



What Works for
**Children's
Social Care**

BEHAVIOUR OUTREACH SUPPORT SERVICE

PILOT EVALUATION REPORT

December 2021





What Works for Children's Social Care

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the advice of Jan Forshaw of Coram Life Education, but responsibility for this report's contents rests with its authors. We would also like to thank Huma Haque, Vicky Clayton, Eleanor Stringer, and Eva Schoenwald of What Works for Children's Social Care (WWCSC).

Funding and competing interests

What Works for Children's Social Care provided funding to Family Action to deliver the Behaviour Outreach Support Service (BOSS), and to Coram to carry out an evaluation of the service. What Works for Children's Social Care is funded by the Department for Education, England.

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Established by Thomas Coram as The Foundling Hospital in 1739, Coram is the UK's oldest children's charity and has been supporting vulnerable children for 280 years. Coram is the parent charity of a group of specialist charities helping more than a million children, young people, professionals, and families every year. Coram's Impact and Evaluation Team are a department of researchers with advanced skills in qualitative and quantitative research methods with children and young people, parents and carers, and social care professionals.

About Family Action

Family Action is a national charity which believes no one should be defined by their circumstances. It provides practical, emotional, and financial support to those who are experiencing poverty, disadvantage, and social isolation. Family Action has been building stronger families since 1869 and today works with more than 60,000 families in over 200 community based services, as well as supporting thousands more through national programmes and grants.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BIP	Behaviour Improvement Plan
BOSS	Behaviour Outreach Support Service
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
KS1	Key Stage 1
KS2	Key Stage 2
SEMH	Social, Emotional and Mental Health
SENDCo	Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Coordinator
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
WWCSC	What Works for Children's Social Care



CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
Introduction	5
Research questions	5
Methods	5
Key findings	5
Discussion	8
Conclusion and recommendations	8
INTRODUCTION	9
Programme background	9
Pilot context	11
METHODS	14
Research questions	14
Protocol Registration and Ethical review	15
Research design	15
Data Collection	15
FINDINGS	22
DISCUSSION	56
Discussion of Findings	56
Limitations	56
Conclusions and Recommendations	56
Directions for Future Research	57
REFERENCES	58
APPENDICES	60
Appendix A: Training delivered by BOSS programme in individual schools	60
Appendix B: Pupil diary	62



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Behaviour Outreach Support Service (BOSS) aims to help schools improve their support to pupils who display challenging behaviour that compromises their learning and attendance. Run by the charity Family Action, the BOSS programme was delivered to 77 pupils aged 5 to 11, who have or have had a social worker in the past six years, in eight primary schools in York in the academic year 2020/21.

BOSS consisted of weekly school-based 1:1 sessions between BOSS workers and pupils, of around 45 minutes, for an average of 15 weeks, plus training for school staff and some parents/carers. Family Action is currently implementing a similar model in Lincolnshire schools and has a secondary school model of BOSS, outside the scope of this report. Coram carried out a mixed methods evaluation of the pilot programme.

Research questions

Our evaluation was designed to answer the following key questions:

- Was the programme implemented as planned across the schools, and in relation to the previous Lincolnshire model, in the New York context? Why or why not?
- How different or similar is BOSS to behaviour-management-as-usual in the participating schools?
- What were children's, parents' and carers', teachers', and social workers' experiences of the programme?
- What was the cost of implementing the programme?

Secondary research questions included exploring the perceived impacts and consequences of BOSS, including whether it changed the support available to target children, and the impact on outcomes such as attendance and referrals to children's social care.

Methods

Our independent mixed-methods evaluation of this pilot intervention draws on:

- Semi-structured interviews with 65 pupils, parents, carers, and teachers, as well as BOSS staff and York council staff. All but one interview was carried out 1:1;
- Administrative data collected from four schools on 1,094 pupils;
- Case files of five Behaviour Improvement Plan (BIP) pupils (those worked with directly by Family Action) reviewed as part of a site visit;
- Paper diaries completed by 193 pupils (both those with a BIP and not) in class;
- An online survey completed by 41 respondents: 39 school staff and 2 other professionals.

Key findings

Context

Primary schools do not exclude pupils in large numbers but do experience challenges in managing the behaviour of some pupils. York primary schools had only limited existing central support for pupils with challenging behaviour similar to the BOSS programme. Coronavirus lockdowns brought difficulties in delivering a school-based face-to-face programme, and the programme began online in 2021 before moving to in-person delivery. Despite the challenges,



Family Action delivered BOSS in eight schools, more than the originally intended five, and to almost the target number of pupils (target 80-90, actual 77).

Schools were variously positioned on behaviour management, but BOSS was generally seen as adding to or improving existing support, rather than marking a radical departure from business-as-usual practice.

Implementation

- **Schools engaged with the programme**

Five schools took part fully and three others took part but were less engaged. Almost the target number of 80-90 pupils, 77, were worked with directly (via a BIP) and Family Action delivered school-wide training and other support. Schools appreciated the extra help in managing behaviour and giving target pupils 1:1 adult attention. Training was well-received though two schools declined the offer of training as they saw no need given their existing provision. The five fully engaged schools received a BOSS Bronze Relationship Award from Family Action for having bought into the restorative practice behaviour model. Two schools spontaneously expressed interest in continuing the programme after it ended.

- **Eligibility**

To benefit directly, pupils had to have or have had a social worker in the past six years, something schools sometimes struggled with, as many pupils with challenging behaviour have no social care involvement. Schools varied in their interpretation of who would benefit most and referred children ranging from those with no particular behavioural problems to very challenging and violent behaviour.

- **The programme was implemented largely as planned**

There were two main departures from the previous experience of BOSS in Lincolnshire. These were the introduction of:

- One-hour 1:1 training sessions with seven parents;
- 1:1 transition work with Year 6 pupils in the second half of the Summer term (a shorter and more focused version of BIPs).

- **Covid adaptations**

School closures led to changes in implementation early in 2021 when introductory and early sessions with BIP pupils, and other meetings and training with schools, were delivered remotely. The shift to in-person went smoothly, and we concluded that the earlier virtual delivery was better than nothing at all.

Outcomes

BOSS was a small-scale programme which ran for one academic year and the evaluation was not designed to measure impact robustly. This means any beneficial effects on child outcomes were difficult to measure, especially as the diaries and administrative data we gathered from schools were sparse, so most of our conclusions on outcomes are based on qualitative evidence.



BOSS was an enjoyable experience

All pupils we interviewed enjoyed spending time with their BOSS worker. Parents we spoke to also appreciated having support from BOSS workers in respect of their child's behaviour at home. Enjoyment was perceived to help improve other outcomes, in that BOSS provided another reason to go to school. None of our evidence suggested unintended negative consequences for children or schools taking part.

Changes to practice

As with the other impacts we asked about, many felt it was too soon to say what difference BOSS had made, but around half of school staff surveyed thought BOSS had made some or a lot of difference to professional practice, in how individual teachers, teaching assistants, and schools generally worked with children.

Behaviour

In interviews we heard examples of improved family relationships, improved self-esteem among children, improved well-being, and feeling happier about going to school. The sparse data we received did not allow us to draw conclusions on the BOSS programme's impact on behaviour in schools as a whole, though some evidence from the small number of targeted pupils' diaries indicated slight improvement in how much pupils enjoyed school over the course of the Spring and Summer terms. The improvements were attributed to children and adults learning self-regulation and de-escalation strategies. Children had improved their ability to cope through learning practical strategies to manage anger or remain calm.

Attainment

1:1 support from BOSS took pupils out of classroom teaching, but in some cases the abilities of BIP pupils were believed to have improved as a result of spending more time in the classroom due to their improved behaviour following BOSS involvement. The administrative data we received did not allow us to draw conclusions on any impact on attainment.

Attendance

Data limitations and the impact of Covid meant we could not draw conclusions on the effect of BOSS on rates of attendance.

Exclusions

Exclusion of pupils from primary schools is rare but had been experienced by some BIP pupils. Sparse administrative data meant that we were unable to conclude on the impact of BOSS on exclusions.

Referrals

We could not conclude on the impact of BOSS on rates of referral to children's social care.

Costs

BOSS cost Family Action a total of £164,185 to deliver in 2020/21 (both direct support to children and training for school staff, pupils, and parents), or £20,523 per school, and we estimate that the direct support to pupils cost an average of £1,929 per pupil. We have not costed the time of school staff taken up by BOSS training sessions.



Discussion

Behaviour in schools is a controversial issue, with disagreement over how best to achieve good behaviour. Family Action's relationship-based and restorative approach was popular and seemed to fit well with existing support in primary schools. There were questions and some worries about how it would translate in the case of transition pupils due to the fact that they may experience less nurturing approaches after their move to secondary school.

The BOSS programme was perceived to benefit pupils. Several interviewees described stark improvements in child behaviour which they attributed to the work of BOSS. These examples are encouraging but future research is needed to establish the causal effect of the programme. It is difficult to say how those most likely to benefit should be identified in future, though staff perceived that children without social care involvement would have benefited. The sparse administrative and diary data we analysed did not allow us to reach conclusions with confidence on the overall benefits across all pupils. With other behaviour programmes available to invest in, we are unfortunately unable to provide sufficient evidence to advise schools whether to invest a sizable sum – around a year's pupil premium for an individual child – in BOSS support.

Conclusion and recommendations

- We found widespread satisfaction with the BOSS intervention among pupils, school staff, and parents/carers. There was also no suggestion of any negative, unintended consequences. These findings suggest BOSS can be safely rolled out to further schools while more evidence is gathered on its outcomes and impacts.
- A strong recommendation, suggested by a range of our interviewees across all participating schools and survey respondents, was to remove the WWCS eligibility criteria for BIP pupils to have, or have had, a social worker in the past 6 years.
- Any future testing and adaptation of the BOSS model could consider: evaluating the secondary school BOSS model, outside the scope of this report; offering BIPs to a wider pool of pupils; and a transition model which begins in Year 6 and ends, not at the end of Year 6, but in the first year of secondary school.
- Future research should:
 - Seek complete data on all BIP pupils, to allow analysis of which pupils appear to benefit most from the 1:1 support.
 - Gather primary data on behaviour, to see whether our qualitative findings on changes in behaviour by some pupils apply more widely; and
 - Follow transition BIP pupils after their move to secondary, to follow-up on the impacts of BOSS in the new school setting.



INTRODUCTION

Programme background

Family Action is a national charity that provides practical, emotional, and financial support to those experiencing poverty, disadvantage, and social isolation. Since 2016, Family Action has been funded by Lincolnshire County Council to deliver the BOSS programme in most of the county's primary and secondary schools (Family Action, 2019). The programme was originally developed by Family Action. BOSS aims to provide a range of services that will “help schools improve their ability to support pupils displaying behaviour that challenges and compromises their learning and school attendance, or the learning of their peers.”

Figure 1: BOSS model, which includes Targeted Outreach (1:1/Group), Assessment/Advice, Restorative Approaches/Interventions, Parent Support, Training and Consultancy and finally Therapeutic Intervention.



Family Action describes its BOSS programme as one which offers support with assessment and planning, direct intervention, and support to staff to develop more effective inclusive provision and practice (Family Action, 2019).

This includes:

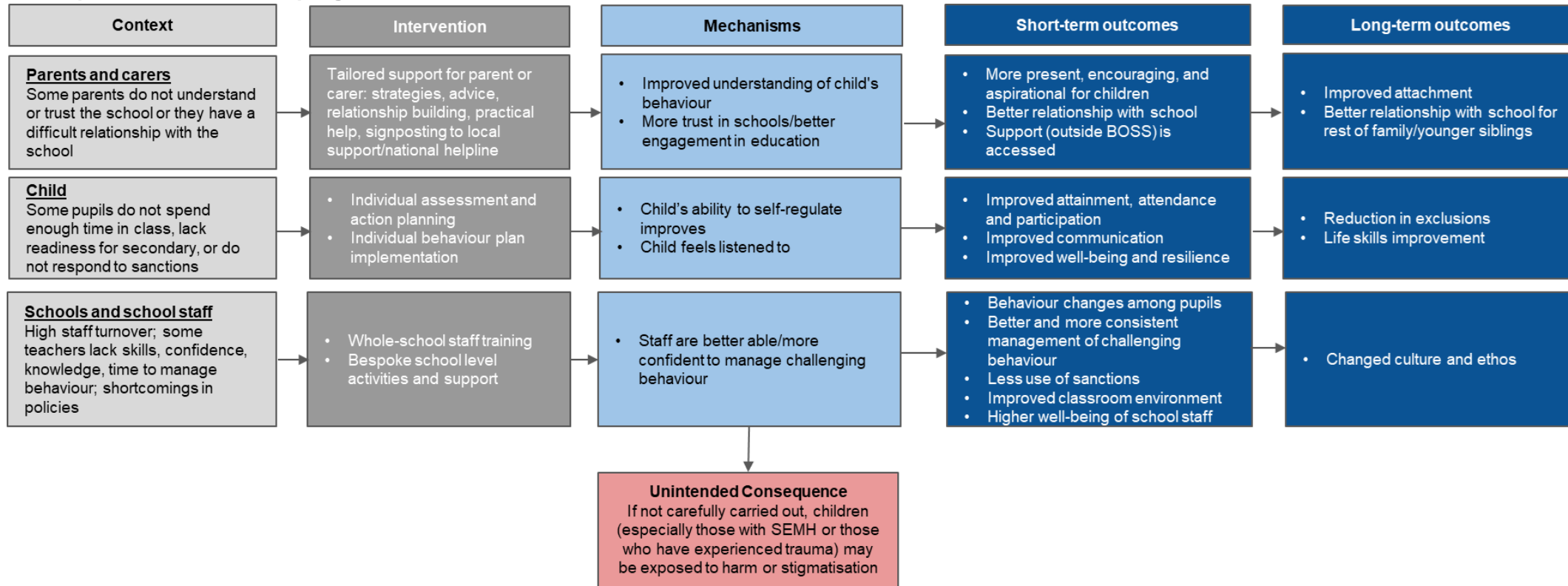
- Bespoke support to primary and secondary schools, including bespoke individual behaviour plans for children and young people;
- Targeted work on planning school transitions, including mid-term transitions;
- A wide range of staff training relating to behaviour support, trauma-informed, restorative and solution-focused approaches, and relationship-based approaches in school;
- Co-ordinated peer and parental/family support;
- Targeted therapeutic interventions, supported by registered therapists.

Pupils, teachers, other school staff, parents, and carers are the intended beneficiary groups of the intervention. Delivering the service to these groups are BOSS programme workers and managers, who are Family Action employees. Part of the hypothesised mechanism of action of BOSS is through training delivered to school staff which benefits children by improving the way that schools respond to pupil behaviour.

This logic model was developed by Family Action in discussion with Coram and WWCS in November 2020.



Figure 2: Logic model of BOSS to show context, intervention, mechanisms, short term outcomes, long term outcomes, and unintended consequences of the BOSS programme





Pilot context

In 2020, Family Action successfully applied to WWCS for funding to implement its BOSS model in the new context of primary schools in the City of York Council area.

City of York Council identified schools for participation in the programme (for more details on recruitment of schools, see section 2.1). The initial intention was for BOSS to work in five primary schools in York. However, when two of the original five schools were slow to refer pupils for the BIP intervention, another two schools were approached and invited to participate in the pilot. An eighth school was added subsequently, as a result of the BOSS team being based within the school premises. However, this school only referred a small number of pupils for the BIP intervention.

The eight primary schools were: Clifton Green Primary School, Fishergate Primary School, Hob Moor Community Primary Academy, New Earswick Primary School, Osbaldwick Primary Academy, St. Aelred's Roman Catholic Primary School, Tang Hall Primary Academy, and Woodthorpe Primary School.

Six of the eight primary schools are academy converted or academy sponsor led schools (see Table 1). For the 2019/20 academic year, enrolment at each participating school ranged from 212 to 441 pupils and totalled 2,509 across all eight schools. The number of children receiving special educational needs (SEN) support ranged between 17 and 87 pupils (5% to 20%) per school. Between 11% and 34% of children per school were eligible for free school meals, and 13% to 45% were eligible for pupil premium payments.

The initial target number of pupils to receive BIPs was 80-90 (10-11 per school), or 3.2% to 3.6% of the total roll. Children were eligible for a BIP if they had or had had a social worker in the last six years. Once pupils fulfilled the social worker criteria, schools were able to prioritise who they referred to the BOSS programme. A total of 77 pupils were offered a BIP, just short of the original target.

WWCS intended that a small number of pupils (up to 10%) could be offered a BIP even if they have not had social work involvement. However, evaluation interviews highlighted that BOSS staff in York and participating schools were not aware of this offer. Consequently, all pupils with a BIP in the pilot programme had or had had a social worker in the past six years.



Table 1: Summary of information on the 8 primary schools 2019/20

Name of school	Postcode district	School type	Total pupils	Of total number of pupils, % receiving SEN support	Total school workforce (headcount) (2018)	Ofsted rating	Of total number of pupils, % eligible for free school meals	Of total number of pupils, % eligible for pupil premium
Clifton Green Primary School	YO30	Community school	433	20	77	Requires improvement (2018)	28	31
Fishergate Primary School	YO10	Community school	329	5	58	Good (2017)	11	21
Hob Moor Community Primary Academy	YO24	Academy converter	313	14	69	Good (2013)*	28	33
New Earswick Primary School	YO32	Academy sponsored	215	9	25	Inadequate (2016)	21	13
Osbalwick Primary Academy	YO10	Academy converter	303	16	86	Requires Improvement (2016)*	15	29
St. Aelred's Roman Catholic Primary School	YO31	Academy converter	212	14	48	Good (2017)*	18	28
Tang Hall Primary Academy	YO31	Academy converter	263	13	56	Good (2020)	34	45
Woodthorpe Primary School	YO24	Academy converter	441	10	62	Good (2017)*	17	23
Total			2,509	5% 20%	481		11% 34%	13% 45%



Source: Department for Education (2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2019a). Source for pupil premium numbers: school websites (Clifton Green Primary School, 2019; Fishergate Primary School, 2020; Hob Moor Community Primary Academy, 2020; New Earswick Primary School, 2020; Osbaldwick Primary Academy, 2020; St. Aelred's Roman Catholic Primary School, 2020; Tang Hall Primary Academy, 2020 and Woodthorpe Primary School, 2020).

* Note: Rating is based on Ofsted inspections of predecessor school prior to academy conversion. Whilst judgements of predecessor schools are not those of the academy, they may still provide some useful information.



Pilot Evaluation

METHODS

Research questions

The evaluation aimed to examine benefits for the direct beneficiary children, other children in the schools, parents and carers, and school staff. It also sought to understand if there were early indications that the BOSS intervention was effective in addressing behavioural problems in Key Stage 1 and 2 across eight primary schools in York.

This evaluation builds on a previous unpublished evaluation of the BOSS programme in Lincolnshire by Family Action (2019) and aims to inform possible future evaluation using more robust designs to enable conclusions about causality.

We aimed to address the following 12 research questions, four of primary interest, and eight of secondary interest. We had five outcomes of particular interest: attainment, attendance, behaviour, exclusions, and referrals to children's services.

Primary questions: understanding the intervention

1. Fidelity and adaptation: was the programme implemented as planned across the schools, and in relation to the previous Lincolnshire model, in the new York context? Why or why not?

- What were the barriers and enablers to successful implementation?

2. Similarity to business-as-usual practice: how different or similar is BOSS to business-as-usual behaviour management in the participating schools?

3. Satisfaction, acceptability, and user experience: what were children's, parents' and carers', teachers', and social workers' experiences of the programme?

4. Cost: what was the cost of implementing the programme?

Secondary questions: potential indications of impact

5. What changes (if any) are made in BOSS schools to the support that is available and the approach taken to working with the target children?

6. What is the perceived impact and mechanism of action of the BOSS programme on child outcomes among children, parents/carers, teachers, and social workers who are involved in it?

7. What is the difference between the attendance of children on BIPs in the term before the introduction of BOSS and the term after?

8. What is the difference between the exclusion rate of children on BIPs in the term before the introduction of BOSS and the term after?

9. What is the difference between the attainment of children on BIPs in the term before the introduction of BOSS and the term after?



10. What is the difference between the rates of referrals to children's social care of children on BIPs in the term before the introduction of BOSS and the term after?

11. What is the difference in the behaviour of children on BIPs in the term before the introduction of BOSS and the term after?

12. What were the unintended consequences of the BOSS programme on the children and the school?

Protocol Registration and Ethical review

Following Coram's Research Ethics Policy (Coram, 2020) we sought ethical scrutiny through Coram's Research Ethics Committee. We received a favourable opinion in December 2020.

Research design

We employed a mixed-methods design including a pupil-level data request of schools; interviews with pupils, parents/carers, teachers, and others; child diaries; and a survey of school staff and other professionals.

We followed the plans for our methods set out in the pilot protocol (Taylor et al, 2021), though with changes to the fieldwork dates, largely caused by Covid restrictions.

Data Collection

Table 2: Data collected in this pilot evaluation

Data collection type	Timing and amount
Semi-structured interviews, mostly in-person and 1:1, with children, parents/carers, teachers, and other professionals	65 interviews carried out between April and July 2021
Paper diaries for completion by pupils in classrooms	356 collected, 193 analysed (where parent/carer consent given), dated 4 January to 21 June 2021
Administrative data collection and analysis	Data on 1,094 pupils in 4 schools relating to 2017/18 to 2020/21
Online survey for school staff and other professionals	41 responses received between 26 March and 23 July 2021
Site visit to one school, including case file review	Case files relating to 5 BIP pupils reviewed on 13 May 2021

Semi-structured 1:1 interviews with children, parents/carers, teachers, and other professionals

We aimed to maximise the breadth of experience and characteristics we covered in a series of 1:1 semi-structured interviews (Taylor et al, 2021). We expected variation in implementation



from one school to another, so aimed to cover at least one of each type of interview in each school, which we achieved.

In total we interviewed 53 people in the eight participating schools: 17 children, 15 parents, and 21 school staff. In addition, we also interviewed seven York City council staff and five Family Action staff. All 65 interviews were carried out between April and July 2021, and with participants' consent were audio recorded. In the interests of anonymity we describe all Family Action staff interviewed as a 'BOSS worker'.

We spent one or two days each in six of the schools and carried out 3 - 11 interviews with staff, parents/carers, and children. In the other two schools, whose engagement with BOSS started later, we only carried out a telephone interview with the two headteachers.

For the school-based interviews we worked with our key contact in each school to identify and organise interviews with staff, parents, and children – this is likely to have influenced who we had access to. Overall, we spoke to six headteachers, eight staff in roles such as Designated Safeguarding Leads / pastoral / Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Coordinators (SENDCo), four classroom teachers, and four teaching assistants. We conducted the vast majority of interviews with school staff in private spaces within schools, such as empty classrooms and conference rooms. A few were telephone interviews, because the member of staff was not available on the day of our visit.

Our 17 interviews with children (six with KS1 children and 11 with KS2 children) covered 22% of the 77 BIP pupils. In the child interviews we used a range of creative methods, such as 'chatterbox', 'draw and talk', 'helping hand', 'smiley / sad faces', and 'concentric circles'. The purpose of these creative methods was to facilitate conversations about their involvement with the BOSS programme, and it is therefore these conversations between children and the evaluator, rather than the creative output, that was used in the analysis. Using creative methods with children plays to their strengths rather than weaknesses, but also helped to create a more informal atmosphere that encouraged children to reflect on the evaluation questions and to respond in their own words. It enabled us to explore their school and home life more widely, without being too intrusive. In one interview, for example, a girl only mentioned her social worker when she was asked to write or draw the people who help her learn (concentric circles), providing an insight into this girl's life that we would not have gained otherwise.

Having an informal and flexible approach to interviewing also proved beneficial in interviews with KS1 children, as many of these very young children (age 5 to 6) often lost concentration quickly. By following their lead, we were still able to have conversations about the BOSS programme while also having a pretend picnic with dinosaurs or folding paper chatterboxes.

We interviewed 15 parents across six schools. We mainly spoke to the children's mothers (10), but also interviewed others (5): three fathers, one stepmother, and one foster father. The majority of interviews were conducted face-to-face in school, but we also carried out six conversations by telephone, either because Covid restrictions prevented parents entering school or due to parents' other commitments.

Both child and parent/carer interviewees received a £15 voucher for participating. We did not aim to interview parents and children within the same families, but this was often the case – most likely because this arrangement was easier for school staff to organise.



We recruited our local authority interviewees via a key contact in City of York Council. Potential interviewees were sent an information sheet with our initial email approach. The council staff worked in the areas of school support, inclusion, and Virtual School.

Limitations of the interviews

Recruiting parents and children for interviews through our lead contact in each school will have influenced our sample. Schools made decisions about which parents/carers to contact based on their own experience of contact with parents, such as who would be available and like to attend the interview. It is likely that some parents selected and interviewed were more engaged with their child's school than average. The same potential selection bias is likely for the interviews with children. While it is important to acknowledge the limitation on the representativeness of our interview sample, it is our impression that schools tried to select interviewees with a range of experiences and difficulties.

The BOSS team consisted of three caseworkers (one began their role a few months later than the other two and one finished a few months before the programme ended). However, among the children and parents/carers we spoke to, cases were not equally split between the three caseworkers. Half of the children had one caseworker and had done the most parental training and support, which may be a specific reason for schools to select these children and parents for us to speak to.

The timing of our interviews between April and July 2021 meant some children only had 3-4 sessions with their BOSS caseworkers at the time of their interview, and most of these interviewees felt it was too early to talk about the impact of the work.

Analysis of interview data

Interviews were transcribed and reviewed, and we also listened to audio recordings and made notes, before carrying out a thematic analysis of the interview data using the framework approach to qualitative analysis (Ritchie et al, 2013). This allowed us to pull out more general themes experienced across the pilot schools. During the fieldwork stage interviewers wrote up reflective fieldwork notes following each day spent in schools. These notes, together with debriefs and emerging findings discussions with all interviewers, helped build a common understanding of the key themes.

We also collated multiple perspectives on individual children. In cases where we had a range of evidence (interviews with the child themselves, their parent/carer, and comments made by school staff and BOSS workers) this information was organised into tables.

Child diaries

Diaries can be a good way of gauging children's engagement with the school in terms of social interactions and the extent to which the children feel included in the school culture (Lämsä et al, 2012). We created diaries for use in class by children in Years 2-6. We did not employ sampling; we invited all children in Year 2-6 to complete a diary. There were 1,874 pupils in Year 2 and above in the participating schools in 2019/20. We sent information and diaries to headteachers in all the participating schools. We created and provided online forms for schools, including an information sheet and a consent form for parents and carers, and paper copies of these for pupils to take home and return signed to the teacher.



We suggested that teachers could use the diaries with all children in their class, to avoid any possible feelings of inconsistency within classrooms. To encourage completion, we suggested teachers could use the diaries flexibly as a classroom tool, but told them to only return to Coram, for our use as an evaluation tool, the diaries from children whose parent or carer had consented to this use.

We initially asked that children record their experiences at the end of the day in the diaries once a week (one page per week) during Spring term 2021. However, we also suggested to teachers that they use the diaries flexibly, so a few diaries were completed daily or sporadically. The dates printed on the diaries were from the week beginning Monday 4 January, to the week beginning Monday 22 March; the start to the end of term.

Paper diaries focused on the school experience, so diaries were only suitable for completion by children physically present in the school. Between January and March 2021, UK government guidance was that only children of critical workers and vulnerable children and young people (including children with a social worker) should attend school (Cabinet Office, 2021). In response we advised schools they could use the diaries more flexibly and until the end of the academic year, disregarding the printed dates. We received diaries with dates ranging from 4 January to 21 June 2021. We analysed the diaries two ways: by date, and in sequence irrespective of date (from 'week 1' to 'week 12'). Where pupils filled in the diaries in the originally intended sequence, week 10 represents the week in which their classmates returned to school, after the lockdown was lifted on Monday 8 March. Family Action told us that one BIP pupil was physically present in school throughout the term.

We received 356 diaries from five schools (4 to 115 per school), and were able to analyse 193 diaries from four schools, where parental/carer consent was received (0 to 112 per school). Teaching staff mostly did not indicate in the diaries whether pupils were on BIPs or not, as we had requested. Consequently, we were only able to analyse and compare five diaries from BIP pupils with non-BIP pupils. These five came from the school which provided the majority of the diaries we analysed (58%). We did not receive consent for any of the four diaries collected from the fifth school and were therefore unable to include these in our analysis.

The diaries, the parent and carer information sheet, and the information sheet for teachers made clear that the diaries were optional and children did not need to complete (or fully complete) them. We treated diaries in which all questions for at least one page were unanswered as partially completed; 74% of the diaries analysed were partially completed. One school provided a list of initials of 50 children whose parent or carer had consented for the diaries to be used, of which we could only identify 16, suggesting that future similar research should use an alternative identifier such as Unique Pupil Number.

On each page, the diaries asked four questions of children, and included space for written comments. Some comments were written by children, and others were written by teachers or teaching assistants, recording children's spoken comments, or summarising their day. Children were presented with two statements and asked whether they 'agree a lot', 'agree a bit', 'disagree a bit' or 'disagree a lot'. The statements were:

- 'I love going to school'
- 'I was able to do my work in school today'.

The diaries also asked a multiple-choice question:



- 'What went well in school today?'

Children were able to circle up to four answers:

- 'I got on with my classmates',
- 'I got on with grown-ups',
- 'I was able to listen', and
- 'I was listened to'.

The final question was open-ended and asked: 'How has today been for you?'

Each year group was represented fairly evenly, but the largest proportion of diaries were completed by pupils in Year 2 (25%). Due to the reading level, we recommended that schools distribute the diaries to pupils in Year 2 to Year 6. Nevertheless, we received seven diaries from Year 1 pupils which we included in the analysis. Thirteen pupils did not state their year group.

Administrative data collection and analysis

We requested data on all pupils from all participating schools in a standard format. The request covered demographic information on pupils and measures of attendance, exclusions, attainment, and behaviour. The full set of data fields we requested is available in Taylor et al (2021).

We received data from four schools, covering 1,094 pupils (198 to 384 pupils per school), including 38 pupils who had been on a BIP (4 to 13 per school). Some schools only provided outcome data on BIP pupils. In the case of one school, behaviour data was provided only at aggregate level. Some schools commented on the burdensome nature of the request, which may explain why some schools did not provide the requested data. The data we received was sparse in terms of coverage by school and by time period. For some variables we requested, none of the schools provided data, suggesting a need to revisit the data fields in any future evaluation. Our online staff survey asked how confident staff felt about the quality of administrative data from their school. Over a third (35%) felt very confident, 30% felt fairly confident and 27% did not know. Some commented on its accuracy, for example 'teachers are rigorous', and 'data is moderated and monitored on a regular basis by various members of the SLT and pastoral team'. One member of staff did not feel confident at all in their school's data quality but did not comment why.

On receiving the administrative data, we carried out data validation and checking, cleaning, and quality assurance. We merged the data from different schools into a single analytical dataset. We carried out quality assurance checks, for example checking for duplicates and checking that no dates of birth were in the future. Our quality assurance procedures entail a review of work by another member of the team.

Online survey for teachers and other professionals

In line with our plans (Taylor et al, 2021), we provided a link to an online survey to key contacts in participating schools, Family Action, and City of York Council, for passing on to staff who were involved to a greater or lesser extent in the BOSS programme. The survey was open between 26 March and 23 July, and we received 41 responses (Table 3). The response rate is unknown: we asked schools to tell us how many staff they circulated the survey link to, but



did not receive back reliable enough information to calculate a denominator. The questionnaire included a mixture of closed and open questions and explored perceptions of BOSS, training received, and other interactions with the programme by school staff. We mostly report only on the 39 school staff respondents, excluding BOSS worker responses, unless otherwise stated.

Table 3: Survey respondents by job role

Role	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Classroom teacher	15	36%
Teaching assistant	13	32%
Member of school senior leadership team (SLT)	7	17%
Other school staff	4	10%
BOSS worker	2	5%
Total	41	100%

We asked staff members to provide a brief summary of their key responsibilities:

- Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher;
- Teaching assistant with 1:1 responsibility for one pupil;
- Nurture and Behaviour Lead;
- Administrative assistant, including greeting visitors and parents when they come to school and daily use of school management systems and databases;
- Designated Safeguarding Lead;
- SENDCo;
- Breakfast and afterschool club supervisor;
- Early Years Lead;
- PE teacher;
- Speech and language support.

We asked staff in the online survey about their experience of BIP. Over a fifth (21%) of school staff had worked closely with a child or children on a bespoke BIP, but the majority (54%) had not. Five staff members had worked on a bespoke BIP to some extent, and another five responded 'a little bit'.

Staff from five out of the eight schools responded to the survey (Table 4).



Table 4: Survey respondents by school

School	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Clifton Green Primary School	12	32%
Fishergate Primary School	11	29%
Hob Moor Community Primary Academy	0	0%
New Earswick Primary School	0	0%
Osballdwick Primary Academy	4	10%
St. Aelred's Roman Catholic Primary School	0	0%
Tang Hall Primary Academy	9	24%
Woodthorpe Primary School	2	5%
Total	38*	100%

*Note: we have excluded from analysis two BOSS workers and one school staff respondent who did not specify the name of their school

Site visit including case file review

We selected Hob Moor Community Primary Academy for a site visit on 13 May 2021 as it was the most representative of the participating schools, based on a review of published data (Department for Education (DfE), 2020c). In 2019/20 Hob Moor had the most typical number of pupils (313, compared to the overall average of 314). We reviewed case files relating to all the BIP pupils in the school.

The documents reviewed related to all five of the school's pupils on BIPs, and were:

- Attendance records;
- School reports for 2017/18, 2018/19, and 2019/20 (written by teachers for parents and carers);
- Extracts of records from the school's safeguarding incidents database CPOMS²;
- Behaviour Improvement Plans.

² CPOMS is a software system used by some schools to monitor safeguarding, wellbeing, and pastoral issues.



FINDINGS

1. Context

City of York Council had 50 state-funded primary schools in 2020/21. It described itself to us as having strong relationships with its schools, partners, and specialist providers. We heard that there is an interest in exclusion and behaviour, and a range of central services, some of which were based in schools, including the Virtual School Head, Emotional Literacy Support Assistants, and an outreach team which facilitates mainstream to specialist moves and had a role described as somewhat similar to BOSS. One pupil referral unit, the Danegate Community, offers behaviour-focused outreach work and in-reach placements for primary stage pupils.

1.1 About the schools

Schools described themselves as differently positioned in respect of behaviour management, and took different approaches. For example, the extent of previous staff training on trauma varied. Some schools already perceived themselves as restorative schools, and others perceived themselves as being on the journey to becoming restorative. Two schools had received recent training from a company called Pivotal, which had delivered restorative training and did regular check-ins with children.

Most saw challenging behaviour and managing individual children’s behaviour as important issues in their school. Generally, schools described BOSS as offering extra support on top of their existing provision, making it more consistent, and improving it, rather than radically changing school practice. However, BOSS was also described to us as ‘filling a gap’. In some cases, there was an overlap between what a school was already doing and what BOSS offered. Two schools discussed the BOSS training offer with a BOSS worker but declined, as they saw no need given their existing training.

1.2 About the children

Among all pupils on whom we received administrative data from schools, 50% were male and 50% female, but among the BIP pupils, two-thirds were male and one-third female (25 and 13; Table 5).

Table 5: Gender of all pupils and BIP pupils

	All pupils	BIP pupils
Female	50%	34%
Male	50%	66%
Total	100% (n=1,094)	100% (n=38)

Note: column totals may not sum due to rounding.

In terms of ethnic groups, 91% of pupils were White, 1% Black, 2.5% Asian, 2.9% mixed, and 1.7% other. The BIP pupils were all White (36 White British, 2 White Gypsy or Traveller).



Table 6: Ethnic group of all pupils and BIP pupils

	All pupils	BIP pupils
White	91%	100%
Mixed	2.9%	0%
Black	1%	0%
Asian	2.5%	0%
Other	1.7%	0%
Total	100% (n=1,094)	100% (n=38)

Note: column totals may not sum due to rounding

The data we received covered all age groups from reception to Year 6. BIP pupils were concentrated in older years, especially Year 6 (34.2%), who received transition support ahead of their move to secondary school.³

We asked for the social care status of children. Though mostly this field was left blank (58%), where recorded, the breakdown between pupils with social care involvement and no social care involvement was 9% (36 children) and 91% respectively. Among BIP pupils, the social care statuses were Early Help in two cases, missing in 26 cases, and no current involvement in the remaining 10 cases. We know that this is an incomplete picture; for example, we were told that one school had included all their looked-after children among those referred to BOSS. In one school, we were told that, of the eight children referred to BOSS, three children had a Child Protection Plan in place, two were classed as Child in Need, while another child had just ceased being a Child in Need.

We asked schools whether their pupils had any special educational needs and disabilities, and received data on the status of 910 children, of whom 22% (197) were reported to have this. Among pupils on BIPs, this percentage was over half (54%, 19/35). In respect of free school meals receipt, overall this was 28% of all pupils (309/1,095), and 61% of BIP pupils (23/38). Many of the selected children already had other support or intervention plans in place, such as My Support Plan, Education, Health and Care Plan (ECHP) or were working with CAMHS (called Lime Tree in York), an educational psychologist, or an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) within school.

1.3 About the behaviour problems faced by pupils

Interviewees told us that children with a range of issues, difficulties, and needs were referred to the BOSS team. Given the children's current or past social care involvement, it is no surprise that schools often highlighted family context or family vulnerabilities as a common characteristic. This could, for example, be fractured relationships, domestic abuse, tension between separated parents, bereavement, or large families.

³ Two BIP pupils were in Year 1, two in Year 2, five in Year 3, eight in Year 4, six in Year 5, and 13 in Year 6. There were also two BIP pupils who were younger or had missing age information.



We reviewed 208 incidents relating to four pupils recorded on the CPOMS behaviour incident database on our visit to Hob Moor. The number of incidents per pupil per year ranged from 5 to 22 in the peak year, 2018. Example incidents for one BIP pupil included:

- Bouncing on their chair;
- Flicking their hair into other children's faces;
- Refusing to join in and follow an instruction;
- Stealing other children's things.

A proportion of the selected children displayed very challenging and occasionally violent behaviour in school, and accounts of children throwing and kicking things in the classroom, being disruptive, refusing to move, being rude, and swearing were mentioned by all schools.

Examples of incidents recorded for another BIP pupil in our case study school included:

- Biting another child on the hand in the playground;
- Punching [two pupils] below the waist during lunch;
- Burping In [pupil's] face and then continued to push;
- Saying they hated school and wanted to burn the school down.

However, behavioural problems varied widely within schools and between BIP pupils in nature and extent. We were told: *'The pastoral role is ever-changing and is different to how it was a few years ago. Recently we had to discuss sexuality with pupils. There's a group of 4-5 girls in Year 6 who verbally abused each other online during lockdown and then refuse to come in as it would mean meeting the abuser.'*

Restorative Practice

The BOSS model is founded on restorative principles, and supporting schools to develop restorative approaches to their behaviour management is key to the programme.

Restorative practice encourages individuals to take responsibility for their actions, develop awareness of the consequences of their actions on others, and to restore relationships that have been damaged.

As a behaviour strategy, it does not punish bad behaviour, but aims to involve 'harmer' and those 'harmed'^[1], for example, in an argument or fight, by facilitating an environment where everyone feels heard and involved, and can agree on how things should be put right. Listening and solving the problem together aims to prevent the behaviour from reoccurring, as accountability and responsibility can leave the 'harmer' with a sense of belonging and self-respect, while it can help the 'harmed' forgive and move on. Using restorative language is key to the approach, in part because it shifts how we think and speak about behaviour that challenges, but it also helps us separate a person from their behaviour.

^[1] Terms used in: Skinns, L., Du Rose, N. & Hough, M. (2009) An evaluation of Bristol RAiS, ICPR, King's College London, <https://restorativejustice.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/files/Bristol%20RAiS%20full%20report.pdf> [accessed 11 August 2021]



2. Implementation of the programme

The BOSS pilot in York ran over one academic year from September 2020 to July 2021. Sitting under the existing BOSS management structures in Lincolnshire, Family Action was able to second experienced BOSS managers to the pilot in York, who already managed the continuing BOSS service in Lincolnshire. Consequently, the new team benefitted from access to existing knowledge and experience of delivering the BOSS model, and were able to use existing training material, delivery plans, and job descriptions, which enabled the pilot to mobilise quickly.

Starting in the autumn term 2020, BOSS managers met with individual schools to clarify what the programme was about, what it required of schools, and what the programme could offer. During this initial setting up period, BOSS caseworkers for direct work with children, parents, and schools were also recruited, with two members of staff in post in November 2020 and one in January 2021, ready for delivery to begin in the spring term.

The Behaviour Intervention Plan (BIP)

The BIP is the document that BOSS creates to detail its bespoke support plan for each individual child. Following an initial assessment by the BOSS caseworker, the plan sets out work for the school and for the BOSS worker to carry out during the intervention. It also highlights any training needs, strategies, and suggestions that staff and parents can work through to support the child. Following an initial meeting to agree the BIP, attended by BOSS, parents, key school staff, and sometimes children themselves, the plan is reviewed after 8 weeks of weekly one-to-one sessions. At this stage, if the involved parties think there is more work to be carried out with the child, then the sessions will continue, perhaps with a new focus as new behaviour is identified. At the end of the sessions there is a closure meeting, which also looks at any improvements for the child.

The BOSS programme uses the Boxall profile^[1] to help caseworkers do the initial child assessment. School staff are also asked to score the child's risk of exclusion on a scale from 1 to 10 (where 10 is the highest risk). This is done at baseline and again as the work comes to a close.

^[1] The Boxall profile is a well-known assessment tool to assess children and young people's social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties. <https://new.boxallprofile.org>

2.1 Recruiting pilot schools

Family Action's original proposal suggested that the BOSS pilot would work with five primary schools in York. By being involved from the very beginning, York City Council - through its Education and Skills department - played a key role in identifying schools and promoting the pilot to selected primary schools. Interviews with York council staff suggest that pilot schools were approached primarily because they were located in areas of high deprivation or because the schools had been identified as 'heavy users' of the council's specialist provision.



Schools were told about the BOSS pilot through various means, including targeted emails and headteachers' meetings. When two of the five recruited schools were slow to take up the BOSS offer and to refer children for targeted BIP support, another two primary schools were identified and recruited. An additional school was also added to the pilot, following conversations between programme staff and the school, as a result of the BOSS team being based on school premises. A BOSS worker told us this final school worked to a very inclusive ethos and did not identify many pupils in need of extra support.

A total of eight primary schools participated in the pilot, five of which embraced the programme from the very beginning of their involvement (the first wave), while for another three schools the work was slower to take off, and did not begin in earnest until summer term 2021 (the second wave). One of the headteachers said the late start was prompted by a perceived lack of need, due to a lack of children with behaviour challenges who fulfilled the social worker criterion and due to previous training from Pivotal. Later, they realised that help was available through the programme for a particular child whose behaviour had escalated on return to school after lockdown. In the other two cases our interviews also suggested that a perceived lack of need for BOSS played a role in the slow starts.

2.2 How pupils were selected

For most of the participating schools, targeted support with individual pupils was one of the main attractions of the BOSS pilot. During initial meetings with the BOSS team schools were told about the BIP, the social worker criteria, and how to refer children using the referral form. Schools were given full autonomy to select and refer their pupils for the BOSS intervention. Participating schools took different approaches to how they selected pupils. In some schools all classroom teachers were consulted and encouraged to put forward names of children they thought would benefit from the programme, while in other schools lists of children were drawn up by a few key members of staff, such as the headteacher, SENDCo, pastoral lead, or the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

The schools, given discretion to refer whichever eligible pupils they wished, varied in their interpretation of which children would benefit the most from the programme. One school, for example, focused on KS2 children, as they considered KS1 children too young developmentally to benefit from a BIP, while another school included a three-year old child who attended their school nursery (a sibling of another older BIP child). One school looked at their CPOMS database to identify those with high numbers of incidents relating to safeguarding, wellbeing, and pastoral issues. Another school decided to refer all its children who had had social care involvement, regardless of whether they were at current risk of exclusion, but rather focusing on their emotional needs and if they would value 1:1 support. While another school highlighted that they had looked at whether the family would benefit from support, especially in situations where the concern was more about the child's challenging behaviour at home rather than in school.

However, regardless of their approach, schools found it relatively straightforward to identify which children they wanted to refer, as one school highlighted:

'We looked at what children had - social worker involvement or agency involvement in terms of the social worker side. And then which children could benefit from [BOSS], which children we needed to get support with... We were able to come up with a list [...] quite quickly. [...]



[There] was quite a clear consensus on who it would be. We didn't have to argue about who would it be. It was very much like 'yeah that child definitely.' - School staff

2.3 Nature of support given

BOSS was implemented flexibly, meaning children, families, and schools were offered different kinds and amounts of support and training, rather than a set menu. For example, some parents and carers of BIP pupils were more involved than others.

2.3.1 Support for individual pupils

BOSS workers we interviewed described their 1:1 work with children on BIPs, which mostly involved conversation. One Teaching Assistant in our survey said that support was 'personalised to their needs'.

One BOSS worker described the content of her conversations with children, which varied by age. With younger children, the sessions would involve games and creative activities, and often end with reading a book together, whereas older pupils would talk about their interests, as in the case of one 11-year-old: *'going on 16, now [I] just sit and chat with them about makeup'*. We were told: *'I think all of them just want someone to talk to, even if it's not about anything in particular. They just want that chat.'* One worker speculated that the children often did not have that outlet at home.

Parents were involved to varying extents, including not at all (after giving consent for their child to take part in BOSS). BOSS workers told us some parents were highly engaged and would speak or text once or twice a week. One headteacher explained that some parents did not wish to be involved:

Interviewer: How did you 'sell' it to parents?

Headteacher: It was sold as extra pastoral support. We didn't make a big thing about the social care criteria. Some parents said no. They're jumpy about other agencies becoming involved and wouldn't want their child saying more about what's going on at home to someone at school.

However, in the majority of cases, parents were keen for their child to receive additional support, and some parents we spoke to had also been pursuing extra support from external agencies and school.

In a few cases, BOSS workers arranged for additional support for children, such as the purchase of equipment and a Family Action Covid Survival grant for one family living in cramped conditions. In another few cases, the BOSS workers recommended as part of the BIP document that parents encourage their children to do additional activities outside of school, for example to practice getting the bus or to buy a pint of milk at the corner shop to facilitate their sense of independence prior to going to secondary school.

2.3.2 Training offered to schools

Schools were offered a range of training opportunities for whole staff groups, such as restorative awareness training and trauma informed training. Appendix A sets out the training delivered in each school.



Most of the participating schools welcomed BOSS' training offer. Three schools mentioned in interviews that they had accepted 'absolutely everything' that BOSS had offered and that they had highly valued the training provided to schools. Due to lockdown restrictions some members of school staff, such as midday supervisors, did not initially take part in staff training. However, in at least one school, training was provided when this staff group later returned to school.

According to Family Action data, the BOSS programme delivered 52 training sessions to 1,537 participants (adults and children) during the pilot period.⁴

Three schools did not take up any training opportunities. One school that joined the programme later mentioned in their interview that this was because they had not been offered any training. The other two schools believed the offered training would have overlapped with things they had done earlier, such as the Pivotal training.

As part of the BOSS pilot programme, BOSS offered participating schools the opportunity to work toward Family Action's School Relationship Award at bronze level. To gain the bronze award schools needed to complete the following qualifying activities:

- 'Whole School Awareness Session on Restorative / Relationship Approaches in a School Setting (2 hours)';
- 'Whole School Trauma Informed Awareness Session (2 hours)';
- 'Circle Sessions delivered by the BOSS team with a focus on Building and Maintaining Relationships (3 x 1-hour sessions per class)';
- 'School to regularly use Circles, Check-ins (to be arranged with school)'.

By the end of the pilot year, five of the eight schools received Family Action's Bronze Relationship Award as a result of their involvement and commitment to the programme. These five schools were seen as having bought into the restorative practice behaviour model and made it their own.

2.4 What schools hoped to achieve from participating in the BOSS programme

The majority of participating schools told us that the main attraction of the BOSS programme was the direct support for individual children and families within their school, as well as the package of training offered. Addressing behaviour was high on schools' agenda following the first lockdown, as many of the schools were experiencing challenging behaviour from pupils as they returned to face-to-face teaching in Autumn 2020.

The staff survey asked respondents what they hoped their school's participation in the BOSS programme would achieve by the end of the year. The majority (79%) hoped to achieve better management of behaviour challenges in children. Another 79% hoped there would be more support provided to teachers to support the children in their class. Many staff members (64%) also hoped more support would be provided for parents and/or carers to support their children. Half (49%) hoped to achieve improved attainment of children, and another half (49%) hoped to achieve an improved school environment.

Almost a third (28%) hoped to achieve fewer referrals to Children's Social Services, and another 28% hoped to achieve fewer exclusions. A fifth (21%) hoped to achieve improved

⁴ Some participants took part in multiple training sessions.



attendance of children. One staff member hoped to achieve a better understanding of the reasons behind certain behaviours, and another mentioned improved self-esteem in children. One class room teacher hoped that children would feel they had someone to talk to.

2.5 Covid and lockdown

The pilot ran during exceptional times. While schools had returned to face-to-face teaching for all pupils in September 2020, after the first national lockdown, they did so operating in class or year group bubbles, with a hesitancy to allow anyone external (including parents) into school settings and with a need to manage and support pupils who had not attended school for up to five months. The autumn term was a hectic and worrying time for schools across the country, as they had to adapt rapidly to changing national guidance, ongoing risk assessments and manage Test and Trace for its staff and pupils, in addition to business as usual. In the circumstances, in partnership with City of York Council, the BOSS team did well to recruit five and then an additional three schools to participate in the pilot.

The next national lockdown in January 2021 meant schools once more closed their doors to the majority of pupils. This time the government guidelines broadened in terms of who could be considered a child of key workers or a vulnerable child and schools had more requests for in-school places. Again, this was a busy and demanding time as school staff essentially ran two schools – one online with remote pupils and one for a growing number of pupils attending school premises – at a time where many members of staff were shielding, had to self-isolate, and were working in bubbles within the schools.

During this challenging time the BOSS team was able to organise and deliver staff training and begin to deliver one-to-one sessions with individual children using online platforms. When asked how the programme adapted so quickly to the changing circumstances brought on by the national lockdown, BOSS staff highlighted that they had gained experience of online delivery during the first lockdown in early 2020 and knew it was both possible and beneficial. This experience helped the BOSS team convince four schools to switch to online delivery, rather than delay the programme, which was generally schools' first inclination.

BOSS staff were consequently able to deliver a range of online training sessions to school staff, including Restorative Awareness, De-escalation and Regulation, and Trauma Training. For pupils who were at home during lockdown, parents and carers helped their children log on to BOSS 1:1 sessions on the device they also used for school work, whether it was a family laptop, a school-provided Chromebook, or their smartphone. For pupils attending school, school staff helped them access their online BOSS sessions, as schools continued to place restrictions on who were admitted into school settings.

Five respondents to our staff survey commented on Covid as a barrier to implementing the programme. One teaching assistant commented:

'Covid meant the child had to access the first few sessions via Teams. Though this was good, it was a strange experience for the child and took a little longer to build that rapport with [child's name].'

Despite the challenges the pandemic posed, staff recalled that their pupils looked forward to the sessions:



'BOSS was really accommodating in lockdown. Anything that could be via Zoom (all the training), was. They held back what needed to be done in person. They were so adaptable. Don't feel there was a negative impact as result of lockdown.' - Headteacher

For some of those involved, both children and adults, online delivery was not ideal and during interviews we heard accounts of pupils finding it awkward to meet a new person on Zoom, a pupil doing cartwheels while holding her smartphone making the BOSS worker dizzy in the process, and a young pupil pretending to be frozen on the screen when he was not, to the amusement of school staff watching.

A minority of pupils we interviewed mentioned that BOSS sessions could have been better if they were not remote, particularly as this prevented play time:

'It was a lot more not fun because the Chrome-book sounds really weird when people are talking. We couldn't play games online. When [BOSS worker] came in she used to bring in games like play-dough – it's one of my favourite things to do, play games.' - Pupil, KS1

'Talking on the phone is not as good as coming in because usually [BOSS worker] plays Uno or something with me' - Pupil, KS2

But we also heard some stories of pupils preferring to meet a new person on the computer in the safety of their own home, of BOSS workers using creative and playful approaches to sustain pupils' engagement online, and of parents who felt more involved with the programme because they had talked to the BOSS worker every time they helped their child log on. Consequently, while online communications may not be ideal, especially for younger pupils, it is our impression that in the circumstances online communication and training was preferable to having no training and communication.

The switch to in-school sessions in March 2021 when all pupils returned to school went smoothly. The fact that regular weekly BOSS sessions were already established meant that pupils' sessions continued without a gap as delivery switched from online to face-to-face.

Consequently, while the national lockdown did delay certain aspects of the BOSS pilot programme, such as Circle Time and the intensive 2-day Restorative Awareness training for key staff, the programme team was able to deliver what it set out to do despite the lockdown in four of the five most engaged schools. The fifth school chose not to move to online delivery of BOSS, so the project did not start there until March 2021, meaning children saw their BOSS worker for a shorter period of time. The programme's original target of working with 80-90 children was not eased as a result of the national lockdown and Covid restrictions.

3. Feedback on implementation and delivery

Overall, school staff interviewed for the evaluation thought that the roll out and implementation of the BOSS programme had gone well. Over time schools had built up their trust in the programme and were keen to roll it out further. One school, initially hesitant, had put forward four additional pupils to take part, another had chosen eight members of senior leadership team (SLT) staff to take restorative practice further, and another had seen more staff coming forward wanting further training.

An aspect of the programme praised by many staff we spoke to was the whole school approach and how well-integrated BOSS workers were with schools. A good range of child-



facing staff from across the school were invited to take part in formal training, regardless of whether they were teaching staff or not. For example, one school specifically arranged for midday supervisors to take part in De-escalation and Regulation training.

'It was just good to have the year group teams there so we could all have the dialogue about relating the behaviour to a child in our class, which was useful, so we could all be on the same page, so we all had the same level of understanding.' - Teaching Assistant

'Lunch time is unstructured and children sometimes find it more difficult to regulate themselves. The kitchen staff and mid-day staff have a role to play there and were invited. It was good for kitchen staff to receive that training and understand expectations.' - Classroom Teacher

This was also mirrored in the online staff survey when we asked how they thought implementing the BOSS programme had helped. One teaching assistant mentioned the benefit of the whole school training sessions:

'The BOSS training has encouraged all staff within the Early Years team to embrace the same approach to behaviour management within the unit. We take time to discuss different approaches for different children and try to come up with alternative solutions when necessary.' - Teaching Assistant

Another key standout for many school staff was the collaborative and positive relationships BOSS workers developed with parents and families. While some schools had tried to involve parents in previous interventions, the BOSS staff were seen as particularly helpful at making parents feel involved and heard and providing them with bespoke advice.

'[Name] was very good at listening to parents about their difficulties and incorporating the difficulties they had at home into the BIP and giving strategies that children could have at home, and I think that was really helpful.' - SEND Co-ordinator

Similar comments were also made in the online survey:

'Excellent practitioners who were able to liaise effectively between school staff, families and the child. Provision of training for parents, offering webinars and signposting when possible.' - Classroom Teacher

'The 1:1 support that [name] has been able to give children – but more importantly their parents. She has been really proactive with making contact when there have been difficulties and parents have been very happy to contact her directly.' – SLT member

One pastoral manager told us in an interview how the positive relationships built with parents has helped parents feel reassured that the school is there to support their child:

'It's helped enhance our relationships with parents. They've felt their child's getting something from it. I go to child in need, child protection, meetings and looked-after child reviews. To be able to say so and so's getting some mentoring in school. That's really good it's all written into the wider plan. I guess that's reassured the parents that the school are committed to the family and doing what they can to support the situation.' – Pastoral Manager



Many of the parents we interviewed also told us first-hand that they felt listened to and reassured:

'We were just so happy for any support or anyone who can tell us any ideas or any things like that, and everything has been so positive, it's been really nice. I have had conversations with [BOSS worker] who was doing the sessions with [pupil], so I've had a lot of feedback, I can say, 'this has happened at home' of 'this has happened', and it's been so brilliant to have her to talk to.' – Parent

The BOSS workers were seen as skilled and competent experts in their field, which instilled confidence in staff. They were able to engage both pupils, parents, and school staff well.

Pupils also reported that they felt their BOSS worker was skilful, particularly with anger management techniques.

'My teacher has mentioned stuff like that [breathing techniques taught by BOSS worker], my mum, my granny, my dad. It makes a difference that [BOSS worker] mentioned it because she's, in a way, more professional. I listen to her more. She helps me. She benefits me a bit more than my immediate family.' - Pupil, KS2

'[BOSS worker] had given me loads of ideas. At bedtime I kept getting really upset and she gave me loads of ideas. She suggested singing a song, and since after I have done that for a while, I didn't need to do that anymore because it had got better.' - Pupil, KS2

In interviews, staff, parents, and pupils mentioned a number of characteristics that made BOSS workers good at their job. These positive characteristics added to the overall value of the programme:

- Consistent and reliable
- Flexible approach
- Approachable
- Non-judgmental
- Resourceful
- Fun

Staff felt that BOSS workers were there for them as much as they were for pupils, with many leaning on BOSS staff for advice. Being regularly based within schools on certain days enabled staff to 'pop in' to discuss specific pupils or incidents with BOSS workers:

'The BOSS workers have come down, they have been at the end of the phone, for any questions, they have been there, they have been supportive. Our BOSS workers have been very open to talk to the class teachers, spending time and talking back and forth, they are certainly part of the team.' - Headteacher

'That is what has benefited our school most, having somebody to ask, somebody that's approachable, that it doesn't take three weeks to process a referral, it's just a quick question, [name] gives you a quick answer, and it's done, it's finished, you can get on with the next thing.' - SEN Co-ordinator

Similarly, parents were able to speak to BOSS workers easily and quickly if they had any issues, questions, or concerns:



'[BOSS worker] was very responsive, if she couldn't speak when I rang her, she would always ring me straight back, which was quite good.' - Parent

Other less frequently mentioned positive aspects of the implementation of BOSS included pupils having 1:1 support when transitioning back to school after lockdown, as well as BOSS workers being external rather than existing school staff, providing a fresh pair of eyes and a new face.

3.1 Feedback on BOSS training sessions

Training was delivered in five of the eight BOSS schools, and an additional two sessions were delivered in a sixth school, Archbishop Holgate's School, a local secondary, to support transition into the school.

The training was very well-received. Most school staff (77%) who responded to the online survey had attended one or more training sessions delivered by Family Action as part of the BOSS programme. Five staff members had not been offered training, two were not aware of the training sessions, one member of staff was booked to attend training in the future, and another staff member had been unable to attend due to Covid.

The majority (60%) of those who had attended training found them very helpful or extremely helpful and almost a third (30%) found the training session(s) somewhat helpful. Three staff members found the training session(s) slightly helpful. No school staff found the session(s) 'not helpful at all'.

Staff members commented on what impact the training sessions had had on them. Two staff members mentioned the training session on trauma and that they now have a greater understanding of how trauma and attachment affect children and young people's lives. They had also been provided with strategies to support pupils experiencing trauma. One SLT member wrote that they had gained an understanding of the science behind trauma and attachment, such as the impact neglect can have on the brain.

Some wrote suggestions about how the training sessions could be improved. One SLT member thought training sessions could have been delivered at an earlier stage. Two staff members who attended the training sessions on trauma wanted more time for discussion and interaction. Conversely, another staff member, who attended training on restorative practice, thought time for discussion could have been reduced by half.

One classroom teacher suggested that both the trauma and restorative practice training sessions could be tailored to staff members who were already familiar with the topics. Similarly, one teaching assistant commented that they were already familiar with the topic of trauma and attachment, and suggested that the sessions could focus on practical solutions and implementing recommended approaches.

Another classroom teacher who attended the restorative practice training thought the sessions could include strategies for different staff members in school.

3.2 Implementation issues and suggestions

Although overall the BOSS programme did involve the whole school staff, a few staff we interviewed felt they were not as involved as they would have liked to have been. An Inclusion



Support staff member told us that she was not involved in the set-up of the BOSS programme, choosing children to take part or speaking to parents about the programme. Another SEN Co-ordinator told us that she had limited visibility of who was taking part in the programme and would like to have been more involved:

'I would have liked to have been involved more at the beginning. At the end of the project, I'm still not really sure who was involved and who wasn't. I think probably ought to be more of a joined-up approach right from the beginning with the Senco and the pastoral side.' - SENCo

BOSS workers mentioned barriers and challenges such as schools who were less engaged; 'who aren't open to it', and being sometimes seen as 'a nuisance':

'Quite often it seems we are time consuming and get in the way.' - BOSS Worker

On occasion, the BOSS workers also felt that it was difficult to organise three BIP meetings (initial, review, and close) per child, as it involved getting busy school staff, parents, and BOSS workers in the same space at the same time.

On the whole, parents were pleased with implementation, and many did not mention any issues. However, a minority of parents said they had limited understanding of what actually happens in the BOSS sessions, suggesting more communication is needed:

'Yeah, I would have liked to know more. It's just all I knew was someone was coming in to support [pupil]. That was it really.' - Parent

In one school, the school staff we spoke to requested more feedback to teachers on what work BOSS workers were doing and what support classroom teachers can offer. While school staff acknowledged this was not always easy within a busy school, they saw clear benefits of BOSS and school staff working more as a team. One idea suggested was that BOSS workers could spend time in class with children, modelling behaviour for the teacher's benefit, as it was felt that taking the child out of the class did not benefit the teacher.

Responses to the online survey also reflected this:

'Some regular feedback from the BOSS worker about the sessions. I don't know what they do in the sessions at all or really how she thinks they are going. Sometimes the BOSS worker may try to give verbal feedback when the child comes back to class but it is the middle of a lesson and the child needs support to settle back in.' - Classroom Teacher

Another classroom teacher suggested feedback on a weekly basis, and a teaching assistant commented that better communication between BOSS workers and teachers would make them more aware of what the sessions are covering. Respondents also suggested more involvement of teaching assistants, involving all members of staff working with the child when writing BIPs, and working with families to support them with behaviour techniques.

Two staff members suggested BIPs could be improved by including goals for the child to work towards, another thought BIPs could focus more on relationships and developing trust. One staff member suggested that BIPs could include more interaction with teachers.

One headteacher we interviewed suggested making the 'library of resources' available to schools clearer: *'I've never seen a contents page.'*



3.2.1 Requirement for children to have social care involvement

One of the main differences between the York pilot and how BOSS operates in Lincolnshire, was the specific criteria set by WWCS that children in York needed social care involvement either currently or in the past six years.

WWCS did agree for a small number of pupils (up to 10%) to be offered a BIP despite having had no social work involvement. This option was not communicated to BOSS staff in York, and staff were therefore unaware that this flexibility was available to them. Consequently, only children who fulfilled the social care involvement criteria were selected for targeted BIP support. This was perceived, by schools and the BOSS team, as the biggest downside of the pilot as it severely limited who schools could refer.

'A limitation of the project is that the child must have social worker involvement or at least in the past 6 years. That has been hard for us because those children are getting support already, of course. But actually, it is those children who go just under the radar a bit, they are not bad enough for us to put through a referral to social care or the families won't engage voluntarily.'
- Headteacher

All of the eight schools interviewed for the evaluation highlighted that they had children, often with more challenging behaviour and more pressing need for support, who they were unable to refer to BOSS. The requirement was also raised in our survey as a barrier. Schools indicated that without this restriction they would have been able to refer twice the number of children to the BOSS programme.

'Not everybody that is in need has ticked all the boxes' – BOSS worker

'It's kind of operating with one arm behind your back really' – BOSS worker

'A tier below would benefit too' – BOSS worker

For the three schools where uptake was slower to begin with, the social care criteria was one of the reasons given as to why they had not made any referrals sooner – although they did have children with behaviour issues, those children were outside the social care system and hence did not qualify for support through the BOSS programme.

Among school staff interviewed there was also a general feeling that children with social care involvement often were better supported compared to children who fell below the social care threshold.

'We sat down together and we came up with children that we thought would benefit and we put some names down and then we had to think 'ah they've never had social care.' So that ruled them out and it felt a shame it was ruling them out... We have so many more children in school that fall into that category that we find hard to find some sort of support for them...' - Classroom Teacher

3.2.2 Transition to secondary

Transition to secondary school is a critical time for most children and many, perhaps especially children with behaviour that challenges, may need individualised enhanced transition support as they move from one behaviour management system to another. One BOSS worker



described the challenge facing one school with respect to secondary transition. The primary school was described as *'wholly immersed in a pastoral nurturing approach.'* This sometimes came into conflict with their feeder secondary school, described as *'quite behaviourist'*. We were told:

'The secondary school will say, these children are not secondary ready, you've mollycoddled them all the way through. And, you know, children have been in primary for seven years, never had an exclusion, had really good attendance, made progress and been treated very, you know, in a very nurturing way to engage them in their learning go into that, you know, the transition is just too much of a shock.' – Council staff

Transition to secondary school was hence seen as a period of high risk of exclusion to many of the BIP children and one school highlighted the benefits of children developing a trusting relationship with an adult in primary school who were able to transfer with the child to their new secondary school: Ten sessions in primary school and ten sessions in secondary school were suggested.

'[I] would love to see a link between primary and secondary, and carrying on that work into secondary school. If they were there to pick those same children up again in secondary school. That transition needs to continue with those children – to see that support continue into secondary school.' - Classroom Teacher

3.2.3 The end of the programme

Some pupils told us they felt disappointed when the BOSS programme ended and that they would miss it. They were perhaps not ready for the programme to end and felt attached to their BOSS worker, suggesting that continuity could be beneficial:

'I was like 'do you have to go. It goes so quick.' And she was like 'it's only 20 weeks.' 20 weeks, it went fast. The worst bit is that it's ended, I would like to carry on.' - Pupil, KS2

'I saw [BOSS worker] a lot of times. Made me sad when finished, when it was our last session and I couldn't see her again, made me really sad.' - Pupil, KS1

One headteacher described the end of BIP work with one Year 6 pupil:

'[Name] found it difficult to accept that [BOSS worker] isn't a friend. He's very vulnerable. [Worker] dealt with that really well. He was sad he wasn't seeing [worker] anymore. [Pupil] is getting extra secondary transition [from the school].' - Headteacher

Some schools told us they wanted the BOSS programme to continue after its scheduled end, and one told us it was prepared to use its pupil premium income to fund this. We asked about the sustainability of BOSS insights and changes to practice. One headteacher told us: *'The children are aware that they have been given strategies to cope so hopefully they will keep those at the forefront, but also be reminded by staff in school. To keep that longevity going.'*

However, two of the teachers we interviewed believed that they needed extra support in ensuring the outcomes of the BOSS programme were sustained once it was over and BOSS workers had left:



'I would love it [the BOSS programme] to be every week for the next year but is that going to be possible? Probably not. What does the model look like once people leave the school? They've built relationships with the children. At what point where we can get those strategies or things that have been talked about into our classrooms? That's for me the next step I would like.' - Classroom Teacher

We are unable to say what, if any, impact BOSS continued to have on BIP pupils – both those transferring to secondary school and those staying in their primary school, as the programme ended. The sustainability of the programme is something that any future evaluation could usefully explore.

4. Child outcomes

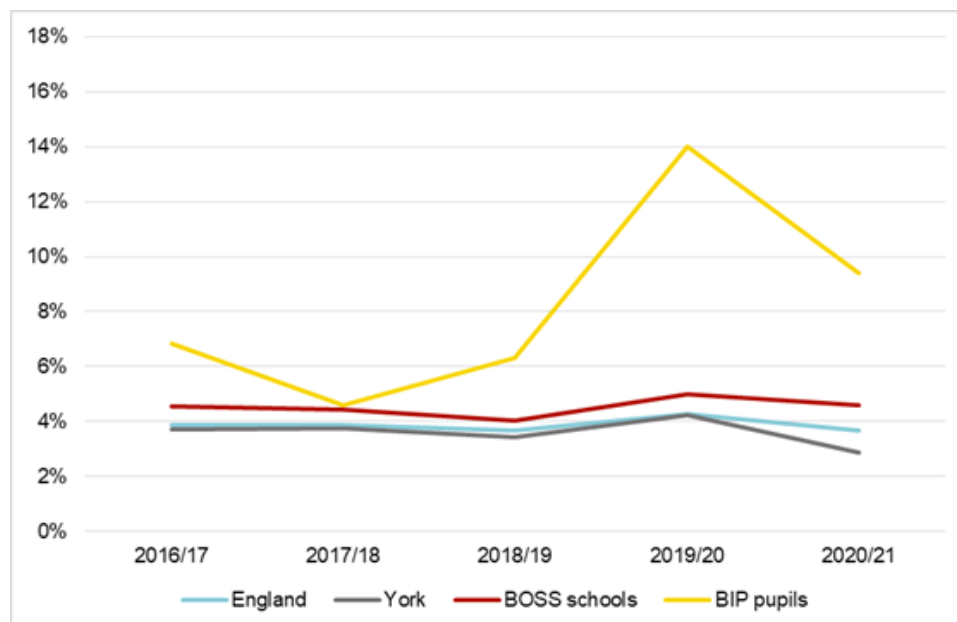
BOSS was a small-scale programme which ran for one academic year, meaning any beneficial effects on child outcomes will be difficult to detect. As one classroom teacher commented in our survey: *'BOSS is only one tiny factor in all of these things.'* Many factors influence child outcomes and many informants believed it was too soon to say what difference BOSS had made. In the following section we review the evidence available on early signs of impacts of BOSS on a range of outcomes, mostly drawing on our qualitative evidence base, due to deficiencies in the quantitative data. Any future evaluation could explore these or other outcomes.

4.1 Attendance

Data on attendance is not complete enough for us to draw conclusions on whether BOSS made a difference to absence rates in schools which participated in the programme. Data on attendance was complicated by Covid. For example, one-quarter of pupils were absent from one school due to self-isolation on the day we visited, though these absences were not recorded by schools as unauthorised.

Published data shows that BOSS schools followed the same trend over the last five years as other state-funded primary schools in the council area and England as a whole (Figure 3). However, the overall percentages of absences was a little higher in BOSS schools than other schools.

Figure 3: Line graph to show the comparison of the percentage of Overall absence rates in England, York, BOSS schools and BIP pupils from the academic years 2016/17 to 2020/21.





Source: Coram analysis of: Department for Education data (DfE, 2021a) covering all state-funded primary schools in England, all City of York Council schools, and all eight BOSS schools; and administrative data provided by 3 BOSS schools on BIP pupils (n=10-30). Note: all data are for Autumn term only, except for BIP pupils, which is whole-year.

Where data was available from schools on BIP pupils, this showed a different pattern. BIP pupils had higher overall absence, with a peak in 2019/20, though small numbers mean these data should be approached with caution. One school provided whole year attendance data on 2020/21, and others provided termly data. The whole year data showed BIP pupils' average absence rate was 9.4% in 2019/20 (n=13), though the termly data from other schools was 2% in term 1 (n=3), 0% in term 2 (n=6), and 0% in term 3 (n=2).

According to the school staff we spoke to, children for the pilot BOSS programme were generally not selected for issues around attendance. This was confirmed by parental interviews.

'He is always at school – except for the times he was excluded. [My children] all have 100% attendance.' - Parent of child with BIP

It is difficult for a school-based intervention to work with children who rarely attend school. We heard how the attendance of one BIP pupil improved, and therefore also her participation in BOSS, after she was taken into care, following poor attendance. The BOSS worker we interviewed said doing 1:1 work with another child had been *'very tricky, because she's just wasn't there. But now, social work is getting more involved.'*

4.2 Attainment

Outcomes data from schools were inconclusive on the recent and prior attainment levels of BIP pupils relative to other pupils on the basis of the limited data we received. One BOSS worker told us that a lot of the BIP children were doing quite poorly academically; another described *'a spectrum of academic ability'*.

One school provided reading, writing, maths, and science KS1 attainment for each pupil, showing whether they were working below, at, or at greater depth than the expected standard. Among their 10 BIP pupils for whom this information was available, attainment varied relative to other pupils, with BIP pupils outperforming other pupils in some areas (reading and science) and underperforming in other areas (writing and maths) in 2020/21. Specifically, 70% (7/10) were at or above the expected standard in reading, compared to 65% (93/144) of other pupils. In respect of writing level this was 20% (2/10) compared to 63% of other pupils (90/144); for maths this was 50% (5/10) compared to 60% (86/144) for other pupils; and for science this was 90% (9/10) compared to 72% (104/144) for other pupils.

We are unable to conclude on any overall trends over time in attainment. In our survey one classroom teacher commented *'regarding attainment, this will likely need a longer period of time for full impact to be seen.'* However, two teaching assistants we spoke to mentioned how the maths and reading abilities of two children with a BIP had improved markedly in the past six months. Spending more time in the classroom, as well as using book reading as a calming strategy was perceived as directly related to the improvements seen in the children's abilities:

'He said the strategies he's learnt with BOSS have helped him to know when to calm down or help him to know when to move away from a situation where it's going to make him angry.'



Sometimes he just comes in and he'll just say "I just need to go in" and I'll say "that's fine I'll come with you." He sits and just calms himself down and reads a book... [name of BOSS worker] suggested to him, "the reading will calm you down." He's used those strategies... He's flown through reading books. His reading has come on massively. He enjoys it and he thinks that's his special time.' - Teaching Assistant

'...We couldn't get her to do some work sometimes, she'd be having one of her episodes, but now, the work she is producing, her handwriting is improving, her maths... with her learning, and wanting to engage with her learning as well [...] actually sat listening to other people talking in the classroom – sometimes she'll shout out, but now she's putting her hand up like everybody else is, [although] sometimes you will have to remind her...' - Teaching Assistant

Except for these two examples, interviewees did not specifically mention children's improved attainment.

4.3 Exclusions

Exclusions of primary pupils are rare, and the administrative data we received from schools was incomplete, meaning we are unable to draw conclusions on the impact of the BOSS programme on exclusion rates in participating schools. On a broader level, Yorkshire and The Humber reported the lowest rate of permanent exclusions of any English region in the academic year 2016/17 (DfE, 2018) and one of the highest rates of fixed-period exclusions since the academic year 2015/16 (DfE, 2017; 2018; 2019b; 2020e; 2021b).

'He has reduced [since] the autumn, he has had BOSS, but I think it's a complex case. It wouldn't be fair to say that BOSS hasn't had an impact, because they have, there is a relationship that [name of BOSS worker] has made with that child has been significant. He is finding it hard at school but is settling now, that latest exclusion was a few weeks ago. We are seeing a settled period again.' - School staff

In the administrative data returns, only one school reported any exclusions: one exclusion, of a non BIP pupil, in 2018/19. In an interview, one headteacher told us their school had excluded 6 children for 10.5 days in Autumn term, 2 children for 2.5 days in Spring term, and in Summer term 2 children, including a BIP child. They mentioned the reasons for the recent exclusions of two BIP pupils: *'[Name] was one, for homophobic language, [Name] was another, for bullying. Both were serious one-off incidents rather than accumulated behaviour.'*

Family Action shared that their risk of exclusion scale, taken at the start and end of the BIP, showed a reduced risk for the majority of children with completed records (75%, 39/52). The others remained the same (15%, 8/52) or increased (10%, 5/52).

Overall, it was difficult to gauge from interviews the programme's overall impact on exclusions. This may in part be because many of the children were not necessarily selected because of their current risk of exclusion.

4.4 Referrals

A change in the rate at which BOSS schools make referrals to children's services might provide evidence on the BOSS programme, but our data was too incomplete to draw any conclusions on this outcome measure.



In the year to March 2020, public data shows that schools made 367 referrals to City of York Council children's services (DfE, 2020d). In the administrative data returns we received from four BOSS schools, only one school reported any referrals - two referrals, both of BIP pupils, in 2019/20. The eight BOSS schools are among 50 state-funded primary schools in York. If the 367 referrals in 2019/20 were evenly spread between schools and between primary and secondary, we might expect a small number of referrals (3-4) per school per year. The two referrals reported to us are therefore likely to represent under-reporting.

4.5 Behaviour

The administrative data we gathered does not allow us to conclude on any impacts of the BOSS programme on behaviour. One school provided administrative data on behaviour for 2018/19 to 2020/21, which showed negative behaviour as a small, limited problem. This was aggregate data and so we are unable to report on how trends varied, if at all, between BIP and non BIP pupils. Overall, the percent of pupils rated by the school as having positive rather than negative behaviour remained broadly constant (94% to 96%) between Autumn term 2018 and Summer term 2021, with a peak in summer term 2020, when it reached 100% (though many pupils were at home). The lack of available administrative data on behaviour suggests the use by any future evaluation of primary data collection from pupils using a suitable behaviour assessment instrument.

4.5.1 Fewer behaviour incidents

Many of the participating schools had a traffic light behavioural system, where children began the school day on 'green'. This could change to yellow or red depending on the number of 'warnings' and 'consequences' the child received during the day. Generally, being on red means that school staff would either phone the parents or talk to them at pick-up time. Many of the parents told us about teachers ringing them numerous times every week to discuss their child's behaviour incidents. These incidents often related to swearing, being disrespectful, not following instructions, having arguments, or fighting with their peers.

In some of the interviews, children spoke about spending less time on red as a result of meeting their BOSS worker, while a few parents described not receiving regular phone calls from their child's teacher as a clear indicator of positive change.

'I used to get two to three phone calls a week – "[Name of child]'s done this," "just have to let you know this has happened." And since he's been back, I think I've had two phone calls over the period... I think it's something to do with the [BOSS] work. I think if he would have just come back into school [after being at home during lockdown] and hadn't had the work, he would have probably been more manic than normal because it's back to school and all his friends. He would have probably gone the other way. I really do think it's down to this intervention thing.' - Parent of child with BIP

4.5.2 Climate for learning

Overall, we do not have enough information from interviews to say whether the BOSS programme specifically improved the climate for learning within the classroom. But interviews with school staff did provide a few examples, where, for example, changes to the daily routines of children with a BIP improved the learning experience for other pupils.



4.5.3 Enjoyment of school

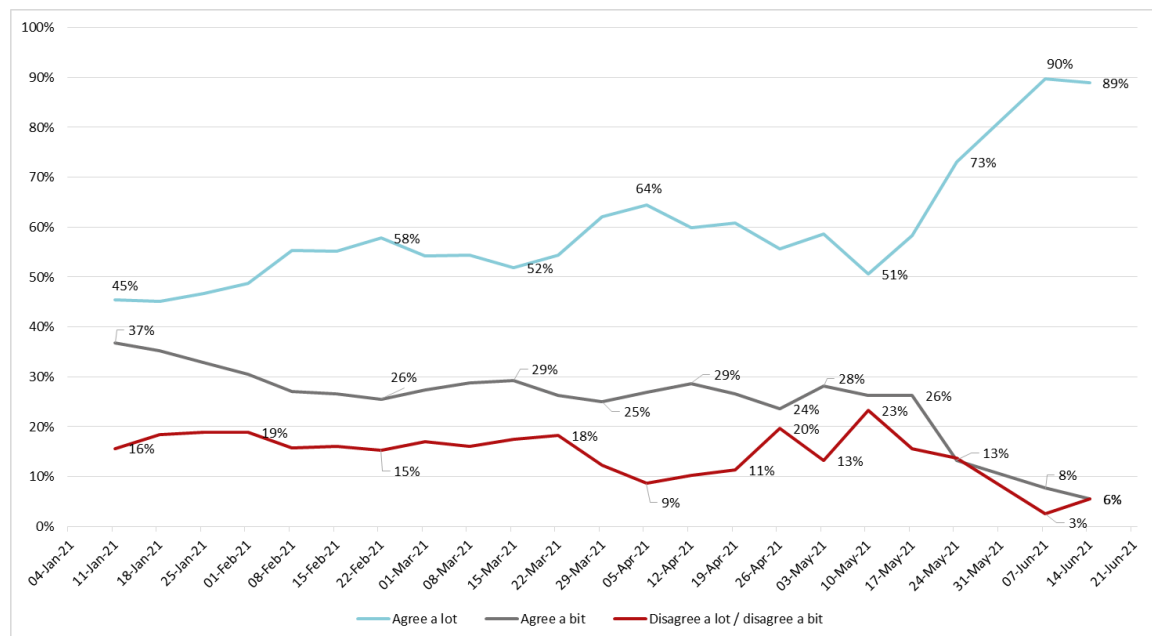
The children's diaries explored pupils' enjoyment of school. Those who responded 'agree a lot' to the statement 'I love going to school' ranged from 43% to 100% over the 25-week period, increasing over time. However, numbers are small (Figure 4), and we are mostly unable to distinguish BIP pupils' diaries from other diaries - their share of answers may change over time. This finding should therefore be viewed with caution.

In the week prior to most pupils returning to schools (the week beginning 1 March), 63% of pupils answered 'agree a lot.' This decreased to 52% in the week beginning 8 March when schools reopened to most pupils, and to 49% in the following week. However, this increased again in the following weeks, and factors other than the return of most of their classmates could explain the pattern in responses. The percentage of children that answered 'disagree a lot' or 'disagree a bit' increased from 13% in the week beginning 1 March to 18% the following week.

The average percentage of pupils responding 'agree a lot' increased from 45% in January to 89% in 21 June (Figure 4). The percentage of children responding 'disagree a bit' or 'disagree a lot' fell from 16% in January to 6% in June. However, in the week beginning 4 January, we received 94 diary entries whereas in the week beginning 21 June, we received only six entries.



Figure 4: Line graph to show the responses of children to the diary statement ‘I love going to school’. The response options displayed in percentages are ‘Agree a lot’, ‘Agree a bit’ and ‘Disagree a lot/ disagree a bit’. The date range is from 4th January 2021 to 21st June 2021 in weekly intervals.



	04-Jan-21	11-Jan-21	18-Jan-21	25-Jan-21	01-Feb-21	08-Feb-21	15-Feb-21	22-Feb-21	01-Mar-21	08-Mar-21	15-Mar-21	22-Mar-21	29-Mar-21	05-Apr-21	12-Apr-21	19-Apr-21	26-Apr-21	03-May-21	10-May-21	17-May-21	24-May-21	31-May-21	07-Jun-21	14-Jun-21	21-Jun-21
Diary responses (n)	94	93	101	114	101	95	78	102	96	90	101	95	10	7	34	28	31	26	18	6	13	5	2	6	

(n=2-114) Note: data have been smoothed (rolling three-week average).

We asked one parent we interviewed about whether BOSS could make a difference to outcomes like attendance, attainment, and exclusions. They thought so, on the grounds that sessions with BOSS workers were ‘something to look forward to’ for children.

The feeling that children were enjoying school more due to their BOSS worker’s involvement also came up during interviews with other parents.

‘We used to have a lot of stomach ache before school, symptomatic, ‘my head hurts’, ‘my tummy hurts’, ‘I can’t do this’. I don’t get that anymore and when he comes home, he is a lot calmer... I can’t remember the last time he said to me ‘I don’t want to go to school’. He isn’t vocal about it anymore.’ - Parent of child with BIP

‘[He’s] a lot more calm and it’s the positivity. [Name of child] before used to “ahhh, have I got to go to school again, can’t I stay home, dad?”. Now he wants to go into school. In the carpark he waits for his friend out of her mum’s car and starts walking. “I’m off now dad”. He gives me a kiss and off he goes. He’s excited to get into school. Looks forward to it now [whereas] before he didn’t really.’ -Parent of child with BIP

4.5.4 Ability to do work in school



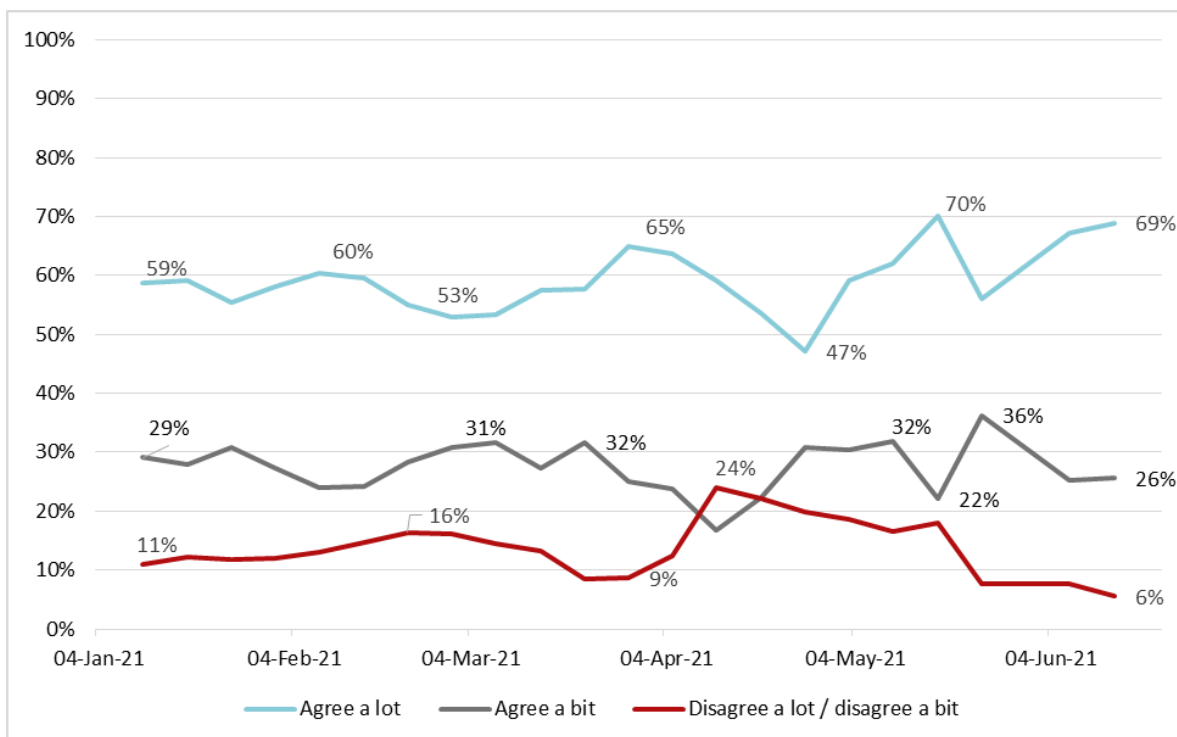
The diaries also looked at pupils' ability to do their work in school. Mostly, our data from BIP and non-BIP children shows that they were able to do this. The percentage of all children who responded 'agree a lot' to the statement 'I was able to do my work in school today' ranged from 37% to 100%. A minority of up to 35% of children responded either 'disagree a lot' or 'disagree a bit'.

The percentage of children who responded 'agree a lot' increased from 47% in the week beginning 1 March to 59% the following week when most children returned to school. The percentage of those who answered 'disagree a lot' slightly declined from 4% to 3% between those two weeks.

The smoothed average of children responding 'agree a lot' increased from 59% in January to 69% in June (Figure 5). The smoothed average of children responding 'disagree a bit' or 'disagree a lot' decreased from 11% in the first three weeks to 6% in the last three weeks. However, the responses to this question fell to small numbers in the final weeks of term.

Figure 5: Line graph to show the responses of children to the diary statement 'I was able to do my work in school today'. The response options displayed in percentages are 'Agree a lot', 'Agree a bit' and 'Disagree a lot/ disagree a bit'. The date range is from 4th January 2021 to 21st June 2021 in monthly intervals.

Responses of children to the diary statement



Diary responses (n)	04-Jan-21	11-Jan-21	18-Jan-21	25-Jan-21	01-Feb-21	08-Feb-21	15-Feb-21	22-Feb-21	01-Mar-21	08-Mar-21	15-Mar-21	22-Mar-21	29-Mar-21	05-Apr-21	12-Apr-21	19-Apr-21	26-Apr-21	03-May-21	10-May-21	17-May-21	24-May-21	07-Jun-21	14-Jun-21	21-Jun-21
Diary responses (n)	92	91	101	112	102	95	77	101	95	90	99	97	10	8	32	26	31	27	17	6	13	5	2	6

(n=2-112) Note: data have been smoothed (rolling three-week average).



4.5.5 Positive aspects of the school day

In response to the question ‘what went well in school today?’ the percentage of all children who answered ‘I got on with my classmates’ ranged from 50% to 100%. In the week beginning 8 March when most children returned to school, the percentage of children reporting that they got on with their classmates fell from 66% to 61%, but this rose again in the following week to 68%.

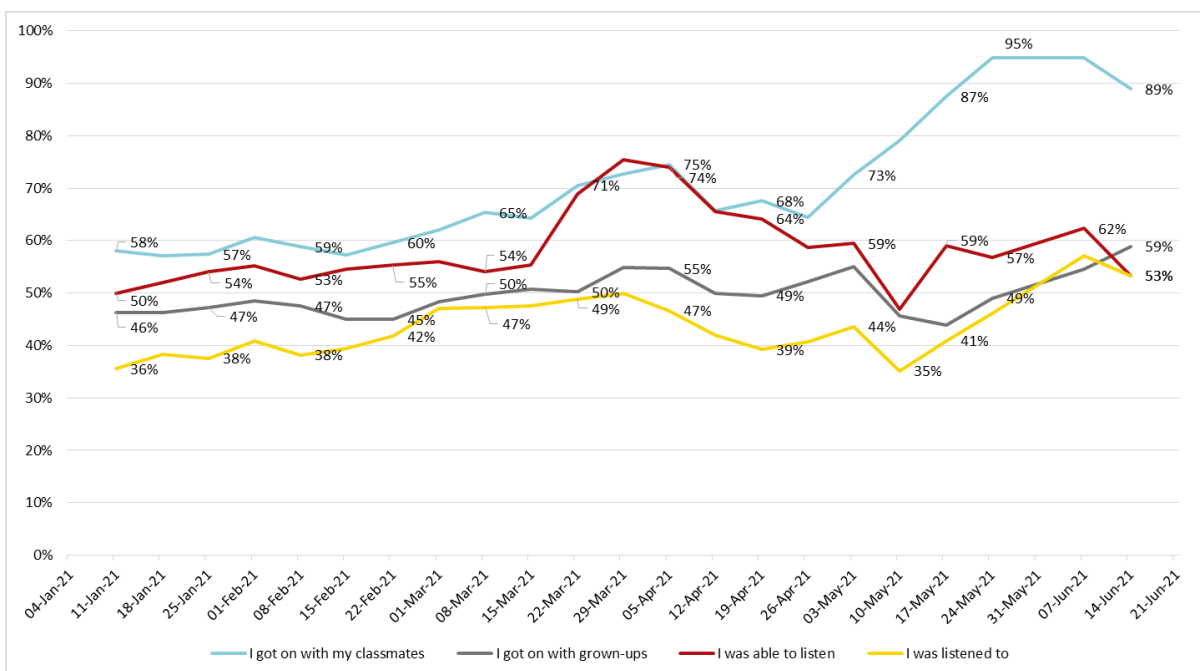
The percentage of pupils who answered ‘I got on with grown-ups’ ranged from 33% to 67% from week to week. There was no notable change when most children returned to school, or in the following week.

Over the 25 weeks, half or more of pupils answered ‘I was able to listen.’ Interestingly, when schools reopened to most pupils in the week beginning 8 March, 49% of children reported ‘I was able to listen’, a decline from the previous week where 57% reported they were able to listen in school. However, this increased the following week to 55%.

The proportion of children that answered ‘I was listened to’ was the lowest of the four statements. It ranged from week to week between 17% and 62%. There was no notable change when most children returned to school or immediately afterwards.

Though numbers were small in later weeks, it is positive that the smoothed average for all four answers increased between the first three weeks (January 4 to January 18) and the last three weeks (7 June to 21 June; Figure 6). The average smoothed percentage of children answering ‘I got on with classmates’ increased from 58% to 95%, ‘I got on with grown-ups’ increased from 46% to 55%, ‘I was able to listen’ increased from 50% to 62%, and ‘I was listened to’ increased from 36% to 55%.

Figure 6: Line graph to show the responses of children to the diary statement ‘what went well in school today?’. The response options displayed in percentages are ‘Agree a lot’, ‘Agree a bit’ and ‘Disagree a lot/ disagree a bit’. The date range is from 4th January 2021 to 21st June 2021 in weekly intervals.



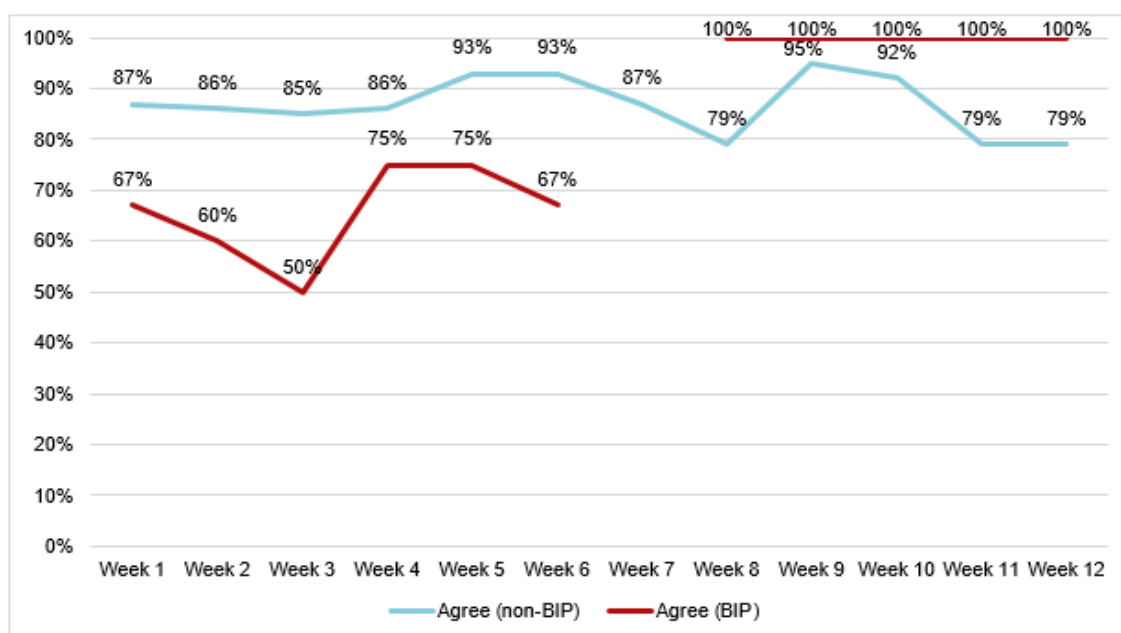


or two pupils answered our questions. We organised the data in weeks 1-12 and compared responses from BIP pupils to non-BIP pupils in the same school.

Both BIP and other pupils mostly enjoyed going to school (Figure 8). Given the small numbers, it is not surprising that BIP pupils' answers were more variable from week to week than other pupils' answers. The percentage of pupils circling 'agree a lot' or 'agree a bit' in response to the statement 'I love going to school' increased for BIP pupils over time from below the overall percentage to above it (67% in week 1 to 100% in week 12, compared to a range between 79% and 95% for non-BIP pupils). Though we saw an improvement in enjoyment of school among BIP pupils over time, this was based on only 1 to 2 diaries from week 8 onwards.

Figure 8 :Line graph to show a comparison of the responses of BIP and non-BIP children in one school to the diary prompt 'I love going to school' over 12 weeks.

Responses



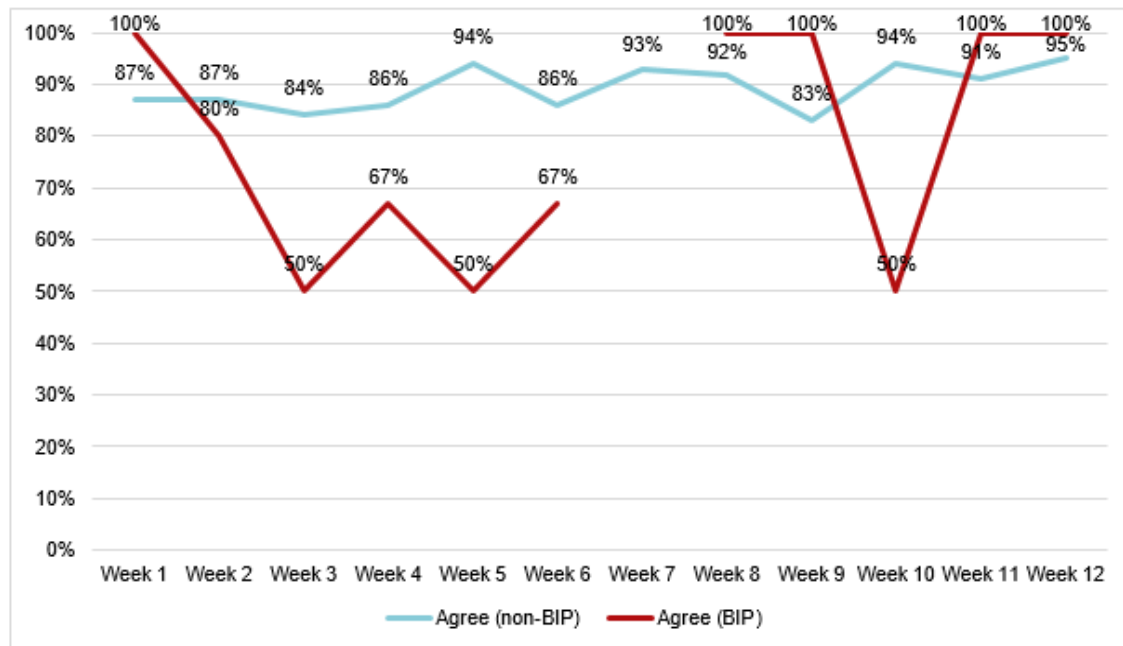
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9	Week 10	Week 11	Week 12
Non-BIP responses (n)	85	84	82	80	69	68	47	48	40	36	24	19
BIP responses (n)	3	5	4	4	4	3	0	1	1	2	1	1

Note: 'agree' combines 'agree a lot' and 'agree a bit'. n=1-5 (BIP pupils); n=19-85 (other pupils). Dates of diary entries vary between 4 January 2021 and 21 June 2021.

The most common response to the prompt 'I was able to do my work in school today' for BIP (and non-BIP) pupils was 'agree a lot' (Figure 9). The percentage of non-BIP pupils agreeing (a lot or a bit) increased from 87% in the first week to 95% in week 12. For BIP students, small numbers mean the percentage of pupils agreeing varied over the 12 weeks. All four of the BIP pupils agreed in week 1, as did the one remaining BIP pupil in week 12.



Figure 9: Responses of BIP and non-BIP children in one school to the diary prompt ‘I was able to do my work in school today’ over 12 weeks.



	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9	Week 10	Week 11	Week 12
Non-BIP responses (n)	82	83	80	78	68	66	46	48	40	36	22	19
BIP responses (n)	4	5	4	3	4	3	0	1	1	2	1	1

Note: ‘agree’ combines ‘agree a lot’ and ‘agree a bit’. n=1-5 (BIP pupils); n=19-83 (other pupils). Dates of diary entries vary between 4 January 2021 and 21 June 2021.

As with all pupils, in response to the prompt ‘what went well in school today?’, the most common individual response for BIP pupils was ‘I got on with my classmates’ and the most common response overall (BIP and non-BIP pupils) was circling all four responses. Things in school went increasingly well over time. The percentage of BIP pupils circling all four options increased from 25% (1/4) to 100% (1/1) over the 12 weeks.

In their written answers to the question ‘How has today been for you?’, BIP pupils responded in a positive manner, similarly to their fellow non-BIP pupils, naming specific pupils and teachers they enjoyed spending time with, as well as subjects and activities they enjoyed, specifically ‘science’ and ‘forest school’.

4.6 Self-regulation and de-escalation

An important part of the 1:1 sessions was for children to learn how to better self-regulate their emotions, in order to cope with strong emotions, calm down after incidents, control impulses, and respond appropriately in different situations. The children we spoke to described this as dealing with their anger. During sessions children were taught different strategies to deal with their anger – to stop it becoming explosive and to be able to calm down quicker. Most children told us about the strategies they had learnt, such as walking away from a situation, pushing the wall if feeling angry, breathing in a particular pattern, or counting. Some were able to



identify which strategy worked best for them and to use sessions to practice using them or discuss how to use such strategies in different situations.

Being taught such seemingly simple strategies and being able to implement them at school and at home appear, according to the school staff and parents we interviewed, to have had a marked impact on a couple of children in each school. One BOSS worker, for example, told us how she had spent many sessions practicing one specific strategy ‘tell a teacher’ with a five-year-old boy and what happened when he started using it in the classroom:

‘Every week, the session was basically around the same thing. We would just practice and practice, like going to tell a teacher. We’d act it out and roleplay it, we’d write it down on paper, we’d write a story about it, a comic about it, this is what we’re gonna do. [I was told] that the teacher ended up going to the head of the school, saying “[name of child] has just started not lashing out and coming to tell me”...’ - BOSS worker

Case study: Henry^[1]

Henry’s challenging behaviour had accelerated through primary school. Two years ago, he was diagnosed with ADHD at a time when his parents were also separating. His mum described his explosive behaviour as affecting his learning and his friendships at school, but also their home life. According to Henry, he had six exclusions before Christmas and spent many lessons outside his classroom.

Henry started meeting his BOSS worker online during lockdown and they built up a positive relationship, which continued when Henry returned to school. During sessions, Henry could ‘*get things of his chest*’ and they talked about his week and made a plan for what to do in situations when he was beginning to feel angry. During our interview, Henry mentioned how he prefers breathing exercises to counting, but how they both work for him – helping him calm down and stay focused. Because Henry was at home during lockdown and sessions started online, his mum also got to meet his BOSS worker and they talked about how she could respond to his anger and help him self-regulate.

The impact on Henry has been noticeable, as everyone – school, mum, BOSS and another external worker who supported Henry with his anxiety – worked together to help him break the cycle of bad behaviour. School now describes Henry as ‘*flying*’, mum says he is ‘*almost a completely different child*’, and Henry himself says ‘*I don’t get told off as much. [I’m] not getting excluded and I’m more focused*’.

^[1] All names have been changed and identifying information removed.

4.7 Being listened to and having adult attention

All those interviewed for our evaluation, including school staff, parents, and children themselves, said that the children looked forward to seeing their BOSS worker.

The supportiveness of their BOSS worker was a key stand out for pupils and having a mentor, or someone to talk to made children feel happy.



'It makes me happy seeing [BOSS worker], because I know that I can speak to someone to get things off my chest. Speaking about the week, how it's gone so far, and getting to chill a bit.' - Pupil, KS2

'She's supportive. She doesn't make fun of me. She listens and she just really helps me.' - KS2 child with BIP

'[Sessions] makes me feel very happy. I like to stop being angry, I don't like being angry because when I'm angry I don't have a lot of friends' - KS1 child with BIP

Children seemingly liked the attention of an adult, sometimes because they did not get the same level of attention at home or at school, because adults have other obligations, or other times because children were known to prefer adult company to the company of their peers.

'I wouldn't have anybody to talk to unless I go to [teacher] or [teacher], but I don't usually go to talk to them a lot because I don't get to go past them. I'm always just, like, who can I talk to when I'm just sat in class? I can't talk to anybody. [BOSS worker] would just say like 'well you've got me here, you can talk to me, whatever you want to talk about.' She's always smiling and making me happy again. - Pupil, KS2

'He says he enjoys it. It's about having that adult attention outside the family. Like sometimes in a situation, especially at home with [names of younger siblings], they will argue and because I have not seen what happened I will just say 'get on with it', whereas with [name of BOSS worker], because she is an outsider, he can fully explain what happened and she can say 'next time that happens, try this or try that – it might be a better way to deal with it'. And he takes a lot from that,). He can offload to [name of BOSS worker] about what he has got going on. And perhaps he speaks to her about things that he wouldn't speak to me about – I don't know.' - Parent of child with BIP

One council official we interviewed speculated that these supportive relationships could have a downside, once BOSS sessions came to an end:

'Because children with attachment needs, you know, people come and go. And that doesn't help with their ability to trust everybody if some BOSS worker introduced in January, he was leaving in July. That could be more damaging.' - Council staff

There are some indications that 1:1 sessions may improve some children's self-esteem. The children we interviewed often mentioned that their BOSS worker had told them they were good at something. Having an external person give you praise, or believe that you can be a really good netball player, or say that you know a lot about animals, mattered to the children we interviewed.

'With [name of child]'s self-esteem, since speaking to [name of BOSS worker] she seems to have come back and not be so hard on herself, she has started to smile again, she got quite depressed during lockdown, so as a family she has helped us all massively.' - Parent of child with BIP

Case study: Beth^[1]

Beth was selected for the BOSS programme, not because of challenging behaviour, but because of vulnerabilities in her family life. Her school believed a BOSS mentor would be



good for her emotional well-being and Beth also developed a good relationship with her BOSS worker. During sessions they would play games and talk and Beth slowly began to feel able to share things she might not tell others, including her social worker: *'As I got to know her a bit more, I started talking about things outside of school... When I'm talking about things like my family, moving away from them, it's a bit sad, [but] she helps me get along with it.'*

Halfway through the BOSS intervention, Beth was taken into care and came to live with foster carers. Beth's BOSS worker made contact with them a few days later and was able to share information about Beth and what she likes and finds difficult. The BOSS worker was also able to attend a Personal Education Plan (PEP) review meeting and provide useful information about Beth's wishes for where she wants to live longer term that other professionals were not aware of. Beth's foster carer told us that he believed that the BOSS worker had got to know Beth in a different way because sessions were more informal and child-led.

'She has a good grasp on who Beth is and what her needs are. She has definitely gotten to know her... I think [BOSS worker] pulled off the big sister thing rather than the social worker with a clipboard, which I think Beth definitely did need.' - Foster Carer

Having someone to talk to outside of family and school during this confusing time was perceived by everyone as extremely beneficial. Following the BOSS intervention there continue to be a lot of uncertainties in Beth's life, about where she will live and what school she will attend, but her teacher believes that the intervention has enabled Beth to talk more openly to adults about herself and also give her the emotional vocabulary to talk about her feelings.

Ⓜ All names have been changed and identifying information removed.

5. Impact on schools

Restorative practice was part of the existing ethos in some schools, so BOSS was seen as adding to or improving the existing culture and practice, rather than marking a radical departure from business as usual. BOSS supported schools' approaches to behaviour, rather than representing something brand new.

'[For our school] it wasn't a huge change in mind set, it was more about us honing it in and making it even better... a chance to refresh that work. We had some new staff so it was a good point to re-introduce that or invest in it again, to make sure we were all on the same page.' - Headteacher

Family Action intended that BOSS should be a whole-school approach. The extent to which BOSS reached through the whole school varied, partly due to Covid lockdowns, but we received positive feedback on this point.

'... as a whole school our teachers and TA have benefited massively... All of our teachers and TAs have had the restorative practice [training], they've had PDA, emotional regulation



*training. So from a top-down perspective, we've been massively skilled-up by the BOSS programme, which is something that doesn't often happen because funding for training for schools is so minimal... We've had a **whole-school training**. We've had class [training]... the restorative circles with classes all the way through school, so they've benefited from a whole class perspective... [training with pupils] that's made a massive difference in terms of their understanding **and then** the families **and then** the individuals have benefited enormously from the things that have happened [emphasis in original]. So I think overall it's been hugely beneficial for everybody.' - SENDco*

5.1 Whether BOSS affected schools' usual practice in managing behaviour challenges

The online survey asked whether staff had seen any wider differences to professional practice due to the introduction of BOSS. Almost a third (31%) thought it was too early to say, but almost a quarter (23%) thought they had seen differences to some extent. One SLT member commented that they had seen a difference for new staff members who missed a lot of initial training, and that it has had an impact on teaching assistants who work 1:1 with children. This was also highlighted by one of the classroom teachers who mentioned that teachers working with children 1:1 had used strategies suggested by BOSS workers. Another SLT member wrote:

'Staff are beginning to take note of pupil voice more and use trauma-informed awareness to understand that behaviour is a form of communication.' - SLT member

A fifth (21%) thought they had seen a difference to a limited extent. One classroom teacher wrote:

'Useful introduction to our ethos and strategies for new members of staff. Especially useful for those families receiving targeted support - for those affected there has been a wider difference to a large extent.' - Classroom Teacher

Two staff members had seen differences to a large extent, one SLT member commented that they had seen changes in classroom practice, implementations from BIPs, and in interactions between pupils and adults.

Five staff members had not seen any wider differences and three staff members did not know.

5.2 Differences BOSS made to individual professional practice

We asked staff in our online survey whether the introduction of BOSS had affected their usual practice in how they managed behaviour challenges. Forty-one percent thought BOSS had affected their usual practice a little. Almost a quarter (23%) thought it was too early to say, a fifth (21%) did not think the introduction of BOSS had affected their usual practice in how they manage behaviour challenges, and three members of staff did not know.

Eleven staff members left comments to explain the difference, if any, that BOSS had made to their usual practice in how they managed behaviour challenges (Table 7).



Table 7: Breakdown of comments on whether BOSS had made a difference to individual professional practice

Response	Job role	Comment
Yes, a lot	Member of school senior leadership team (SLT)	Adapting provision and strategies to meet the needs of families and children both in school and at home on an individual and whole school basis.
	Teaching assistant	I use the Zones of Regulation on a daily basis and integrate it into my behaviour management routines. I use social stories to help children understand how their behaviour affects others. I empathise with children who are angry or upset and talk less - let them regulate in their own time and way. I am more confident in dealing with behaviour management and seeing the world.
	Classroom teacher	BOSS is working very closely with one of my children, and I have been learning new de-escalation techniques
Yes, a little	Member of school Senior Leadership Team (SLT)	It has reinforced work that we did in school to overhaul our behaviour management a couple of years ago. The science behind behaviour needs has been really interesting to explore.
	Member of school Senior Leadership Team (SLT)	I have been given great phrases to use with one of my children to encourage positive reinforcement.
	Member of school Senior Leadership Team (SLT)	Having an understanding of pupil's needs/experiences and remembering to empathise with this whilst dealing with challenging behaviour.
	Classroom teacher	I am more tolerant and try to understand the reasons behind the behaviour.
	Classroom teacher	Language used.
No	Classroom teacher	We were already using the vast majority of the strategies that BOSS recommend.
	Classroom teacher	Will be attending the restorative practice training next month and that may impact on policy change.
Don't know	Other school staff	I don't work directly with the children.



Among some members of staff, at least within two schools, there continued to be a tension or conflict between this new restorative approach to behaviour and the more traditional or assertive approach to managing behaviour. One school leader described this as 'a *kickback from some areas of the school*'.

Schools dealt with this resistance differently. In one school three of four staff members selected to participate in the more in-depth two-day restorative training delivered by BOSS were described as struggling more with the restorative approach. This suggests that even when schools are buying into the BOSS model of restorative practice, some members of staff may need more training or time to accept this behaviour management approach.

6. Impacts on parents and families

Parental engagement with BOSS varied markedly. As part of the referral process, all parents consented for their child to have a BIP in place. The majority of parents we spoke to also mentioned speaking to their child's BOSS worker during the intervention, generally by phone, Zoom, or text messages due to Covid restrictions. All parents were aware of the BIP document and many had also attended online meetings to agree and review the plan.

Any additional contact between the BOSS programme and parents largely depended on the individual parent and their BOSS worker. Some parents struggled with their child's behaviour at home and appreciated regular telephone conversations with the BOSS worker for support. School staff also told us that some parents valued having someone to listen to them.

Seven parents received one-to-one training as part of the pilot intervention, mainly on de-escalation and regulation, to help them understand their child's different stages of emotions and techniques to support their child's self-regulation. We spoke to four parents who had participated in individual BOSS training, and they all highlighted how the training had been very helpful and had given them useful, practical tips and ways to respond to their child's behaviour. All four provided examples of how the support and training had helped them handle their child's emotions better, for example, by knowing how to react if their child was having an outburst, when to stand back rather than intervene in a situation, or the importance of praising good behaviour rather than punishing poor behaviour.

As two mothers told us:

'I watched him last week having one of his meltdowns, and I was carrying on with what I had to do very calmly. He went upstairs and then quickly, having regulated himself, came back downstairs. He handled the calming down very easily. It's very clear that he has taken so much from [BOSS sessions]... [Before] he would have been shaking uncontrollably, so he wouldn't have been able to regulate himself. I think I wouldn't have been able to intervene in the way that I did, so that was quite good to have that interaction with [name of BOSS worker] that I had. The things we have learnt together has been incredibly helpful.' - Parent of child with BIP

'It was sort of teaching me, giving me coping mechanisms, things I could try when he was having a meltdown, things like that. Any ideas to get [pupil] to listen.' - Parent of child with BIP

This combination of parental support, together with targeted 1:1 work with children, were described by many parents as having a positive influence on family life. For example, some



children with a BIP were perceived as having better relationships with family members at home, including siblings. As two different mothers described:

'At home he is a completely different child, he is not hitting his brothers, he is using his words more, like 'don't do that, it's annoying me'. Don't get me wrong he still loses it sometimes – he is 6, he can be quite a feisty boy, but he is different now, he is not hitting.' -Parent of child with BIP

'I think he's a lot more calmer when he's at home. He's started to play with his brother a lot more. It was very physical before, but now he's started to do things with his brother – 'hey come on [name of brother] let's do this.' They've been working together, so that's a noticeable change which's been nice.' - Parent of child with BIP

7. Cost

We received data from Family Action on the cost of running BOSS. Our analysis of the data found that the total cost of BOSS in 2020/21, mostly for the time of seven staff (a peak of 4.5 FTE), was £164,185.⁵ As eight schools took part, this came to £20,523 per school. This compares to the original budgeted cost of £200,000, which Family Action told us was later amended to £165,000 by agreement, due to reduced implementation and set-up costs and a slight delay on staff start dates.

Most of the staff time was spent supporting pupils on BIPs, and a minority (around 10%) on delivering training. A total of 77 pupils directly benefited from BOSS, because they had a BIP (59) or received transitional support for the move from primary to secondary school (18).

Family Action informed us that the 77 pupils reached were among 89 children on whom they received referrals. The difference of 12 was made up of six children who withdrew consent, four who were unable to complete transition work due to lockdown at the end of term, and two who moved school.

There were two to 18 children per school, or 10 on average (made up of seven BIP and three transitional cases). Family Action did not define a minimum or maximum number of BIP pupils per school. Of the 77 starters, 84% (65) completed the programme.

We calculate that the mean cost of BOSS per pupil receiving 1:1 support was £1,929.⁶ This includes a share of management overheads and indirect costs such as printing, but excludes the cost of training, which we estimate was £15,654 for all schools.⁷ Family Action delivered 52 training sessions attended by 1,537 separate individuals, or 2,398 attendees, of whom seven were parents and carers, 1,799 were pupils, and 592 were school staff. In total, BOSS

⁵ None of the three BOSS case workers were in post for a full academic year. Two started in November 2020 and one in January 2021. One BOSS worker left the programme in May 2021, but was able to conclude all their cases.

⁶ This assumes that: an average session lasted 40 minutes; the average programme length was 14.7 weeks (range five to 30); and 71 pupils directly benefited (halfway between the number of starters and the number of completers).

⁷ Total costs were made up of: salaries, travel, training, IT support, running costs, set-up costs, printing, and a management cost overhead allocation.



workers spent 77 hours delivering training and attendees spent 2,860 hours (around 400 seven-hour days) attending the training sessions.

These figures relate to the experience of delivering BOSS in York and may not apply more widely, as pilots have limited economies of scale in some ways, but may conversely be able to make savings due to geographical concentration.

Our cost estimates do not include the cost of the time of school staff in attending training or carrying out other tasks for the programme such as liaison, communications, set-up, chasing evaluation consent forms, arranging meetings with parents/staff, and making sure staff let pupils leave the classroom to attend sessions. These were non-zero but not large.

The majority (64%) of respondents to the staff survey did not think the BOSS programme had incurred any other costs for them. One SLT member thought the BOSS programme had incurred costs, commenting '*resources for individuals, resources for circle activities*'. A third (33%) did not know, one person stated that it was too early to say and that they had not been involved in training costs.

Almost half (44%) of those responding to the staff survey did not think BOSS had taken up more of their time, however a third (33%) responded 'a little'. Two SLT members thought BOSS had taken up a lot of their time, and seven staff members did not know.

Staff were asked how much extra time they had spent in hours and over what time period. Time spent ranged from 15 minutes overall to 2.5 hours over a five week period. Two SLT members mentioned the amount of paperwork, with one saying initial contact and paperwork took 2-3 hours, and several respondents in our interviews and survey mentioned that the evaluation-related requests for data and parental consents were time-consuming.

One SLT member explained:

'My time has been taken with meetings to set up the behaviour programme and with BOSS meetings - it is time well spent though.' – SLT member

Another staff member felt BOSS' outcomes were beneficial enough for it to be worth taking on the extra admin:

'On the referral forms you give parents details and then I would liaise with the parents on the playground. When it was on Zoom, Microsoft Teams, it was reminding the teacher because they'd forget to get the child to go out of class at point and log on to the link. I'd be dashing around every 45 minutes or whatever. I did it as there was such a benefit to us. If I did an hour's admin but I had 15 hours mentoring each week, that's a good trade off.' - Pastoral manager



DISCUSSION

Discussion of Findings

Family Action did well to implement the BOSS programme and reach eight primary schools and almost the original target number of pupils (77 against a target of 80-90) in the context of Covid-19 lockdowns. The programme's approach went with the grain of what schools were already trying to achieve in terms of pupil behaviour. In York, at least, schools already aspired to improve behaviour using the whole-school, restorative, tailored, and relationship-based BOSS-like approach. They appreciated the extra help BOSS provided. Schools that were less engaged or slower to start felt less need for the programme, being perhaps further ahead on the same journey.

Our findings suggest that BOSS can be safely implemented in further schools while more evidence is gathered on its outcomes and impacts, including after the move to secondary. We estimate the cost of this would be £1,929 per pupil for 1:1 support, or £20,523 per school including the training for adults. Pupils enjoyed taking part and receiving the 1:1 attention, while around half of school staff told us BOSS had made a difference to professional practice. It is plausible that, in line with the logic model, this leads to improvements in child outcomes. We heard individual examples of stark improvements in child behaviour which interviewees attributed to BOSS, but we cannot say that these perceived benefits were caused by the programme, or if the perceived benefits were more widespread. Schools certainly saw future benefit in expanding the programme's eligibility to children without a social worker, who have less support available to them and who schools felt would have also benefited from the programme. Schools felt constrained from selecting those who needed support the most by the eligibility criteria of social care involvement.

Limitations

Our evaluation design, and limitations in the amount and quality of the diaries and administrative data we received from schools, mean we are unable to reach firm conclusions on the impact of BOSS on overall attainment, attendance, exclusions, behaviour, and referrals to children's services. Our evaluation took place over the same single academic year as the programme, so we are also unable to comment on longer-term outcomes.

Our recruitment through schools is likely to mean that some of the parents, carers, and children we interviewed were more engaged with their school than average.

Conclusions and Recommendations

We found widespread satisfaction with the BOSS intervention among pupils, school staff, and parents/carers. There was also no suggestion of any negative unintended consequences. These suggest BOSS can be safely rolled out to further schools while more evidence is gathered on its outcomes and impacts.

A strong recommendation, suggested by a range of our interviewees across all participating schools and survey respondents, was to remove the eligibility criteria for BIP pupils to have, or have had, a social worker.



Any future testing and adaptation of the BOSS model could consider offering BIPs to a wider pool of pupils, and a transition model which begins in Year 6 and ends, not at the end of Year 6, but in the first year of secondary school.

Directions for Future Research

Future research and evaluation should:

- Seek complete data on all BIP pupils, to allow analysis of which pupils appear to benefit most from the 1:1 support;
- Gather primary data on behaviour, to see whether our qualitative findings on changes in behaviour by some pupils apply more widely; and
- Follow transition BIP pupils after their move to secondary, to follow-up on the impacts of BOSS in the new school setting.



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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Training delivered by BOSS programme in individual schools

School staff attended training on restorative awareness, trauma, pathological demand avoidance, and de-escalation. Parents and carers attended training on de-escalation and regulation, and on social stories. Pupils attended Circles, described as sessions facilitated by a BOSS worker where children sit in a circle in their class group and are encouraged to talk. Some of the training was delivered remotely and some in-person, including the Circles work with pupils.



Name of school	When recruited	Number of BIP pupils (up to 20 weeks)	Number of Transition pupils (4 5 weeks)	Number of staff	Type of staff training	Number of pupils trained (Class Circles)	Number of parents	Type of parent training
Clifton Green Primary School	1 st wave	11	2	134	TT, RA	360	3	D&R
Fishergate Primary School	1 st wave	6	1	123	TT, RA, SS, D&R, PDA	189	3	D&R
Hob Moor Community Primary Academy	2 nd wave	8	4	103	TT, RA, D&R, RA2	117	0	-
New Earswick Primary School	2 nd wave	3	0	0	-	0	0	-
Osbalwick Primary Academy	2 nd wave	16	2	118	TT, RA, SS, D&R, PDA	90	1	SS
St. Aelred's Roman Catholic Primary School	1 st wave	1	1	0	-	0	0	-
Tang Hall Primary Academy	1 st wave	8	8	66	RA, RA2	117	0	-
Woodthorpe Primary School	1 st wave	6	0	0	-	0	0	-
Archbishop Holgate's secondary School	Additional school	-	-	40	PDA	-	-	-

Source: Family Action monitoring data. Note: Trauma Informed Awareness (TT); Restorative Awareness (RA); Restorative Awareness 2-day course (RA2); Social Stories (SS), De-escalation and Regulation (D&R); Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA)



Diary
Spring Term 2021

coram

better chances
for children
since 1739

Draw or write something about yourself

About you

Child's initials: _____

School name: _____

Year group: _____

For teachers (please tick box):
I confirm parent or carer consent has been received

When this booklet has been completed at the end of Spring term 2021 please return it to:
Impact and Evaluation Team, Coram, 41 Brunswick Square, London WC1N 1AZ

About this Diary

We are a children's charity called Coram and we want to know how you are getting on at school this term.

What you write in your diary is private.

We will not share what you write with others. We would only do this if we were worried about someone's safety.

You do not have to answer the questions if you do not want to.

You can write as much or as little as you like.

If you need help filling in this diary, you can ask a teacher.

There are no right or wrong answers.

We will read all the diaries and then write a report about them. We won't use your name.

We are writing our report about your school's Behaviour Outreach Support Service and what difference it makes.

Thank you for helping our study.



Week beginning Monday 4 January 2021

I love going to school

Do you agree or disagree? Circle the answer closest to what you think.



Agree
a lot



Agree
a bit



Disagree
a bit



Disagree
a lot

I was able to do my work in school today

Do you agree or disagree? Circle the answer closest to what you think.



Agree
a lot



Agree
a bit



Disagree
a bit



Disagree
a lot

What went well in school today?

Circle the things that went well. You can circle as many answers as you want.

I got on with
my classmates

I got on with
grown-ups

I was able
to listen

I was
listened to

How has today been for you?

Tell us about how things have been going at school today:

3

Space for school staff to write notes

Thank you

When this booklet has been completed at the end of Spring term 2021 please return it to:
Impact and Evaluation Team, Coram, 41 Brunswick Square, London WC1N 1AZ

15



What Works *for*
**Children's
Social Care**

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