

Cost

£££££

Evidence strength



Impact (months)

+4

Effect size

0.28

---

## What is it?

Behaviour interventions seek to improve attainment by reducing challenging behaviour in school. This entry covers interventions aimed at reducing a variety of behaviours, from low-level disruption to aggression, violence, bullying, substance abuse and general anti-social activities. The interventions themselves can be split into three broad categories:

1. Approaches to developing a positive school ethos or improving discipline across the whole school which also aim to support greater engagement in learning;
2. Universal programmes which seek to improve behaviour and generally take place in the classroom; and
3. More specialised programmes which are targeted at students with specific behavioural issues.

Other approaches, such as [Parental engagement](#) and [Social and emotional learning](#) programmes, are often associated with reported improvements in school ethos or discipline, but are not included in this summary, which is limited to interventions that focus directly on behaviour.

---

## Key Findings

1. Both targeted interventions and universal approaches have positive overall effects (+ 4 months). Schools should consider the appropriate combination of behaviour approaches to reduce overall disruption and provide tailored support where required.
2. There is evidence across a range of different interventions with highest impacts for approaches that focus on self-management or role-play and rehearsal.
3. Even within programme types there is a range of impact. If selecting a behaviour intervention, schools should look for programmes that have been evaluated and shown to have a positive impact.

4. When adopting behaviour interventions – whether targeted or universal – it is important to consider providing professional development to staff to ensure high quality delivery and consistency across the school.

---

## *How effective is the approach?*

The average impact of behaviour interventions is four additional months' progress over the course of a year. Evidence suggests that, on average, behaviour interventions can produce moderate improvements in academic performance along with a decrease in problematic behaviours. However, estimated benefits vary widely across programmes.

Approaches such as improving teachers' behaviour management and pupils' cognitive and social skills are both effective, on average.

School-level behaviour approaches are often related to improvements in attainment, but there is a lack of evidence to show that the improvements are actually caused by the behaviour interventions, rather than other school interventions happening at the same time. Parental and community involvement programmes are often associated with reported improvements in school ethos or discipline and so are worth considering as alternatives to direct behaviour interventions.

Targeting bad behavior is a serious challenge that schools in the Arab world face. Physical violence and all forms of bullying were seen among males more than females students. A large sample of adolescents in Kuwait reported being involved in physical fight because they were victims of bullying.

To this end, researchers in Jordan, Kuwait, and Iraq, emphasized the importance of schools therapeutic programs to reduce students aggressive behavior particularly at the secondary level. Building stronger relationships between schools and parents and parent-child is an upmost priority to encourage students to communicate the school life and seek guidance and support to solve their problems. Creating sustainable school therapeutic programs is as equally important to reduce secondary students' aggressive behavior.

The majority of studies published in the Arab world examined reasons for negative behaviors and suggested ways to improve them. No studies to date investigated the impact of behavior interventions on students achievement. More research is needed in this area using longitudinal studies and bigger sample in order to infer casual relationships and generalizability of results. Additionally, approaches that address the use of technology for cyber bullying and cyber harassment is highly needed due to this fast spreading phenomenon and its negative effects on students' wellbeing and academic achievement.

---

## *Behind the average*

Effects are slightly lower for secondary age pupils (+3 months).

Impact seems to apply across the curriculum with slightly greater impact (+5 months) for mathematics than literacy or science.

Frequent sessions several times a week over an extended period of up to a term appear to be the most successful.

Approaches which focus on self-management and those involving role play or rehearsal are associated with greater impact.

---

## *Closing the disadvantage gap*

According to [figures](#) from the Department for Education, pupils who receive Free School Meals are more likely to receive a permanent or fixed period exclusion compared to those who do not.

The most common reason for exclusion is persistent disruptive behaviour. Pupil behaviour will have multiple influences, some of which teachers can directly manage through universal or classroom management approaches. Some pupils will require more specialist support to help manage their self-regulation or social and emotional skills.

---

## *How could you implement in your setting?*

Behaviour interventions have an impact through increasing the time that pupils have for learning. This might be through reducing low-level disruption that reduces learning time in the classroom or through preventing exclusions that remove pupils from school for periods of time. If interventions take up more classroom time than the disruption they displace, engaged learning time is unlikely to increase. In most schools, a combination of universal and targeted approaches will be most appropriate:

- Universal approaches to classroom management can help prevent disruption – but often require professional development to administer effectively.
- Targeted approaches that are tailored to pupils' needs such as regular report cards or functional behaviour assessments may be appropriate where pupils are struggling with

behaviour.

Across all approaches it is crucial to maintain high expectations for pupils and to embed a consistent approach across the school. Successful approaches may also include social and emotional learning interventions and parental engagement approaches.

Evidence suggests that programmes delivered over two-to-six months seem to produce more long-lasting results. Whole-school strategies are usually longer to embed than individually tailored or single-classroom strategies.

When introducing new approaches, schools should consider implementation. For more information see [Putting Evidence to Work - A School's Guide to Implementation](#).

---

## *What does it cost?*

The costs of behaviour interventions vary widely and overall they are estimated to range between very low to moderate. The costs to schools to deliver whole school strategies are largely based on staff time and training. More intensive, targeted interventions are likely to incur higher staffing and training costs.

Behavioural interventions can require a large amount of staff time, compared with other approaches. Targeted or one-to-one approaches, delivered by trained school staff or specialists, will require additional staff time compared to universal approaches. Overall, effective approaches can promote better engagement with teaching and learning by reducing challenging behaviour and improving pupil engagement.

Alongside time and cost, school leaders should reflect on the impact of whole school behaviour policies and support their staff to maintain a consistent approach. When adopting new approaches, school leaders should consider programmes with a track record of effectiveness. Improving classroom management may involve intensive training where teachers reflect on their practice, implement new strategies, and review their progress over time.

As yet there is no information about local costs.

---

## *How secure is the evidence?*

The security of the evidence around behaviour interventions is rated as low. 89 studies were identified that met the inclusion criteria for the Toolkit. Overall, the topic lost two additional padlocks because:

- A small percentage of studies took place recently. This might mean that the research is not representative of current practice.
- A large percentage of the studies were not independently evaluated. Evaluations conducted by organisations connected with the approach – for example, commercial providers, typically have larger impacts, which may influence the overall impact of the strand.

As with any evidence review, the Toolkit summarises the average impact of approaches when researched in academic studies. It is important to consider your context and apply your professional judgement when implementing an approach in your setting.

Copyright © [The Education Endowment Foundation](#). All rights reserved.