teacher regarding bullying was observed in a subsequent study in a primary school in Ballyfermot (Downes 2004a)³² where the class teacher employed strategies such as an anonymous problem box, role play and circle time to eliminate a bullying problem that had existed in the class the previous year when there were a number of substitute teachers.

In Tallaght, it was reported that 33% of children have been bullied at school, with 8% of these being bullied several times a week within the previous term (CDI 2004)³³. access, behaviour), it would be useful to adopt a similar approach in regard to bullying with exchanges of good practice, materials, and joint in-service as possible models of co-operation.

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- Curriculum approaches to bullying prevention potentially offer sufficient intensity and duration to bring habitual change to the system of relations in the class and school.³⁴

³⁰ Downes, P. (2004). Psychological support services for Ballyfermot: Present and future. URBAN, Ballyfermot

³¹ *ibid*

³² Downes, P. (2004a). Voices from Children: St.Raphael's Primary School Ballyfermot. URBAN, Ballyfermot

³³ Childhood Development Initiative (CDI) (2004). *How are our kids?* Jobstown, Dublin: CDI

³⁴ Prevention of Bullying at a Systemic Level in Schools: Movement from Cognitive and Spatial Narratives of Diametric Opposition to Concentric Relation. In Shane R. Jimerson, Susan M. Swearer, and Dorothy L. Espelage (Eds.), *The International Handbook of School Bullying*, Section III., Research-Based Prevention and Intervention (in press, 2009)

- The Irish Primary School Curriculum (1999)³⁵ offers a model of how to integrate anti-bullying approaches with developing social, emotional and cognitive skills across the elementary school curriculum in subjects such as Drama, English, History, and Religion as well as Social, Personal, and Health Education.
- The extreme variation in levels of bullying across 6th classes *within* each school suggests that individual teachers are having significant success with SPHE and preventive approaches to bullying. There is a need for this success to be translated more fully across all classes within a school.
- A positive feature of schools in the RAPID areas of Blanchardstown is the number of structured transition programmes between primary and post primary schools
- The extreme variation in levels of bullying across 6th classes *within* a school suggests that individual teachers are having significant success with SPHE and preventive approaches to bullying. However, this success is not being translated fully across all classes within a school.
- It would seem that while a whole school approach with regard to bullying may be having some impact, further development of a coordinated within school anti-bullying strategy may be needed - including more dissemination within the school of strategies that are working well for some teachers with regard to prevention and elimination of bullying.
- To facilitate this dissemination of good practice strategies for prevention and elimination of bullying within the school, it is recommended that a staff member coordinate such dissemination strategy and act as a support/mentor for other teachers in the school at both primary and secondary level. While this staff member would liaise with the school principal in implementing the whole school anti-bullying policy, (s)he would also serve as an intermediary between the class teacher and the principal. The class teacher may be more likely to approach another colleague – in this role as coordinator - for informal advice on intervention for bullying.

³⁵ Irish Primary School Curriculum (1999) NCCA: Dublin

Downes, P & Maunsell, C (2007) *Count us in: Tackling early school leaving in South West Inner City Dublin: An integrated response.* Commissioned by the South Inner City Community Development association.

- -“Antibullying posters everywhere”
- There was notable variation *across* primary schools in levels of bullying reported by pupils. Some schools had significant numbers of pupils report that all pupils, 5-10 pupils and over 10 pupils were bullied in their class, while other schools had no pupils report bullying at such levels.
- Very high levels of reported bullying are of concern in one primary school in particular where only three out of thirty nine 5th and 6th class pupils in a given school revealed that *no* bullying at all was taking place. Other 5th and 6th class pupils in the same school indicated high levels of bullying. Sample answers included: ‘loads of people’, ‘all of us!!!!!!!’, ‘all 24’, ‘23 most of us’, ‘19 including me’. *It is significant that this was also the school noted earlier as having exceptionally high numbers of pupils who stated that they did not wish to stay on at school until Leaving Certificate, namely, 29% of those who responded to this question in that school stated that they did not want or did not know if they wanted to stay on at school until Leaving Certificate.* A proactive anti-bullying strategy is clearly needed in that school as the effects of bullying are already impacting on attitudes to stay on at school until Leaving Certificate.
- In a number of the primary schools there was notable variation *between* classes in the *same* school with regard to levels of bullying. It is evident that some teachers are having significant success in almost eliminating bullying but that successful classroom bullying prevention strategies are not being disseminated throughout the school.

Murphy (2007) in *Beyond Educational Disadvantage*, states that ‘Peer Mediation in an education context is seen as an alternative means of dealing with conflict. It is unlike the conventional arbitration or judicial processes in that the responsibility is given solely to the children. It involves a third party intervening in a dispute; this third party is a peer of the disputants rather than a higher authority’. (p 451)³⁶

³⁶ Murphy, A (2007) Peer Mediation: The Power and Importance of Children’s Voices in Downes, P & Gilligan, A.L. *Beyond Educational Disadvantage*. Dublin: IPA

- The South West Inner City schools consistently stated that they engage in proactive preventive strategies with regard to bullying.
- Nevertheless a key theme which emerged from pupil and student responses in a number of schools at both primary and secondary level is bullying *between* years.
- There was notable variation *across* primary schools in levels of bullying reported by pupils. Very high levels of reported bullying are of concern in one primary school in particular. It is significant that this was also the school with exceptionally high numbers of pupils stating that they do not wish to stay on at school until Leaving Certificate, namely, 29% of those who responded to this question in that school stated that they did not want or did not know if they wanted to stay on at school until Leaving Certificate. A proactive and preventive anti-bullying strategy is clearly needed in that school as the effects of bullying are already impacting on attitudes to stay on at school until Leaving Certificate.
- It is evident that as with the local primary schools, some local secondary schools are having significant success in eliminating and minimising bullying whereas others are having less success in this regard. It is clear that a sharing of anti-bullying strategies across schools, through the School Completion Programme, is needed.
- Projects that could be developed in afterschool services, such as antibullying approaches, local citizenship building and awareness of the wider community, can feed into work also being done across the schools...
- Visible public antibullying statements on the walls of the secondary school: *“It’s become a part of their routine to take his money and make him scream to twist his arm and bash his head, if you tell sir that’s it! You’re dead! However this is not the case!”*

Mental health and early intervention

Downes, P. (2004) 'Present and Future Psychological Support Services for Ballyfermot. Dublin: URBAN

Downes (2004) concluded that:

- *The need for supporting teachers with regard to issues such as:*
 - *conflict resolution,*
 - *behaviour management*³⁷

³⁷ One principal observed that teachers need more support regarding coping with children with problematic behaviour and regarding consistency

- *self-awareness*
emerged from many teachers and indirectly from a variety of student responses in the questionnaires and focus groups.

The benefits for mental health in having even only one person to confide in is well recognised in psychology (Levitt 1991³⁸; Antonucci 1990)³⁹

Responses to the question ‘Do you have anyone to talk to if you feel sad?’ revealed quite a high level of social support, usually expressed as being from family or friends, though also occasionally from a teacher

Yes	305
No	30
Sometimes	3
No answer	4

- *The frequent reliance on friends to provide emotional support suggests that group level interventions to improve children’s self-esteem and emotional awareness can strengthen resilience not only among those children attending such a group but also their friends that they provide with emotional support*

Downes, P & Maunsell, C (2007) *Count us in: Tackling early school leaving in South West Inner City Dublin: An integrated response.* Commissioned by the South Inner City Community Development association.

Downes and Maunsell (2007) found that:

- *Among key local family support services, there is a consensus regarding their interest in being involved in preventative approaches with local schools for children at risk of early school leaving. A community based psychological support service for the area is recommended that involves early intervention, mental health promotion, and system level interventions to create a more supportive school social climate in some schools. (P 4)*
- Pupil and student responses indicate that the large majority of young people in the area have someone to talk to in order to provide social and emotional support.
- Nevertheless a significant minority state that they have nobody to talk with if they feel sad and this places them at risk for mental health problems. As one secondary student stated: “*There is nobody interested in our problems*”.
- It is a concern that not only does this significant minority not have anyone in their family or peer group to provide social and emotional support – but they are not accessing such support from other services, whether therapeutic supports, afterschool clubs or in the school itself.

³⁸ Levitt, M.J. (1991). Attachment and close relationships: A life-span perspective. In J.L. Gewirtz & W.M. Kurtines (Eds.), *Intersections with attachment*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum

³⁹ Antonucci, T.C. (1990). Social supports and social relationships. In R.H. Binstock & L.K. George (eds), *Aging and the social sciences*. 3rd ed. San Diego: Academic Press

Do you have anyone to talk to if you feel sad?

Primary	Yes	No	N/A
School A	31	1	---
School B	31	8	
School C	32	0	---
School D	48	4	---
School E	26	3	2
School F	25	0	-
School G	24	6	1
Total Primary	217	22	3

Secondary	Yes	No	N/A
1 st Yr ---	47	6	2
1 st Yr ---	44	3	1
1 st Yr ---	26	4	1
2 nd Yr ---	23	4	1
2 nd Yr ---	41	-	-
2 nd Yr ---	32	7	1
5 th Yr ---	24	2	
5 th Yr ---	37	1	-
5 th Yr ---	34	3	-
Total Secondary	308	30	6

- The National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008⁴⁰ notes the importance of ‘seek[ing] to strengthen resilience amongst young people in or out of school by fostering positive stable relationships with family or key community figures especially in the early years’.

Downes and Maunsell (2007) recommended *that a community based psychological support service, providing early intervention, mental health promotion, system level interventions in the school and family support, be established in the local area.* (p 149)

- These issues are as follows:
- the high levels of pupils experiencing problematic sleep patterns potentially affecting their academic performance and linked in some responses to levels of anxiety affecting their sleep,
- a notable minority of pupils and students who stated that they have no one to talk with about their problems,

⁴⁰ National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008 (2001). *Building on experience*. Department of Tourism, Sport & Recreation.

- a large majority of children and young people who stated that they would not trust an adult with their emotional problems in a school-based setting,
- the need for clearer information locally about emotional support services for young people,
- accounts from some teachers of lesser priority being given to the SPHE curriculum,
- the scope for increased adoption of the arts as a vehicle for emotional expression and conflict resolution strategies,
- the need for increased coordination regarding referrals of children and young people at risk of early school leaving, whether between schools and afterschool projects, across afterschool projects, between local family support services, between afterschool projects and family support services,
- the need for system level work with schools to develop teachers' conflict resolution strategies and to improve school social climate in some schools in particular,
- the need for system level work with parents, for example, regarding early intervention strategies for their children's literacy and speech and language development,
- the need for alternative strategies to suspensions,
- the need for early referrals,
- the need for early intervention regarding speech and language development, and therapeutic emotional intervention.

In the same report, Downes and Maunsell (2007) recommended:

that a community based Psychological Support Service for South West Inner City be developed to focus on early intervention, mental health promotion, systemic level interventions in the school and family support, including parent peer support.(p 150)

This strategic recommendation proposes a psychological support service for the area that is community based; it is a service that adopts a focus on:

- early intervention,
- family support,
- mental health promotion.

It involves:

- school site based work with students at risk of suspension and/or with emotional and behavioural problems,
- systemic work at the level of the school with regard to developing teachers' conflict resolution strategies at secondary school in particular (see also Barnardos 2006 on the need for teachers to develop conflict resolution strategies),
- other systems level interventions with regard to developing parent to parent mentoring, for example, with regard to facilitating parenting strategies for at risk youth and for speech and language development of younger children.
- The interventions at a systemic level with regard to teachers and parents is part of a preventative strategy with regard to problems, so that the service adopts a

model of *both* intervention (as treatment) and prevention, as well as mental health promotion.

- It needs to be recognised that:
 - intensive therapeutic work with a child/young person,
 - family therapy level interventionsare usually to take place outside the school site and in a community based setting. The experience of the Suaimhneas project in South Inner City Dublin observed the difficulty with therapeutic intervention onsite in the school, namely, that pupils could be upset going back into class after raising issues with the counsellor (Morgan & Hayes 2004)⁴¹. This difficulty could be overcome if more of the school site based work took place after school hours. However, issues of privacy and also that many students alienated from the school system may not wish to open up in a school-based setting also need to be recognised (Downes 2004)⁴². In the psychological service proposed for Ballyfermot (Downes 2004)⁴³, it was recommended that students be given a choice as to whether they feel more comfortable dealing with issues in a school based or community based context with regard to counselling.

- Any supervised time out area requires support from counsellors, whether this is school or community based, or both.
- Cognitive-Behavioural strategies for working with children with ADHD are well recognised strategies and there is a need for support for teachers in implementing these strategies. Group work to develop self-esteem in children and young people is very suited to children with ADHD and does not need to single them out.
- The high levels of reluctance of students to talk to any member of the school staff about personal problems, in part due to issues of trust and confidentiality, highlights the need for:
 - every school to develop a confidentiality protocol which is also communicated to students,
 - systemic level interventions to provide supports for schools in further developing a supportive school climate.
- The good practice example in one local school of having in effect peer mediation, as well as a range of people for children to talk to, is a helpful model that could be adopted by other schools.

⁴¹ Morgan, M., & Hayes C. (2004). *Evaluation of Suaimhneas Project*. St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra

⁴² Downes, P. (2004). Psychological support services for Ballyfermot: Present and future. URBAN, Ballyfermot

⁴³ *ibid*

- Some students at risk of suspension at secondary school and displaying disruptive behaviour may *not* need counselling support and therapeutic intervention. The focus of the service with these students will be on facilitating improved communication between the student and the classroom teacher, together with a systemic level focus on developing the teacher's conflict resolution skills. The service will play a role as mediator between student and teacher. Some students may need more support with for example, literacy issues or other academic needs which may be contributing to their inattention and disruptive behaviour.
- The concern noted earlier that a 'time-out' room for students displaying disruptive behaviour will become an easy option for students to leave the classroom to be with their friends can be allayed by the involvement of students leaving the classroom in an individual behavioural contract with specific targets – and with a range of consequences, including sanctions - and in a mediation process with the psychology team. If a behavioural contract approach is not sufficient to improve the situation as there are a number of deep underlying issues in the student's life, it may be at this stage that referral to the community based team for more intensive counselling support, with the consent of the student, is desirable⁴⁴. This is one option among a menu of options after members of the psychological service team have examined the individual needs of the student. Another option could be for example, involvement of the at risk student in expression of conflict resolution skills through drama, if this resource was available from afterschool projects.
- The proposed psychological support service can work together with schools to develop mechanisms:
 - to provide support to the isolated teachers who need more help in changing from a highly authoritarian teaching style and in adopting a strengths based focus in their interaction with the children and young people,
 - to provide an outlet for pupil and student perceptions of being treated unfairly, both for minor complaints and more serious ones.

⁴⁴ It must also be noted by the psychological service that just because a prior situation exists of emotional stresses/issues in the student's life, and a subsequent situation exists of disruptive behaviour in class, that this does not necessarily mean that the prior situation issues 'caused' the later disruptive behaviours. The relation may in some students with emotionally difficult past experiences be simply correlation rather than cause.

ADHD: Cognitive behavioural work with parents and in schools

Downes, P. (2004) 'Present and Future Psychological Support Services for Ballyfermot. Dublin: URBAN

The following points were made by different individuals during the course of the above consultation:

- there is a danger of 'pigeon holing' those with ADD/ADHD by separating them from their peers whereas many common issues such as self-esteem, anger management can be dealt with in groups including both ADD/ADHD students and their peers without ADD/ADHD
- In the words of Stephanie Mahony from the parents representative group HADD (North Brunswick St.) for parents of children with ADD/ADHD, there is a need for '*someone who has done a behavioural management course who understands these children...parents don't know where to go for behaviour management therapy*'

Pffifner & Barkley's (1998)⁴⁵ discussion of treatment of ADHD in school settings states that the:

need to establish interventions in all settings in which problems occur should be stressed to parents and school personnel as changes in one setting rarely generalize without intervention to other settings (p.461)

To implement this combined approach from both school and home:

- continuous support needs to be provided for the teacher beyond one day in-service on ADHD (Pffifner & Barkley 1998)⁴⁶
- parent training in behavioural management methods is needed and is best suited to children with (mental) age 3-11 (Anastopoulos et al 1998)⁴⁷

The benefits of both parents participating in a behavioural management programme for their child is to be emphasised:

Joint participation can increase the parenting alliance, reduce marital tensions related to child management, and facilitate parental efforts to gain control over their child's problem behaviours (Anastopoulos et al 1998.)⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Pffifner, L.J. & Barkley, R.A. (1998). Treatment of ADHD in school settings. In R.A. Barkley (ed.), *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: A Handbook for Diagnosis and Treatment* (2nd ed.). London: Guilford Press

⁴⁶ *ibid*

⁴⁷ Anastopoulos, A.D., Smith, J.M., & Wien, E.E. (1998). Counseling and training parents. In R.A. Barkley (ed.), *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: A Handbook for Diagnosis and Treatment* (2nd ed.). London: Guilford Press

⁴⁸ *Ibid* p. 378

Such a partnership could also extend to developing peer tutoring for children with ADD/ADHD (see DuPaul & Eckert 1997 on the positive effects of peer tutoring for ADHD in the U.S context).⁴⁹

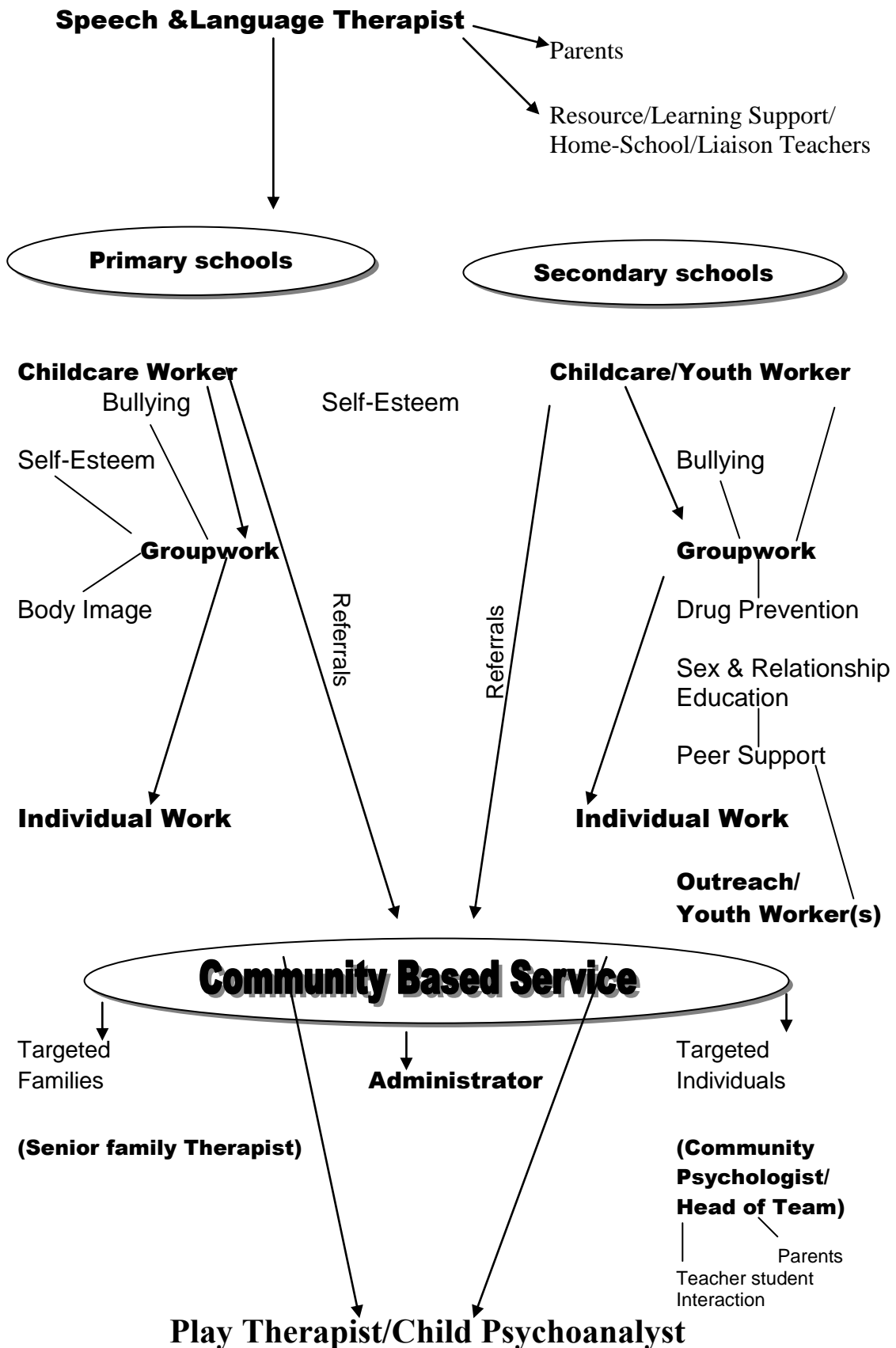
Downes, P & Maunsell, C (2007) *Count us in: Tackling early school leaving in South West Inner City Dublin: An integrated response.* Commissioned by the South Inner City Community Development association.

Downes (2004) states that *Cognitive-Behavioural strategies for working with children with ADHD are well recognised strategies and there is a need for support for teachers in implementing these strategies. It has also been recognised that group work to develop self-esteem in children and young people is very suited to children with ADHD and does not need to single them out.*⁵⁰

⁴⁹ DuPaul & Eckert (1997). The effects of school-based interventions for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: A meta-analysis. *School Psychology Review*, 26, 5-27

⁵⁰ Downes, P. (2004). *Psychological support services for Ballyfermot: Present and future*. URBAN, Ballyfermot

THE PROPOSED MODEL OF A COMMUNITY BASED PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICE: AN INTEGRATED SERVICE WITH THE COMMUNITY AT ITS HEART



Key points regarding the model

- The group work from the childcare/youth workers would serve as a basis for referral of more problematic issues (with parental consent) to the community based team for therapeutic intervention.
- Similarly, children/youth with persistent conduct problems would be referred by teachers/principals (with parental consent). However the child/youth could choose whether to have individual counselling on-site or outside the school setting. This element of choice for the child/youth is a vital aspect of the project rather than being an incidental one. The community psychologist (with background in either counselling or clinical psychology) would be engaged in this 1 to 1 counselling whether community or school based.
- The flexibility of the complementary model between community and school based interventions takes into account the need to accommodate pupil/student choice, particularly for those most alienated from the school system.
- A similar flexibility exists regarding therapeutic support for the child being predominantly an individual focused intervention or a family level intervention. The appropriateness of the level of intervention for a particular case would be a judgement made by the team.
- The team's work with parents will obviously need to recognise that many parents are working so that the hours of availability of services would need to include weekends as much as weekdays, evenings as much as mornings (see also Dale 1996⁵¹ on the contradiction between changing work patterns and the assumption that parents, particularly mothers, are available to meet professionals during working hours).
- As the team plans intervention at both primary and secondary level, this offers the opportunity of long term support, and support with transition from primary to secondary school for identified at-risk students.
- The team will need to engage in a process with school representatives to develop an agreed template regarding the necessary continuum of supports for young people attending school according to levels of need. This process will involve an agreed methodology or mechanism for assessing types, intensity, range of supports and different categories of need. Some young people may need only short or longer term minimal supports. The team will develop agreed evaluation/monitoring templates and strategies against which actions and interventions can be judged.
- Guiding principles for the proposed community based Psychological Service include the following:

⁵¹ Dale, N. (1996). *Working with families of children with special needs: Partnership and practice*. London: Routledge

- the debate between school-based versus school-linked or community based models is viewed not as either/or but both/and depending on the specific contextual needs of the child and parent. A complementary community and school based team is provided,
 - the Head of the project team is community based,
 - the school and community based team are to work in a relation of collaboration with the schools. Nevertheless issues of confidentiality would require that access to files on individual children and their families be kept separate from the schools,⁵²
 - the school is viewed as a mental health system,
 - a complementary rather than duplicative role with NEPS,
 - developing resilience and strength within the community and local student body in order to improve the quality of life of children in the area,
 - emotional and social support interventions are developmental and sustained rather than being once-off events,
 - the community based psychological service can provide a referral role for at risk pupils and students to afterschool projects,
 - facilitating parent to parent support regarding development of speech and language skills for at risk children can build on the strengths of onsite adult education courses already in the local area.
- Overall aims of the recommended model include:
 - targeting at risk children in early years of primary school for speech and language support,
 - targeting identified at risk children/youth for emotional and social support,
 - providing broader emotional and social support for other children/youth at a group level,
 - targeting specific families for therapeutic and practical support,
 - facilitating increased coordination between the network of local services and schools,

⁵² Unless consent is provided by the parents to authorise specific individuals from the school to have access to the files

A key underlying goal of the project is to upgrade the skills of the community and those working in the community, whether at the levels of :

- a) parental intervention skills for speech and language or for behavioural problems,
- b) teachers' (including learning support/resource/Home-School Liaison teachers') skills in applying and facilitating interventions for speech and language, and for students displaying disruptive behaviour,
- c) interventions with teachers for developing conflict resolution skills,⁵³
- d) peer support among the students and developing local youth as mentors.

⁵³ In the U.S, assessment of teachers' satisfaction with psychological consultation regarding teachers' interaction with children with emotional/behavioural problems has tended to focus on emotional support and overlook the need of teachers for practical problem-solving suggestions (Athanasίου et al 2002)