

The non-sense of raising school attendance

Anne Sheppard*

Education Office, North Yorkshire County Council, UK

For over 10 years, the English government has provided extensive funding for initiatives to raise school attendance, especially in the secondary school years, with unclear evidence of success. This paper will discuss some of the difficulties and contradictions associated with the notion of 'raising school attendance' and question whether it is a feasible aim. Main points will be as follows: (a) the importance of raising school attendance is based on the correlations found between poor attendance and both low academic achievement and onset of antisocial behaviour. However, the research demonstrates that these associations are not straightforward; (b) the arbitrary separation of pupils with attendance difficulties from those with behavioural/conduct problems ignores knowledge gained in the twentieth century about the causes of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, including poor attendance and recommended multimodal/multiagency interventions for such problems; and (c) legal sanctions for parents whose children do not attend school remain a threat frequently used by local authorities. There is no evidence that legal sanctions improve attendance when they are applied, yet practitioners continue to use them and may be encouraged to do so. The paper will argue that poor school attendance rate is only a quantifiable measure of a young person's complex difficulties and cannot be improved by simple unsubstantiated solutions. It will question whether the legislation on school attendance difficulties can be justified in view of what is known from empirical research about the causes and development of human behaviour and whether legal sanctions should be imposed on parents for this so-called offence in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: raising attendance; absenteeism; legal enforcement; criminalising non-attendance

Why has there been a focus on raising school attendance?

In 2004, David Miliband, then schools minister, in a letter to local authority directors wrote that it is:

... because of the strong link between attendance and attainment – and also because of the well known links between truancy and street crime and antisocial behaviour – that government sees reducing absence from school as a priority. (Department for Education and Skills [DfES] 2004a)

This point was re-iterated in a Parliamentary Select Committee report in 2006 and such a belief has led to schools receiving ever-higher attendance targets to achieve – that is, to attract more and more pupils through their doors every day. It highlighted the assumption that the correlations between poor attendance and poor attainment or entry into crime

*Email: annie.sheppard@northyorks.gov.uk

indicated a causal relationship, so that getting children into school would lessen both these problems.

It should therefore be asked whether research supported this assumption. Firstly, regarding attainment, a positive correlation with good attendance might be expected, as good attenders are likely to have attributes that promote attainment, such as motivation, self-discipline and persistence, which will have derived from parent and school relationships from the early primary years. However, a study by Morris and Rutt (2004) showed that there was an uneven association between school attendance and attainment in 14- and 15-year-old pupils. For example, boys showed underperformance compared to girls with the same level of attendance.

In fact, it has been consistently shown that there is a strong positive correlation between most measures of social disadvantage and poor attainment, with the effects of disadvantage being cumulative (Cox 2000; Mortimore and Whitty 2000). In spite of extra resources such as Sure Start (Belsky et al. 2006), school-based interventions to improve attendance (Edward and Malcolm 2002) and improvement programmes for schools in areas of high need, findings have generally shown that family circumstances, parental interest in and attitude to education, accounted for significantly more of the variation in children's school achievement than school factors (Mortimore and Whitty 2000).

A review by Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) hypothesised that the socio-economic difference in attainment resulted from differences in parental involvement in children's education exhibited continuously through parental enthusiasm and a positive parenting style in relation to schooling. Involvement was defined as good parenting at home, development of children's academic self-concept and positive interaction of parents with school staff about their children's progress with schoolwork. Parents varied in the degree to which they felt confident to help with their children's education and there was evidence that children themselves could mediate parental involvement by their responses to parental interest in their schooling. Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) concluded that parental involvement affected children's achievement more than school procedures, especially in the primary years.

Before school, the best predictor of achievement at school is socio-economic background, with lower levels predicting poor performance, but once at school actual academic performance becomes the best predictor of subsequent attainment. Many children do not overcome their learning difficulties and fall further behind with the passing years (Sylva 2000). A small-scale study (Sheppard 2009) suggested that poor attenders perceived their parents as less involved with their schoolwork and homework and interacted less with school staff, which would all exacerbate their tendency to miss school and fall further behind with work.

Secondly, there have been studies since the 1960s investigating factors associated with, and predictors of, antisocial behaviour (Robins 1966, 1972; Olweus 1979; Huesmann et al. 1984; Farrington 1980, 1992; Smith and Farrington 2004). Robins and Ratcliff (1980) showed that school absence was associated with poor school outcomes generally, later antisocial behaviour and adult psychiatric symptoms such as anxiety, depression, alcoholism and drug addiction. However, there may be precursors to missing school that are the true causes of the later difficulties, as it is unlikely that school absence in itself could have such serious long-term effects, so that simply enforcing school attendance will not stop the adult difficulties (Robins and Robertson 1996).

The Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development is a rare UK prospective, ongoing longitudinal study, following a sample of individuals from eight years of age to 40 years of age (Juby and Farrington 2001). The study, involving a sample of 411 males, used multiple regression statistical procedures to show which characteristics accurately predicted later

outcome. It demonstrated that the most important psychosocial predictors of adult antisocial personality disorder and convictions were having a convicted parent, large family size, low ability or attainment, and child rearing factors, such as poor parental supervision and disrupted family. Data on school attendance were collected but poor school attendance was *not* an independent predictor of either offending behaviour or other poor life outcomes (Farrington 1996). Therefore, it was not included in the 22 explanatory risk factors for offending behaviour Farrington provided (Farrington 2000). One reason why poor school attendance did not predict later antisocial behaviour independently may be because a significant minority of poor attenders showed temperamental characteristics of anxiety and later developed mental health problems (Parker and Asher 1987; Farrington 1996).

Longitudinal studies also showed that adult antisocial and aggressive behaviours were relatively stable personality features from childhood (Lefkowitz and Eron 1977; Huesmann et al. 1984; Smith and Farrington 2004; Herbert 2006). Indicators of continuity included early age of onset, number of co-existing conduct problems including ADHD, below-average cognitive ability and having a parent with antisocial behaviour and prison history.

The studies cited suggested that a mixture of family background and individual characteristics actually had more influence on whether a child developed antisocial behaviour than did schools or attendance at school. Furthermore, girls tended to be absent from school more than boys, yet had significantly lower rates of offending. Therefore, if there was any causal relationship between school absence and offending it must be different in the two genders (Collins 1998). It might therefore be concluded that poor school attendance may accompany antisocial behaviours, but is not an independent predictor so cannot be assumed in itself to be a causal factor. Increasing school attendance alone should not be expected to reduce offending behaviour. Childhood behavioural disorders and disrupted family circumstances, however, do predict such offending and adult criminality.

The links between school attendance, high attainment and less antisocial behaviour are not straightforward. The correlations should never have been assumed to point to specific causes. These will only be understood by investigating the influence of the numerous other determinants of poor attendance. Encouraging attendance without changing the other characteristics of social disadvantage will be most unlikely to result in either significantly improved attainment or less antisocial behaviour.

Have targets for raising school attendance raised school attendance?

Between 1997 and 2004, government (Parliamentary Select Committee on Public Accounts 2006) spent £885 million on six main initiatives to reduce school absence, which were:

- excellence in cities, providing learning support units and mentors to help pupils with poor attendance, behavioural and learning difficulties;
- school inclusion, which provided a range of activities, including education of excluded pupils, which aimed to help reduce poor attendance and exclusion;
- multiagency teams, learning mentors, learning support units and police in schools to help schools with severe attendance and behaviour problems;
- a Key Stage 3 strategy that provided attendance and behaviour audit and training materials, and consultants;
- behaviour grants to assist work on inclusion, especially for pupils with poor attendance and risk of exclusion; and

- the Capital Modernisation Fund, which paid for electronic registration systems at secondary schools with high rates of absence.

These initiatives were associated with government-set attendance targets for secondary schools, depending on percent of pupils receiving free school meals (as an indicator of pupil deprivation). These ranged from achieving 90 to 96% attendance (DfES 2004b) and increased year by year up to 2008.

In spite of these initiatives and the targets, pupils' school absence in England has not decreased in the last 20 years and there was some indication that it was increasing, with children showing absence earlier in their school histories (Reid 2006, 2007). Absence from secondary school for reasons of illness, holidays, truancy or exclusions remained at about 10–12%, depending on the characteristics of the individual school, such as its attitude towards poor attenders, and its socio-economic catchment (Reid 2002).

Coldman (1995) found that post-registration absence was more frequent than whole day absence in the later secondary school years. Post-registration truants missed school following registration or more commonly absented themselves from individual lessons. Coldman (1995) suggested that lesson absence was closely related to pupils' attitudes to the curriculum and represented curriculum rejection. However, it is generally unknown which pupils routinely miss certain lessons while attending others (Reid 2007). Government changed its focus in 2006 (DfES 2006) so that schools and education welfare services were expected to concentrate on what were called persistent absentees – that is, pupils with an attendance below 80%. It has been shown by Farrington (1996) and others, e.g. Reid (1999, 2007) and Smith (2006) that these young people are likely to:

- come from single parent households living in adverse circumstances;
- have poor literacy, numeracy and special educational needs;
- have behavioural difficulties;
- be drinking alcohol and using illicit drugs; and
- be known to the police and Youth Justice Service.

Schools and local authorities, through pupil referral units (PRUs), have increasingly found ways to help this group of young people in the later school years, offering more vocational, often part-time at school, alternative education. However, without studies following their progress after school leaving, the effects of any short-term engagement in education on the much bigger problems of academic attainment and adolescent outcomes, such as entry into crime, remain unknown.

Is the nature of attendance difficulties understood?

Through the latter part of the twentieth century, research findings would suggest that behavioural and attendance problems evolved in the same way – that is, through the social learning that took place within the family, school and wider community (Bandura 1977) with parental expectations, attributions and beliefs influencing their self efficacy (Bandura 1995) and their children's attitudes and reaction to school (Sheppard 2007, 2009). Similar holistic solutions with emotional, behavioural, cognitive and social components across settings such as home and school (Webster-Stratton and Hammond 1997) and across agencies are likely to be needed to resolve both types of difficulty. If poor attendance, particularly in the secondary school years, was recognised as a behavioural problem, then poor attenders, like others with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and often with learning

difficulties as well, could be perceived as having special educational needs that should be addressed (Southwell 2006).

In practice though, there is an arbitrary separation of so-called 'behavioural' and 'attendance' difficulties as evidenced by separate and differently qualified services for each of the difficulties. Education welfare services exist throughout local authorities, whose prime task is to assist children, young people and their families with school attendance. School behaviour problems, in contrast, are referred to behaviour support services. Yet those with attendance difficulties, like those with behavioural difficulties, are defying their parents, schools and sometimes wider society. Therefore, those who choose not to, or refuse to, go to school could be viewed as having behavioural difficulties, as clearly non-attendance is behaviour. As attendance and behavioural difficulties often occur in the same individual, the two services can receive referrals for the same pupils. Once a pupil with behavioural problems stops attending school, which may occur after exclusion, the case rests firmly with the education welfare service. This is significant because of the implications of the legislation on school attendance. While excluded pupils with behavioural difficulties receive extra support in schools or PRUs, non-attenders do not have access to such services as they are the responsibility of the parents, who instead may be prosecuted for their poor attendance.

Legislation on school attendance: should parents be punished for their children's absenteeism?

Findings from experimental psychology over many decades have demonstrated that children's behaviour develops from a combination of external environmental and intrapersonal influences (Achenbach 1982; Hepworth and Larsen 1990; Herbert 1974; Rutter and Sroufe 2000). Influences from the environment include the child's past learning experiences, the immediate social and psychological environment such as family, peers and teachers, and non-genetic biological variables such as birth trauma or head injuries resulting from an accident. Intrapersonal influences include firstly genetic effects, physical attributes, health, drug and alcohol use; secondly, cognitive ability and perceptual functioning; thirdly, emotional factors such as emotional control, depression and anxiety, and fourthly behaviour, that is, whether it is in the normal range or precipitates difficulties. It is also considered that much abnormal behaviour and cognition is on a continuum with normal behaviour, and subject to the same laws of learning. The notion of coercive parent-child interaction provides a good explanation of how children can learn to be increasingly successful in getting their demands or requests met by parents, whether it is a day off school or other privileges and rewards (Patterson 1982; Webster-Stratton and Herbert 1994; Sheppard 2005, 2007).

Social learning theory (Bandura 1977), suggested that children and adolescents developed serious antisocial behaviour when their early social learning was neglectful or ineffectual. Children became socialised through the development of internal controls over their behaviour – that is, by internalising the standards of conduct and morality (Herbert 2006). Young people with oppositional, defiant disorders and who later offended, demonstrated an inability or unwillingness to adhere to the rules and codes of conduct prescribed by society. Parental separation, poor parental supervision, family violence and child abuse were all predictive of children developing antisocial behaviour disorders (Farrington 1996; Mills 2004; Herbert 2006).

Since school attendance became compulsory in 1870, parents have been responsible for ensuring that their children receive an education (although this need not be in school).

Both the Elementary Education Act 1876 and the Education Act 1996 reinforced this, threatening parents with legal sanctions, including prosecution in the Magistrates Court if they did not get their children into school (Berg 1996; DfES 2003; Sheppard 2005). The Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 introduced a possible prison sentence for parents of poor attenders. In general, legal action proceeds with parents who are socially excluded, with penalties adding to their problems without improving attendance (Hoyle 1998).

There is *no published evidence* to show that prosecuting parents for their children's non-attendance improves attendance in young people (Blacktop and Blyth 1999; Zhang 2004). There is an irony here, in that services are increasingly encouraged to show that their interventions are evidence-based, yet the legislation itself takes no account of the evidence and there is no attempt to seek it. An even greater irony is that the strongest sanction that schools have for disruptive or antisocial behaviour in school is exclusion – that is, compulsory absenteeism. As poor attenders often also have behavioural difficulties, they tend to accumulate short-term exclusions. Sometimes they choose not to go to school; at other times they are excluded and cannot go to school, which is confusing for young people and parents alike.

The above has described briefly how social learning is an active process that takes place within social systems such as the family, school and community, with poor school attendance being learned in the same way as other behavioural difficulties. Government-recommended solutions (DfES 2004c) included parenting agreements between parents, schools and/or education welfare officers, court imposed-parenting orders or parenting groups that focus on children's behavioural difficulties rather than their education, and legal sanctions for parents. While there are largely qualitative studies investigating reasons for poor attendance and such recommendations (Halsey et al. 2004; Kendall et al. 2004; Malcolm et al. 2003) there appears to be a paucity of complementary research that adheres to the basic scientific principles of validity, reliability, random sampling and control groups, which collect quantifiable data that can be subject to statistical analysis to give clear indicators of probable effectiveness.

Although evidence shows that more frequently prosecuting authorities have no have better attendance (Blacktop and Blyth 1999; Zhang 2004), education welfare services can be under considerable pressure to take legal action, and it remains one of their significant roles. However, while there is no empirical study demonstrating whether parental prosecution *causes* a change in school attendance, practitioners are not able to use it in either a systematic or fair manner (Sheppard 2010).

Summary and conclusions

The main points arising from this paper are:

- (1) There has been government emphasis on raising school attendance to reduce adolescent antisocial behaviour and contact with the Youth Justice Service and to improve academic attainment at school. However, such associations of poor attendance with poor attainment or antisocial behaviour are not straightforward. While poor school attendance may accompany variables linked with youth and adult offending, it is not an independent predictor of these behaviours.
- (2) School attendance has shown little improvement over the last 20 years in spite of initiatives. However, the introduction of pupil referral units and schools offering more vocational/alternative education helps some young people engage in

education, which in turn can improve the attendance figures, although the eventual influence on adult outcome is not clear.

- (3) There is no published evidence that parental legal sanctions are effective in getting young people into school or that if they attended they would achieve. If, once in school, they resorted to getting excluded on behavioural grounds, they might then receive the additional educational support offered to pupils with special educational needs.
- (4) Research has described how childhood behaviour develops through learning. It can be concluded that poor school attendance is learned in the same way as other behavioural difficulties (for example, parental defiance, classroom disruption) and should be treated in the same way as other special educational needs, often with multiagency, holistic approaches. It should be concluded that if it is not rational to prosecute parents for their children's behavioural difficulties or school exclusions, then it is not rational to prosecute them for their children's school attendance difficulties either.

So what about the legislation on school attendance in the twenty-first century? Ideally, children and young people should get an education and most do, because they and their parents know it is the best route to good career prospects. However, it should be asked, nearly 140 years after the first Education Act, whether the 10% who do not readily attend school should be forced into a system that probably does not meet their needs – learning, behavioural, emotional or social, which are so often entangled.

Government introduced a severe punishment for parents whose children did not go to school (or get an education some other way). Figures from the Ministry of Justice in 2010 showed that parental prosecutions for poor attendance in England increased between 2007 and 2009 by 27.6% to a total of 10,697 parents in 2009. Of these, an average of just over one a week received a suspended prison sentence and just over one a month served a prison sentence. This is in spite of parental prosecution not being known to have any demonstrable effect on school attendance.

The severity of this punishment is unique. If children or young people steal, set fire, injure others, or even commit murder (cf. James Bulger), there is no prison sentence for the parents. Yet the parental role in affecting the onset of poor attendance or any of these other behaviours is the same. Bandura, whose social learning theory has explained how much of children's behaviour is learned, and who has been so influential on the underlying principles of many interventions and strategies, including parent training programmes used across nations, suggested in a report of his own recent work (Bandura 2009) that governments' introduction of social policies are often flawed by their poor understanding of the psychological and social determinants of human behaviour.

Current knowledge of the psychosocial determinants of young people's poor attendance seriously calls the legislation on school attendance into question.

Note

1. The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and not necessarily of North Yorkshire County Council.

References

- Achenbach, T.M. 1982. *Developmental psychopathology*. 2nd ed. New York: Wiley.
- Bandura, A. 1977. *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Bandura, A. 1995. *Self-efficacy in changing societies*. New York, Cambridge University Press.

- Bandura, A. 2009. Social cognitive theory goes global. *The Psychologist* 22, no. 6: 504–6.
- Belsky, J., E. Melhuish, J. Barnes, A.H. Leyland, and H. Romaniuk. 2006. Effects of Sure Start local programmes on children and families: Early findings from a quasi-experimental, cross sectional study. *British Medical Journal* 332, 1476–8.
- Berg, I. 1996. Unauthorised absence from school. In *Unwillingly to school* ed. I. Berg and J. Nursten, 72–82. London: Gaskell.
- Blacktop, J. and E. Blyth. 1999. School attendance and the role of law in England and Wales. In *Improving school attendance*, ed. E. Blyth and J. Milner, 36–54. London: Routledge.
- Coldman, C. 1995. Truancy and the curriculum. In *Issues in school attendance and truancy*, ed. D. O’Keeffe and P. Stoll, 26–36. London: Pitman.
- Collins, D. 1998. *Managing truancy in schools*. London: Cassell.
- Cox, T. 2000. Introduction. In *Combating educational disadvantage*, ed. T. Cox, 1–14. London: Falmer.
- Department for Education and Skills [DfES] 2003. *Ensuring regular school attendance: Guidance on the local measures available to secure regular attendance*. Nottingham, DfES.
- DfES 2004a. Improving school attendance and tackling truancy. Letter to Chief Education Officers and Directors of Children’s Services in England, 25 August, LEA/0237/2004.
- DfES 2004b. Improving school attendance and tackling truancy. Letter to Chief Education Officers in England, 20 September, LEA/0237A/2004.
- DfES. 2004c. *Guidance on education related parenting contracts, parenting orders and penalty notices*. Nottingham: DfES.
- DfES. 2006. Improving school attendance: Forward strategy for 2006–07 and beyond. Letter to Directors of Children’s Services, 2 November, Ref.SPS06–294.
- Desforges, C. and A. Abouchaar. 2003. *The impact of parental involvement, parental support and family education on pupil achievement and adjustment: A literature review*. Research Report No. 433. Nottingham: DfES.
- Edward, S., and H. Malcolm. 2002. *The causes and effects of truancy*. Edinburgh: Scottish Council for Research in Education.
- Farrington, D.P. 1980. Truancy, delinquency, the home and the school. In *Out of school* ed. L. Hersov and I. Berg, 49–63. Chichester: John Wiley.
- Farrington, D.P. 1992. Juvenile delinquency. In *Current issues in the socialisation of young people* ed. J. Coleman, 123–163. London: Routledge.
- Farrington, D.P. 1996. Later life outcomes of truants in the Cambridge study. In *Unwillingly to school* ed. I. Berg and J. Nursten, 96–118. London: Gaskell.
- Farrington, D.P. 2000. Psychosocial predictors of adult antisocial personality and adult convictions. *Behavioural Sciences and the Law* 18: 605–22.
- Halsey, K., N. Bedford, M. Atkinson, R. White, and K. Kinder. 2004. Evaluation of fast track to prosecution for school non-attenders. Nottingham: DfES Publications.
- Hepworth, D., and J. Larsen. 1990. *Direct social practice: theory and skills*. 3rd ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Herbert, M. 1974. *Emotional problems of development in children*. London: Academic Press.
- Herbert M. 2006. *Clinical child and adolescent psychology*. Chichester: John Wiley.
- Hoyle, D. 1998. Constructions of pupils’ absence in the British education service. *Child and Family Social Work* 3: 99–111.
- Huesmann, L.R., L.D. Eron., M.M. Lefkowitz, and L.O. Walder 1984. Stability of aggression over time and generations. *Developmental Psychology* 20: 1120–34.
- Juby, H., and D.P. Farrington. 2001. Disentangling the link between disrupted families and delinquency. *British Journal of Criminology* 41: 22–40.
- Kendall, S., R. White, K. Kinder, K. Halsey, and N. Bedford. 2004. *School attendance and the prosecution of parents: Effects and effectiveness*. Slough: National Foundation for Educational Research.
- Lefkowitz, M.M., and L.D. Eron. 1977. *Growing up to be violent: A longitudinal study of aggression*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Malcolm, H., V. Wilson, J. Davidson, and S. Kirk. 2003. *Absence from school: a study of its causes and effects in seven LEAs*. Edinburgh: Scottish Council for Research in Education.
- Mills, C. 2004. *Problems at home, problems at school*. London: NSPCC.
- Morris, M., and S. Rutt. 2004. *Analysis of pupil attendance data in Excellence in Cities (EiC) areas: an interim report*. Nottingham: DfES Publications.

- Mortimore, P., and G. Whitty. 2000. Can school improvement overcome the effects of disadvantage? In *Combating educational disadvantage* ed. T. Cox, 156–176. London, Falmer.
- Olweus, D. 1979. Stability of aggressive reaction patterns in males: A review. *Psychological Bulletin* 85: 852–75.
- Parker, J., and S.R. Asher. 1987. Peer relations and later personal adjustment: Are low accepted children at risk? *Psychological Bulletin* 102: 357–89.
- Parliamentary Select Committee Public Accounts Eighteenth Report, 19 January 2006.
- Patterson, G. 1982. *Coercive family process*. Eugene, OR: Castalia.
- Reid, K. 1999. *Truancy and school*. London: Routledge.
- Reid, K. 2002. *Truancy: Short and long-term solutions*. London: Routledge.
- Reid, K. 2006. Raising school attendance: A case study of good practice in monitoring and raising standards. *Quality Assurance in Education* 14, no. 3: 199–216.
- Reid, K. 2007. The harsh truth about truancy. *Education Journal* 105: 38–40.
- Robins, L.N. 1966. *Deviant children grown up*. Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins.
- Robins, L.N. 1972. Follow-up studies of behavior disorders in children. In *Psychopathological disorders of childhood*, ed. H.C. Quay and J.S. Werry, 415–50. New York: Wiley.
- Robins, L.N., and K.S. Ratcliff. 1980. The long-term outcome of truancy. In *Out of school: Modern perspectives in truancy and school refusal*, ed. L. Hersov and I. Berg, 65–83. Chichester: Wiley.
- Robins, L.N., and J. Robertson. 1996. Truancy and later psychiatric disorder. In *Unwillingly to school* ed. I. Berg and J. Nursten, 119–28. London: Gaskell.
- Rutter, M., and L.A. Sroufe. 2000. Development psychopathology: Concepts and challenges. *Development and Psychopathology* 12: 265–96.
- Sheppard, A. 2005. Development of school attendance difficulties: An exploratory study. *Pastoral Care in Education* 23, no. 3: 19–25.
- Sheppard, A. 2007. An approach to understanding school attendance difficulties: Pupils' perceptions of parental behaviour in response to their requests to be absent from school. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties* 12, no. 4: 349–63.
- Sheppard, A. 2009. School attendance and attainment: Poor attenders' perception of schoolwork and parental involvement in their education. *British Journal of Special Education* 36, no. 2: 104–11.
- Sheppard, A. 2010. Raising school attendance. *The Psychologist* 23, no. 6: 482–4.
- Smith, C.A., and D.P. Farrington. 2004. Continuities in antisocial behaviour and parenting across three generations. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 45, no. 2: 230–47.
- Smith, D.J. 2006. *School experience and delinquency at ages 13 to 16*. Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime, No. 13. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh.
- Southwell, N. 2006. Truants on truancy – a badness or a valuable indicator of unmet special educational needs? *British Journal of Special Education* 33, no. 2: 917.
- Sylva, K. 2000. Early childhood education to ensure a 'fair start' for all. In *Combating educational disadvantage*, ed. T. Cox. 121–35. London: Falmer.
- Webster-Stratton, C., and M. Herbert. 1994. *Troubled families: Problem children*. Chichester: Wiley.
- Webster-Stratton, C., and M. Hammond. 1997. Treating children with early-onset conduct problems: A comparison of child and parent training interventions. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 65, no. 1: 93–109.
- Zhang, M. 2004. Time to change the truancy laws? Compulsory education: Its origin and modern dilemma. *Pastoral Care* 22: 27–33.

Copyright of Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties is the property of Routledge and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.