

Dear

The unregulated and unreported use of deep confinement (also called isolation or punishment) booths in Secondary and some Primary schools is a scandal. Children are placed in isolation booths for days, sometimes weeks on end, often for the mildest rule infraction.

It some schools there are no limits to punishment.

In a recent FOI by the BBC of 600 schools a third had isolation booths. While the majority had rules for children spending a maximum of one, two or three continuous days in isolation; 225 pupils from these 600 schools spent a whole week in isolation booths as a single punishment last year.

The Government's response is to praise these schools. OFSTED give them high ratings and the DFE's own advisors claim that isolation booths are 'a positive experience' for children. The reality is that some schools have gone too far with children sitting for days and days starting at a wall with a worksheet not able to look left or speak for fear of another day in isolation. Some children spend weeks in a no man's land between isolation and exclusion. The problem feeds into off rolling and high rates of fixed term and permanent exclusion. These are the same children whose needs are not being met by schools who see inclusion as a danger to their reputation.

The booths also confine children with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and additional needs. They will be no doubt disproportionately occupied by BAME (Black and Minority Ethnic) children. The evidence shows that more than 5,000 pupils with special educational needs in England spent time in isolation.

The booths are a symptom of a system in crisis, a 'do as you please' attitude from Government and schools reaching for bigger sticks in an insane race to the bottom. In Scotland there is a huge wave of trauma focused, ACE informed relational practice. In England we force children into booths and leave them alone with their problems while telling everyone there isn't any other way to deal with them. There is another way.

Our campaign BanTheBooths (www.BanTheBooths.co.uk) has been running just a short time and already we have had a huge amount of support. There is a regular blog, Parliamentary Petition and a steering group. We are organised, credible and determined. Our steering group is made up of Teachers, Headteachers, Advisors and Parents.

We are campaigning for:

The removal of deep confinement booths in all schools
The regulation and reporting of all children isolated for more than half a day
Funding to support schools in shifting from punishment booths to better practice

For clarity....we do not object to removal of children from class. The focus of the campaign is on deep confinement booths not desk separators.

There is no evidence that these booths or extended isolation has any positive effect on behaviour. There is a great deal of evidence to the contrary. There are some extremely successful schools working in challenging circumstances who have no deep confinement booths and manage behaviour superbly.

We would welcome your support for our campaign.

Warmest regards