

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL
Wednesday 11 JULY 2018

1. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR DEWHIRST
Re: Consequences Booths

Can the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Schools identify any schools in Devon that use "Consequences Booths"? MP Paul Williams, who is a GP, reported in Parliament that children were suffering growing anxiety and nightmares over the use of these harsh isolation booths for the entire day, often for trivial reasons, in some schools.

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR MCINNES

Devon LA does not keep records on the how schools apply sanctions within the school environment and are therefore not able to provide the specific information requested. Some schools have for a number of years used Isolation rooms but I am not aware of any that are using consequences booths. The information below is designed to provide some background information in relation to the matter.

The management of pupils behaviour within school settings is the responsibility of the Governing body. Governing bodies of maintained schools and the proprietors of Academies have a duty requiring them to make arrangements to ensure that their functions are carried out with a view to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Headteachers, proprietors and governing bodies must ensure they have procedures in place to support staff in managing behaviour, including the use of rewards and sanctions. These procedures must be set out in a behaviour policy which should be published on the schools website (Maintained schools must publish it).

DfE guidance states that:

"A clear school behaviour policy, consistently and fairly applied, underpins effective education. School staff, pupils and parents should all be clear of the high standards of behaviour expected of all pupils at all times. The behaviour policy should be supported and backed-up by senior staff and the head teacher."

They go on to give examples of sanctions which can be applied and also state that:

"Schools can adopt a policy which allows disruptive pupils to be placed in an area away from other pupils for a limited period, in what are often referred to as seclusion or isolation rooms. If a school uses seclusion or isolation rooms as a disciplinary penalty this should be made clear in their behaviour policy. As with all other disciplinary penalties, schools must act reasonably in all the circumstances when using such rooms (see paragraphs 14 and 15). Any use of isolation that prevents a child from leaving a room of their own free will should only be considered in exceptional circumstances. The school must also ensure the health and safety of pupils and any requirements in relation to safeguarding and pupil welfare."

It is for individual schools to decide how long a pupil should be kept in seclusion or isolation, and for the staff member in charge to determine what pupils may and may not do during the time they are there. Schools should ensure that pupils are kept in seclusion or isolation no longer than is necessary and that their time spent there is used as constructively as possible".