The Use of Tangible Rewards in the Management of Pupils in Comprehensive Secondary Schools in Wales

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports research into schemes that use tangible rewards in the management of pupils in comprehensive secondary schools in Wales. We review the relevant literature on the use of tangible rewards in schools, discuss the different kinds of scheme that use tangible rewards and consider the appropriateness of such schemes in secondary school settings. We then outline the research methodology, the nature of the reward schemes we studied and the themes that emerged from the data analysis. The themes were: what is rewarded, equity and consistency, the reward scheme in relation to key stage and progression, the pupil management policy context, pupil engagement and perception, benefit and cost, and scheme development. The implications of these outcomes for the effective management of reward schemes are considered in the final section.

Introduction

With the current emphasis on improving pupil achievement in schools in Wales (NAfW, 2001), motivating pupils to learn is likely to become increasingly important. Moreover, the potential role of pupil achievement in the management of the teacher performance (NAfW, 1999) may make the issue of pupil motivation yet more significant. Despite their wide prevalence and likely future significance, school-wide schemes that use tangible rewards to manage and motivate pupils in mainstream secondary schools have not been extensively researched. Research that has been undertaken has focused largely on practice in special schools and classes where such rewards have been typically used to

manage pupil behaviour. Whilst such research gives valuable insights, the use of tangible rewards in the management of a wider range of pupil behaviours, such as academic achievement, and in mainstream settings may raise additional issues and have other problematic implications. It was to explore the issues associated with the use of tangible rewards in the management of pupils in mainstream secondary schools that the research reported here was carried out.

We first review the literature on the use of tangible rewards in the management and motivation of pupils. We then discuss the different approaches to using tangible rewards and the appropriateness of such methods in secondary school settings. In the subsequent sections, we outline the research we undertook and the findings that emerged. The implications of these outcomes for the effective management of reward schemes are considered in the final section.

There is an extensive literature on the control, discipline and motivation of pupils in schools, of which the use of rewards is a substantial subset. A review of the literature on the use of tangible rewards is somewhat complicated because 'tangibility' is a complex notion and some authors do not make clear the nature of the reward to which they are referring in analysing reward use. Moreover, there is a bias in the literature towards the management of pupil behaviour through the use of tangible rewards which is reflected in this brief review.

The giving of rewards

A reward may be considered as 'the giving of something which is regarded as valuable or prestigious in return for effort and achievement' (Withey, 1979: 22). Novak (1980: 123) suggests that 'rewarding desirable behaviour is the foundation for achieving and maintaining good classroom control', since the act of rewarding emphasizes that appropriate behaviour is valued. To be effective, rewards must be given in response to the desired behaviour, immediately, consistently and in plentiful supply (Merrett, 1993).

The giving of tangible rewards, that is artefacts or objects of value, which reinforce particular behaviours in order to encourage learning has a long history (Lysakowski and Walberg, 1981; O'Leary and Drabman, 1971), and the principle of giving pupils rewards has been the subject of much debate in the literature. The use of rewards or 'reinforcers' is viewed by some as tantamount to bribery but others, for example, Bull and Solity (1993) who articulate a clear distinction, disagree. Wheldall et al. (1987) assert that pupils should not be rewarded for behaviours which they are supposed to display and Marshall (1999) considers that rewarding expected behaviour could be counterproductive. In

the view of Kyriacou (1997), the giving of tangible rewards reduces the pupils' sense of responsibility for their own behaviour and is incompatible with the promotion of discipline through relationships. Other authors cite various specific disadvantages. Tangible rewards:

- may increase the performance of the activity linked to the awarding of rewards but may reduce the level of performance for non-rewarded activities (Lepper and Greene, 1978);
- encourage non-co-operation among pupils unless implemented effectively (Withey, 1979);
- fail to motivate all pupils in every situation (Withey, 1979);
- may create embarrassment and rejection by peers if awarded publicly (Withey, 1979);
- may not be appreciated by disruptive pupils if awarded publicly because the public praise may undermine the status achieved through disruptive behaviour (Marland, 1975, cited in Docking, 1980);
- can negatively affect both relationships and intrinsic motivation (Kohn, 1993);
- are punitive in nature when withdrawn for non-compliance (Kohn, 1993);
- may cause resentment in those not rewarded (Sutherland, 1994, cited in Clark, 1998).

Winter (1982) and others, for example, Thompson (1991), consider that the use of rewards is open to criticism because it concentrates on eliminating undesirable behaviour rather than focusing on antecedent factors such as providing an appropriate curriculum. Many would support the view of Docking (1980) and Winter (1982) that a suitable curriculum and effective teaching methods are important in encouraging appropriate pupil behaviour. Canter and Canter (1992) argue that certain pupils will continue to misbehave even when the best of curricula is implemented, an assertion that has been the subject of much debate in the literature (Robinson and Maines, 1994; Swinson and Melling, 1995). Nonetheless, many have concluded that pupils are better behaved as a result of a rewards approach (DES, 1987; Charlton and Thomas, 1992; OHMCI, 1996).

Pupils' and teachers' views of rewards

Pupils and teachers view the value of rewards differently (Burns, 1978; Caffyn, 1987) although there is evidence that both pupils and teachers prefer social rewards for good behaviour and tangible rewards for academic achievement

(Branwhite, 1988). There is a variation in pupil preferences for different rewards, which is influenced by the rewards offered as options in the research that was undertaken, the country in which the study was carried out and the age of the pupils (see, for example, the research of Sharpe (1985), Sharpe et al. (1987) and Fantuzzo et al. (1991)). Caffyn (1987) found that the degree of success of rewards in achieving their intended aim varied according to the age, gender and ability of the pupils and how they were administered and by whom. Furthermore, there were differences between teachers' and pupils' views on the degree of success of such rewards in achieving their intended aim.

The different ways of using tangible rewards to manage pupils

Broadly, the different approaches to using tangible rewards to manage and motivate pupils fall into two groups: those that reward appropriate behaviour and those where inappropriate behaviour results in the withdrawal of rewards or the possibility of receiving rewards, the so-called response-cost methods.

Methods that reward appropriate behaviour: In these approaches, pupils are rewarded with tokens of some kind when they demonstrate good or improved behaviour (Kazdin and Bootzin, 1972). Most of the schemes reported in the literature were undertaken in non-mainstream settings such as special schools or classes, for example Warren (1986) and Kelly (1987), or with particular groups of pupils whose behaviour was especially challenging, for example, Merrett and Blundell (1982) and Cross (1989). There are a small number of reports of these so-called 'token economy methods' (Kazdin and Bootzin, 1972) in mainstream settings such as those of Presland (1980), Gersch (1984) and Neumark (1998). Most of the token economy methods reported in the literature are temporary measures.

Typically, the tokens can subsequently be exchanged for various types of tangible rewards according to the number of tokens accumulated. The tokens themselves can be of a range of different kinds, such as points (Ayllon and Roberts, 1974, cited in Thompson, 1991; Presland, 1980), the use of a clicker/hand tally by the teacher (Merrett, 1981) and the giving of a symbol of some kind (Kazdin and Bootzin, 1972).

Broadly, there are three approaches to the process of exchanging tokens for rewards. In the first approach, the points are deemed to have an intrinsic value and the kudos of receiving the most points is deemed to be of value (Merrett, 1981). In the second, the tokens/points are exchanged for a different tangible reward (Kazdin and Bootzin, 1972). The third approach is the raffle approach where pupils are given tickets for a raffle for valued prizes (Witt and Elliot,

1982, Roderick et al., 1997). This approach has been criticized on ethical grounds (Griffiths, 1998).

Various forms of tangible rewards are described in the literature, including prizes, trophies and badges (Withey, 1979), free lessons (Merrett and Blundell, 1982), letters home (Cross 1989), toys (Rees, 1983), crayons (Charlton and Thomas, 1992), house points (Tham, 1992) and sweets (Cross, 1989).

The response-cost method: In the response-cost method, when pupils misbehave there is a price to be paid, usually in the form of the withdrawal of rewards or privileges. Successful implementers include Gallagher et al. (1967) and Leonardi et al. (1972) (both cited in Heron, 1978), although Francis (1975: 137) condemns this approach as 'hallowed by tradition, highly respectable and quite useless'. Charlton and Thomas (1992) report a response–cost method where inappropriate behaviour resulted in the withdrawal of tokens that had been distributed to all the pupils in the class before the start of the lesson. Remaining tokens were later exchanged for tangible rewards. Smith and Laslett (1993) highlight the administrative problems involved when response-cost systems are linked to token economy systems.

The appropriateness of giving tangible rewards to manage pupils in secondary schools

The use of rewards in pupil management appears to be less widespread in the secondary sector than in the primary sector. It is not that the use of rewards is deemed to be inappropriate in the secondary schools, the difference is more the result of the predominance of the 'single class teacher' in primary schools, which promotes the consistency of operation essential for reward schemes, the variety of typical teaching styles in secondary schools and the differential effect of peer group pressure (Blundell and Merrett, 1982; Merrett and Wheldall, 1987). Despite the difference in prevalence, the successful use of rewards to modify behaviour in secondary schools has been reported by many authors including Merrett and Blundell (1982), McNamara (1987), Cross (1989) and Tham (1992). However, reports typically focus on individual pupil/group approaches as opposed to whole-school schemes, although interestingly an exception is Richards (1983) who reports the successful introduction of a rewards system within a south Wales comprehensive school. A number of problems, in particular the nature of the reward in relation to pupil age, limit the effectiveness of successful individual/group schemes (Wheldall and Austin, 1980; Blundell and Merrett, 1982; Merrett and Houghton, 1989). Forness (1973; cited in Lysakowski and Walberg, 1981), using psychological theories of

development, suggests a hierarchy of reinforcers that reflects student age, physical development and intellectual level.

The research

Six schemes were studied in secondary schools of range of size and type in south Wales. Data on the nature of the schemes were collected from staff and pupils by means of semi-structured interviews and from documents (see Table 1).

Table 1
Data sources in schools

School	Data Sources
School A	Interview with deputy headteacher; documentary evidence; follow-up telephone interview with deputy headteacher for clarification purposes.
School B	Interview with deputy headteacher; interview with member of staff; documentary evidence; follow-up telephone interview with deputy headteacher for clarification purposes.
School C	Interview with deputy headteacher; documentary evidence.
School D	Interview with deputy headteacher; documentary evidence.
School E	Interview with member of the school leadership team; interview with member of the teaching staff; interviews with 2 pupils; documentary evidence.
School F	Interview with member of the school leadership team; interview with member of the teaching staff; discussion with a group of pupils; documentary evidence.

Interview questions were formulated using the issues that had emerged from the review of the relevant literature. Staff informants were either members of the senior management team or members of staff who had a responsibility for the scheme. They all had detailed knowledge of the schemes and their operation. Documentation collected included school prospectuses, behaviour management policies, school rules, sanction policies, and records of tokens awarded in reports, merit/credit cards and homework diaries and were used to supplement the information obtained through the interview process and to enhance validity. The variety of information sources enabled a full and authentic data set to be collected. The interviews lasted approximately one hour. They were tape-recorded and following each interview the taped data

were transcribed and then coded and categorized. In some instances, follow-up interviews took place by telephone for clarification purposes.

The findings

In this section, we outline the schemes in each of the case-study schools and then describe the significant themes to emerge from the analysis of the data.

The schemes

In all of the schemes, tokens are awarded in various forms, such as credits, merit marks, points, which are then exchanged for tangible rewards. In one case pupils are awarded tickets in a weekly raffle. None of the schools give tangible rewards immediately. The reward systems in the six case-study schools are as follows.

School A uses a system where merit slips obtained by individual pupils for good behaviour are entered in a half-termly raffle with monetary prizes for each year group ranging from £5 to £20 in value. Additionally, pupils who collected a large number of merits were rewarded with vouchers for meals or drinks at a McDonald's restaurant. Pupils are given the rewards publicly in 'achievement assemblies' every half-term. The teacher issuing the merit slip signs the record as well as the parent and the form tutor, thereby enabling 'the pupil to be praised three times for one action'. The teacher concerned ticks the relevant box on the merit slip, which indicates the reasons for issuing it. Form tutors collect merit slips on a regular basis. They make a note of individual totals and then forward the slips to the head of year every half-term. Overall, the scheme costs approximately £2,000 a year in prizes (approximately £2 per pupil). The scheme had been in operation six years.

School B has adopted a credit system where pupils are awarded credits for attendance, academic achievement, endeavour, good behaviour and positive attitude, which are redeemable against various tangible rewards. These rewards included academic equipment, free swimming sessions at the local leisure centre, gift vouchers for various stores and sporting activities. The choice of reward changes on a regular basis. Some are donated by local businesses and others are purchased locally 'at a discount'. Pupils choose rewards that correspond in value to the number of credits they possess from a catalogue produced by the school. The process is co-ordinated from the school office and here pupils are able to place their orders for their chosen reward on a weekly basis. Members of the office staff ensure a constant supply of rewards. Occasionally, there are assemblies where pupils are publicly rewarded for their achievements. The school spends approximately £5,000 a year on

rewards (approximately £7 per pupil). The scheme has been in place for six years.

School C utilizes a system of merit marks for academic achievement, for showing initiative and commitment to others and for showing an improvement in attitude, work or behaviour resulting in the awarding of certificates. Additionally, pupils are rewarded for participation in extra-curricular activities. Other rewards include pens, cinema tickets vouchers and house points. Merit marks are recorded in pupil diaries or planners. The curriculum subject is noted as well as the reason for awarding merit mark stickers. Monthly totals are collected and kept by form tutors and this information is then forwarded to deputy heads of year who display the information in form rooms and on year notice boards. Monthly updates on the merit marks awarded are given in assemblies and both certificates and prizes for merit marks are distributed within 'presentation assemblies'. The cost of the scheme, which has been in operation for three years, was not available. The reward scheme was part of an extensive policy for the systematic praising of achievement.

School D operates a system in key stage 3 only, where pupils are rewarded with merits for good work, effort and behaviour, which can be exchanged for book tokens. Teachers reward pupils through stamping their reward journals with merits marks on a termly basis. If pupils obtain an average of twenty of the total twenty-six possible merits, that is, two per subject area, they are then publicly rewarded with book tokens. The reward scheme is part of a school-wide policy for the praising of achievement in a systematic way. The scheme also has a de-merit dimension where pupils may lose previously acquired merits for poor behaviour. The scheme is partly funded by the parent and teacher association at an annual cost of approximately £400. It is well established and had been in place 'a number of years'. In addition to this scheme, the school also rewarded attendance. For 100 per cent attendance over the year the reward is a free excursion, typically to a theme park, and for 95 per cent attendance the reward is an excursion for half the full price.

School E holds a weekly draw with monetary prizes, on a year-group basis, for pupils who behave well and obtain 100 per cent attendance for that week. The winner of the draw receives £5. When an individual teacher feels that a pupil has broken the code of conduct, he/she records 'a strike' against the name of the pupil concerned on the staffroom class list, along with an initial that indicates the reason for the strike. Form tutors then collect the information and insert strikes against the names of those who have been absent. The deputy pastoral co-ordinator for the key stage collates the totals for each pupil on a weekly basis. The names of pupils who do not receive a strike in a week

are entered into a lottery that is drawn each week in an assembly. The total cost of the scheme is £2000 a year (approximately £3.50 per pupil). The scheme has been in operation 'for several years'. Under a separate scheme pupils are also rewarded for good work and progress. Rewards in this case take the form of school equipment such as pens and pencils.

School F has a points system for good behaviour, excellent attendance, being fully equipped and arriving at school punctually. Points may be lost according to a very clearly structured schedule for lateness, poor behaviour and not bringing the correct equipment to school. Material rewards are given in return and include school equipment, school clothing, meals at McDonald's restaurant, cinema ticket vouchers, vouchers, gift vouchers in various stores and gift vouchers for various sporting activities, vouchers for different forms of transport, perfume and make-up. Any particular requests made by pupils for specific items are considered. Teachers can award a maximum of two points as a reward, which they must record on the reward card in the pupil's homework diary. The reason for the awarding of points must also be noted. The school senior management team may also award points for outstanding achievement/participation in various activities. The pupils save their reward points, which may be exchanged for various material items at the school office. Points may also be deducted for lateness, poor behaviour and for not bringing the correct equipment to school. Office staff are in charge of ordering and distributing prizes, thus pupils are not rewarded in assemblies for their achievements. There are also free excursions for those pupils who achieve over 90 per cent attendance. The scheme had been in operation for three years.

Emergent themes

What is rewarded?

The schemes variously rewarded effort, attitude, participation, attainment and what one school referred to as 'preparation', that is, attendance, punctuality and being fully equipped for lessons. Only one of the reward schemes focused solely on behaviour. Many of the schools were keen to ensure that rewarding pupils was seen to be comprehensive, which in their terms meant that if pupils were unable to obtain a reward for one of the aspects of 'performance', it was possible for them to obtain rewards for others. This diffuse and multiple focus perhaps also reflects the complex and interconnected nature of achievement.

Equity and consistency

Inconsistency among staff in giving tokens was a common concern. It was

recognized that this inconsistency diluted the possible positive effects of the schemes. Steps taken to overcome such inconsistencies included: issuing constant reminders; monitoring by heads of department, the senior management team, year teams and school representatives; featuring the scheme within a 'theme for the week' approach; and parental feedback via questionnaires. In one school, the operation of the scheme was part of the induction programme for newly appointed teachers.

A significant concern was that pupils who misbehaved frequently tended to receive more tokens for slight and/or inconsistent improvement than those who consistently behaved well. The respondents acknowledged the demotivating effect of this practice on well-behaved pupils. One school claimed to have successfully overcome this problem by excluding misbehaving pupils from a raffle for which there were material prizes. However, this solution is open to further criticism since the rewarding of pupils for good behaviour is on a random basis and those who behave well may never receive a reward. In another school, it was reported that some well-behaved pupils found the scheme for rewarding good behaviour rather insulting. One respondent felt that the more able pupils received fewer rewards, which had a demotivating effect on them. In another school, the problem of awarding merit slips to whole classes that behaved well was recognized.

Four of the six schools operated schemes that enabled all pupils to receive a tangible reward of some kind if they were entitled to by accumulating tokens. This way of working contrasts with the remaining two that operated raffle systems through which only a limited number of eligible pupils received a reward. In both of these schools, however, there were supplementary schemes that enabled other pupils to be rewarded.

The recording of tokens awarded was an issue that affected equity and consistency. In some of the schools, the tokens awarded were recorded in the pupils' homework diaries or equivalent. This approach both provided an incentive to keep the record but may materially disadvantage the pupil if the record was lost. Pupils occasionally forgetting their 'Credit Cards' or equivalent also hampered the awarding of credits/merits.

Deciding whether to award merit marks was problematic for teachers, despite the existence of departmental guidelines on the process of allocation. In one school, it was the responsibility of pupils to ask for merit marks. In two of the schemes studied, tokens that had been accumulated could be removed for various forms of misbehaviour, which exacerbated the complexity of the schemes and added an overtly punitive dimension.

The reward scheme in relation to key stage and progression

One of the schemes was restricted to key stage 3 only. In another, the nature of the reward changed significantly in Years 10 and 11, with letters of commendation sent to the pupils' homes perhaps reflecting the pupils' preferred choice of reward. The remaining four schools adopted a whole-school approach to their reward scheme, although respondents reported that pupils in different key stages viewed the schemes differently. None of the case-study schools included sixth formers in the reward scheme. Older pupils generally viewed the reward schemes less favourably, which in some of the schools was reflected in the nature of the scheme. In one school, where older pupils disliked carrying the 'credit cards', teachers recorded any credits allocated to these pupils centrally (on a staffroom notice board) and the credits were then collated by the head of year. In those schools that appeared to operate the same scheme throughout the school, some offered a considerable range of rewards and allowed the pupils to choose. Monitoring in one school indicated that the number of rewards and the frequency with which they were given declined in Years 9, 10 and 11. This finding is somewhat paradoxical, given the need for pupil motivation in those years, but is consistent with the notion that teacher praise decreases as pupils get older (Merrett and Wheldall, 1987). In one of the schools, the same reward scheme was used in two of the three associate (feeder) primary schools. Incoming Year 7 pupils were able to 'spend' any outstanding credit points from their primary school in the secondary school and the scheme was introduced to parents in the school's open evening for parents of prospective pupils. In another school, the scheme was introduced to future Year 7 pupils when they visited the secondary school at the end of Year 6. They were awarded tokens during their visit, which were still valid when they transferred to the secondary school.

The pupil management policy context

All the case-study schools indicated the importance of locating the reward scheme within a secure pupil management policy and well-established behaviour management practice. In all six schools, there was a code of conduct that imposed different sanctions according to the level of misbehaviour as well as a reward system. The importance of wording the rules for pupil behaviour positively was apparent in the documentation provided by the schools.

Pupil engagement and perception

In one school, involving pupils in the process of creating and discussing school

expectations was a significant feature. In two of the schools in particular there was evidence that the staff allocated substantial time to the process of explaining school rules to individual classes at the start of each academic year. The reward scheme was included in these explanations.

Some schools considered it essential to engage pupils in choosing rewards, although none of the schools involved pupils in determining what behaviours and achievements actually deserved the award of tokens/points. Where there was a high level of teacher discretion in awarding tokens/points there were reports of students bargaining and behaving conditionally in relation to the likely reward they would receive by behaving or completing a task appropriately.

One school was particularly sensitive to the potential embarrassment and peer rejection that may result from the public recognition of achievement. In this school, pupils collected their rewards privately. The other schools presented rewards during whole-year or whole-school assemblies. Publicizing the achievement in this way was to encourage an ethos of achievement but the schools acknowledged that it could discourage some pupils from attempting to obtain rewards.

Benefit and cost

All the schools considered that the schemes had impacted on behaviour and achievement but they were not able to substantiate their claims or demonstrate a robust causal link. Although behaviour was reported to have improved in all of the six schools since the introduction of the schemes, poor behaviour was still a problem to varied extents. The poor behaviour may not be because the reward system implemented is ineffective, but because the behaviour management policy and practice is ineffective in reducing or eliminating misbehaviour. Additionally, an unsuitable curriculum could exacerbate behavioural problems. Finally, all the respondents were clear that even the best behaviour management practice, including schemes that give tangible rewards, is unsuccessful with some pupils.

All six schools indicated that the management of the schemes was time-consuming for the staff. Some schools operated schemes that were more complicated than others, which increased the time spent. Features that made schemes more complicated included: specifying a wide range of achievements that could be rewarded; offering an extensive range of rewards, and having detailed prescriptive procedures for awarding tokens. Another factor that exacerbated complexity was the inclusion of a 'de-merit scheme' where tokens were deducted for inappropriate behaviour. One school also noted that the absence of form tutors through illness led to additional work for the head of

year in administering the scheme. In another, teachers forgetting to award tokens again led to extra work for the head of year.

The financial cost of a reward scheme was a cited disadvantage. However, most believed that the financial investment was, in the words of one respondent, 'money well spent' if it diminished the level of problematic behaviour, increased attendance levels or improved pupil examination performance. In some schools, the choice of tangible rewards was justified on the grounds that the rewards enabled pupils to have material objects that they would not otherwise be able to afford.

Scheme development

The reward schemes implemented had generally been devised via working parties or school councils which respondents considered promoted a sense of ownership. The commitment of the senior management of the school at all stages was considered to be important to success. In one school, the scheme was imposed by the headteacher, which may have been a contributory factor to the inconsistency of implementation reported during the data collection. All the schools have either modified the scheme currently in operation over time and are continuing to do so, or are aware of the limitations/problems of the current system and are seeking different and possibly more appropriate ways of rewarding pupils. Four of the schools consulted staff about modifying the scheme and some of these schools also discussed possible changes with pupils. In so doing, the schools considered that staff and pupil ownership of the scheme was encouraged. Feedback was also obtained in one school via questionnaires distributed to parents.

The implications of the findings

This section outlines some of the implications of the research for the development and operation of schemes that give tangible rewards as a means of managing and motivating pupils in secondary schools.

Tangible rewards and pupil management policy and practice

A key outcome of this research is that implementing a reward scheme is a considerable undertaking and any scheme that gives tangible rewards to manage and motivate pupils needs to be located within a framework of appropriate policies and effective practice. Most schemes have pitfalls and affect the nature of the pupil–teacher relationship and the resulting scheme may prove costly in relation to any benefit. Before implementation, the values

underpinning the scheme and the messages the scheme conveys need to be carefully thought through. Reward schemes can have a significant impact on the dynamics of the pupil–teacher relationship and may be difficult to rescind without negative impact. There is a good case for arguing that implementation represents a shift to a more behaviourist, mechanistic and instrumental view of teaching and learning.

The management of schemes that give tangible rewards

This section briefly outlines some of the issues relevant to the management of schemes that use tangible rewards to influence pupil behaviour in secondary schools.

Senior management commitment. A consistent feature that underpinned many of the themes reported above was the importance of the commitment of the headteacher and the senior management team to the reward scheme. This commitment needed to be communicated to all members of the teaching staff to ensure consistency and equity of operation of implementation and to ensure that the potential benefits are realized.

The efficiency of the scheme. Schools contemplating schemes that give tangible rewards need to ensure that the schemes being considered are not too time-consuming or problematic for teachers to administer. A time-consuming procedure may create a system that is prone to inconsistencies and may reduce the level of commitment shown to it by members of staff and pupils.

Staff and pupil engagement. It is likely that the ownership of the scheme by staff and pupils and their commitment to it are likely to be enhanced if they are consulted about the rewards given. For similar reasons, staff and pupils need be consulted regarding the behaviours and achievements that are to be rewarded. Failure to ensure pupil contribution to decisions on the nature of the rewards could lead to unsuitable rewards being offered, which is likely to reduce the effectiveness of the scheme. For the successful operation of a scheme, the choice of reward given needs to reflect the preferences expressed by pupils and should vary to allow for differences based on gender, age and ability. In addition, the decision on whether to give rewards publicly or in private needs careful consideration.

Equitable and consistent operation. There is a good case for arguing that, on the grounds of equity and fairness, all pupils should have equal access to the

rewards. Regular monitoring and evaluation of the scheme is therefore important to ensure consistency in operation. Ensuring that all members of staff are committed to the equitable and consistent administration of the scheme is important.

Implementation. In implementing a new scheme, sufficient time needs to be given to ensuring that staff and pupils understand it. Problems that may arise during the implementation stage need to be foreseen and overcome so that the consistency of the scheme and the workload of members of staff are not affected.

Concluding comments

Reward schemes are so widespread in schools that it is tempting to consider them to be unproblematic. However, they do affect educational relationships, and what is rewarded and the nature of the reward convey significant messages to pupils, parents and teachers. The cost of reward schemes, up to £7,000 per annum in the schemes studied, represents a considerable proportion of a school's non-staff budget. Understandably, all the schools in the study felt that the benefits outweighed the cost and that they could justify the expenditure, but across Wales the total spent on pupil rewards could be substantial, especially when the cost of staff time in managing schemes is added. An important issue for future consideration is how schemes that give tangible rewards to manage and motivate pupils in Wales develop and change as the pressure to improve pupil achievement grows, which it is almost certain to do, and the performance management of teachers is fully implemented.

Notes

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