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# Engaging the Disengaged in Transition – EDiT

## Education Review

The Engaging the Disengaged in Transition project (EDiT) is designed to work with those who are 'disengaged from learning' and behaviour that may be either disruptive (over acting) or removed (under acting) in the classroom. Partners from UK, Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria have come together to review children's disengagement from learning in schools. Partners conducted studies on what constitutes 'disengagement' at both **county** level (governmental) and a direct school understanding.

This review will introduce the issue and showcase case studies from teachers in each country plus an overview of using dialogue and drama in schools. It will allow the reader to draw general application to classroom management and point them to find out more about how they can work particularly with disengaged learners. The review is designed to look at what is currently happening with disengagement in schools both in terms of the governmental stance and case studies of what teachers on the groups are doing to tackle it.

This review is the first stage of a two-part process with the Engaging the Disengaged project. This review is to give a perspective on what is currently happening in the four partner countries and some introductions to techniques that have a proven success, being dialogue and drama. Following this the 2021 Engaging the Disengaged toolkit will include featured lesson plans and more practical suggestions of delivery in the classrooms with disengaged learners.

Since 2009, the Liverpool World Centre in the UK has been involved in a project entitled "Engaging the Disengaged". The project aim was to work with pupils who are not meeting their full potential in school. This can be a result of poor or disruptive behaviour in class, poor attainment academically or low attendance. Over the years the project has undergone many changes in activities, school numbers and funders but throughout the project there has been one constant, participatory dialogue and the use of theatre.

In 2019 the Liverpool World Centre linked with NGO partners in Bulgaria (EDA), Hungary (Anthropolis) and Poland (TEA) to come together and reflect on **Designment** and share good practice and examples of what each country is doing to tackle this issue. The project also includes schools in UK (Studio School) Poland (Stowarzyszenie Oświatowo Wychowawcze im.S.F.Klonowica w Lublinie) and Hungary (ELTE Radnóti Miklós Gyakorló Általános Iskola és Gyakorló Gimnázium).

Disengagement is categorised as when a pupil in education is not meeting their potential and is overall losing their value in their education and therefore attendance and attainment suffer. Below are examples from 4 Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and the UK about what is disengagement on a country level.

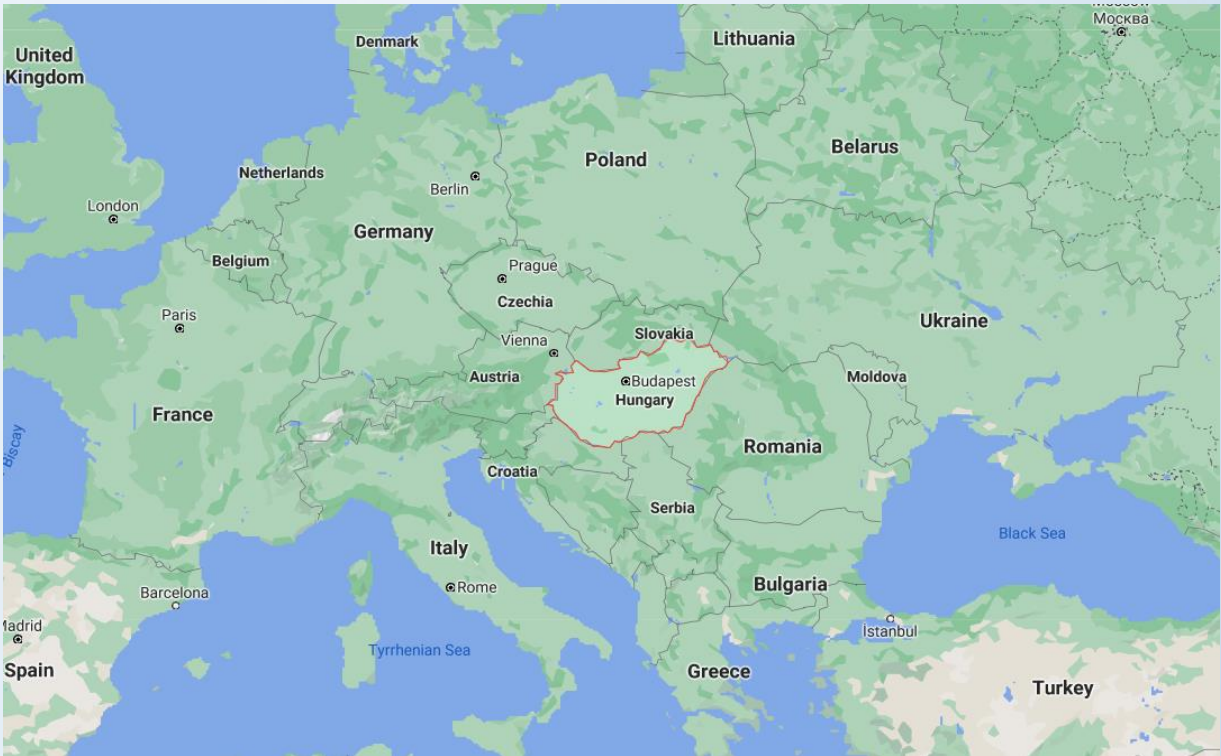
This document has been presented in a format that is dialogue based, they are the personal opinions of school teachers and do not represent all schools opinions in their countries. These are based on the personal reflection's on teachers and do not represent a whole school approach.





Country Overview

<b>What is the population in your country?</b>	9.7 million
<b>What is the population of people under the age of 18 in your country?</b>	1.8 million
<b>How many children there are in education in your country?</b>	730.000 in elementary, 416.000 in secondary (preschool is not included in these data)
<b>At what age does compulsory education finish in your country?</b>	16 years



**Brief description of the education system in your country (i.e. primary to secondary schools, age of transitions etc.).**

All children in Hungary from age 6-16 are obliged to attend compulsory education. Children between three and six can go to the kindergarten. The last year of kindergarten is compulsory.

Compulsory education begins with the obligatory pre-school year in kindergarten, usually at the age of 5. From age 6 to 16, school is mandatory for all Hungarians. Most children attend Free State schools. Private school charge fees but are subsidized by the state.

After finishing elementary school (*általános iskola*) students can decide between three options: high school (*gimnázium*), vocational school (*szakmunkásképző iskola*) or trade school (*Szakközépiskola*). All Hungarians must complete 8 years of elementary school plus two more years in one of the above schools.

To study at a Hungarian university (*egyetem*) or college (*Szakiskola / főiskola*) you need a certification of secondary education.



## Country Overview

**Do cultural variations of the population in your country reflect on disengagement in the school system (how do they reflect according to your opinion, if they do)?**

The early school leaving rate (ESL) remains high, especially in disadvantaged regions and for vocational training. In 2018, ESL remained at 12.5%, having seen an increase in recent years which goes against the decreasing EU average (now at 10.6%). The rate is particularly high among Roma (65.3%).

Participation of 17 and 18 year-olds in secondary education dropped sharply between 2011 and 2016 (from 98% to 85%) after the age of compulsory education was lowered from 18 to 16 in 2012.

The distribution of pupils affected varies greatly by school type and region. In the three most affected counties, more than 15% of pupils are at risk of dropping out. In vocational training this figure is 19%. ESL correlates strongly with local education outcomes, which are lowest in rural settlements. In rural communities the capacity to provide quality education services is more limited and teacher shortages are more pressing. Hungary has the largest urban/rural gap in education outcomes, before accounting for socio-economic status, of all OECD countries

(Education and **raining** monitor, 2019)



**What is the policy in your country about disengagement in the school system (key causes and identifiable factors)?**

The Hungarian Education system strongly influences how families' socioeconomic conditions affect students' performance and educational career, a full picture of the inequalities between Roma and non-Roma youths calls for a glance at families' personal circumstances.

Approximately 70% of Roma families live in impoverished conditions, and Roma are the largest group amongst the poorest of the poor who face destitution and extreme social exclusion. Inequalities in income and wealth hit the Roma the hardest: compared with those in the middle and upper positions of the income distribution, indicators of 20 to 40 times difference in per capita income point to sharp deprivation. Having more children than the average, and being long term unemployed, Roma parents seriously struggle to provide for the basic needs of their family.

Absenteeism that is widely explained by the schools as resulting from disengagement and lack of proper parental care is often nothing more than a manifestation of deep and chronic poverty. However, not having formalized contacts with the local welfare agencies, schools have very limited tools at hand to intervene for ascertaining material support that would be of fundamental help for their poorest Roma students.

(Comparative Perspectives on Early School Leaving in the European Union 2018)

## Country Overview

### ***Policy in your country to prevent disengagement***

Measures to improve access to and the quality of early childhood education and care (ECEC) will help reduce inequalities in educational outcomes. 95.6% of children aged 4-6 participate in ECEC, around the EU average. In 2016 Roma participation was 91%, close to the national average and by far the highest among Member States in the region. As performance gaps appear at early ages, lowering the age of compulsory participation in kindergarten from age 5 to 3 from 2015/2016 has been a positive step that is likely to improve children's later performance at school. To ensure participation, the family allowance was made conditional on kindergarten attendance. In 2017, 13.8% of children under 3 attended ECEC.

(Education and training monitor, 2019)

### National strategy

In 2016, the Hungarian Government set up a 'Medium-term strategy against leaving school without qualifications' to tackle early school leaving and to increase employment, for which the cross-sectoral cooperation (education, training, employment, health care, law enforcement and social policy) is important. The timeframe of the strategy is 5 years between 2016 and 2020. The strategy also defines individual, institutional and system-level tasks:

#### Institutional Objectives:

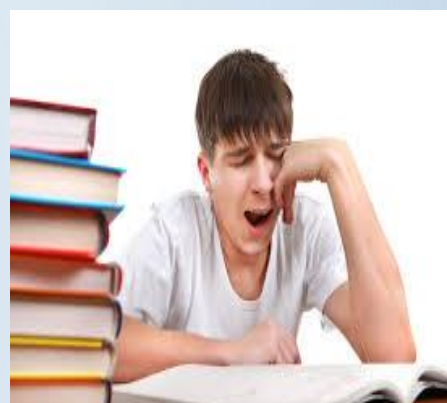
1. person-oriented, differentiated education and support,
2. encouraging learning, preventing backwardness and disappointment,
3. appropriate intervention,
4. creating incentives for institution financing.

#### Institutional Objectives:

1. providing adequate training and professionals,
2. development of institutional public services,
3. collaborative, adaptable learning organization and management.

#### At system level:

1. implementation of cross-sectoral co-operation,
2. providing adequate education and training structure,
3. developing sectoral responsibility,
4. creating an appropriate financing system,
5. creating flexible, effective regulation,
6. creating an information system.





## Country Overview

The [Ministry of Human Capacities](#) is responsible for the implementation of the strategy, including the State Secretariat for School Education. Since the strategy was adopted in 2016, its first audit has not yet been released, but some measures have already been taken according to the information provided by the Ministry in 2018, such as:

- From September 2015, the kindergarten is compulsory for children from year 3. It aims to ensure the educational successfulness.
- The early warning and pedagogical support system was introduced.
- There is a system for controlling and monitoring the work of the teachers by the Education Office.
- Pedagogical Educational Centres were established to coordinate controlling and monitoring at local level.
- The expectation and recognition of competences of inclusive education are included in the qualification procedure of the teachers.

For those teachers who work with disadvantaged students (for example Roma children) **there is going to be an extra pay from January 2019.**

According to the information provided by the Ministry in 2019, the responsible authority for the audit is going to be the [Ministry for Innovation and Technology](#) and the audit is planned to be held in 2020.

### Early warning and pedagogical support system for preventing early school leaving

The amendment of the Government regulation no. 229/2012 (VIII.28.) on the implementation of the Act on National School Education entered into force on 19 November 2016. The regulation introduced the early warning and pedagogical support system for:

The prevention of  
early school leaving

and

the commencement of related  
institutional and state tasks at  
national level

The support system is intended to contribute to the achievement of the 'Medium-term strategy against school leaving without qualifications, and to help achieving the targets of the [Europe 2020 strategy](#), namely that the proportion of early school leavers in Hungary should fall to 10% by 2020. The system draws attention to situations and areas requiring development that, if recognized in time, might prevent the dropout. These are usually linked to:

Declining  
school  
performance

Problematic  
behaviour

Regular  
absence  
from school

Problems in  
the family



## Country Overview

### ***What are the results in preventing disengagement due to the policy in your country?***

As the National Strategy against ESL was set up in 2016, it is hard to tell about the results. In my opinion it is more about fulfilling an EU requirement.

In numbers:

In 2013, the ESL rate was around 11 per cent in Hungary. ESL rates are calculated in the European Union since 1992 and in Hungary since 1997. During the past ten years the trend in the EU has shown continuous improvement, while in Hungary it has been fluctuating: the period between 2004 and 2006 was marked by stagnation, and then from 2006 to 2010 by decrease, and since 2010 by increase, i.e. the situation has become worse in recent years.

(Early School Leaving an the Context of Policy-making in Hungary 2014)

### ***What is necessary to be changed in the policy in your country to prevent disengagement better? (Please give your opinion on the topic)***

Since disengagement and ESL hits the poorest and socially excluded Roma population in Hungary, on the long run an integrative education system (which we have officially, but **in in** practice) would help a lot on this segment of the Hungarian society.

I also believe, that targeted educational programs should be applied in the most deprived regions of the country.

The topic of ESL and disengagement should get a focus in future teacher training and CPD. Teachers should be better equipped with methods to tackle this issue.

Sharing good practices could also help teachers to gain tangible knowledge against ESL and disengagement.

## School perspective

### ***Please give definitions of disengagement to you and your school.***

From our perspective, disengagement is best defined as the opposite of being engaged - thus we consider it as a spectrum, and students occupy different positions depending on the time of year, family background, problem or mood of the day, and various other factors.

Although it is fair to say that our school does not face the most evident patterns of disengagement (school refusal, truancy, withdrawing from education or other forms of complete disconnection from school), we do work with students who are considered to be at risk and may show low commitment, low attention, negative participation or interaction, frequent or consistent lateness, skipping classes - often to avoid challenges or assumed difficulties.

### ***At what average age does disengagement take place in your school?***

From the age of 14.



## School perspective

### ***Is there a balance or imbalance with gender disengagement in your school?***

There is no consistent imbalance with gender.

### ***What initiatives have you or your school taken to change disengaged behaviour of students?***

We use methods and techniques in classes that focus on teamwork and cooperation. We spend 1 or 2 lessons (mainly form teacher's class and ethics) to focus on the importance of involvement and develop social, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. There are various school and class programs for different generations to increase involvement in various forms, thus develop a sense of belonging. Part of it is the peer mentoring program. There is a clear and very strong safety net (form teacher(s) with typically a very good relationship with students, school psychologist, peer mentors) to detect and identify problems, and find possible solutions. There is also strong commitment from the part of the parents to provide support.

### ***What initiatives have you or your school taken to prevent disengagement of students?***

All of the above mentioned programmes are designed so that they can serve prevention purposes as well.

#### Case Study

### ***When and how **you noticed** that someone was becoming disengaged from learning?***

After the third test (mathematics and physics) the student missed, I consulted the teachers involved. It turned out that the student had lost motivation, did not pay attention in class.

### ***What **you did** to help him/her/them?***

After consulting teachers, I talked about the general outcomes of skipping classes and avoiding challenges/difficulties with the class and we applied some elements of drama. We also had several P4C sessions about decisions, challenges, facing problems.

Then I talked to the student and then the parents. We had a meeting (student, parents, teachers) to find the best way to help the student. Then we agreed that the student felt ready to consult the psychologist, which consultation took place a week later. We also agreed that the student would find the peers he trusted to help him with studies and spend time after school together to focus on school responsibilities and maybe other activities.



## School perspective

### ***What was the end outcome of the situation?***

The student relied more on peers in helping him, rather than relying solely on parents and other adults. He hasn't skipped test since then, although he was absent for two single days due to having a day of bad mood, as reported by parents.

### ***What do you believe causes disengagement in your county? Do you agree or disagree with the policy in your country?***

It is mainly expectations. Very often parents and schools have very different expectations, and also, these may be very different from what children/students experience in the world around them. Also, social background may be a cause of disengagement, as the parental pattern does influence children's decisions. If they do not have parents that reinforce the value of education, learning, reading, and do not reinforce the important and supportive role of teachers, students may find it very difficult to find/maintain the motivation they need, especially in cases when financial problems are also hindering factors.

In many cases, teachers themselves may not have the skills, techniques, time or patience to identify problems, and find the best solutions, or find any solution at all. It is typically a long and energy-consuming process to help students at the real risk of disengagement, and many teachers are not educated, prepared or motivated enough to take the initiative or act.

Teachers should definitely have less workload and more assistance to help those at risk or in trouble. Also they should be provided more useful, clear and simple strategies, techniques or methods to be able to support their students, especially in certain parts of the country.

The way students with difficulties in learning are treated in the Hungarian education system is also creating huge differences between students with different interests, strengths and weaknesses, different abilities, and different social backgrounds. Instead of building strong communities and providing space and opportunities for communities and institutions that are motivated to support disengaged students, the system of education is seemingly designed to filter and disengage these young people even further.





Country Overview

<b><i>What is the population in your country?</i></b>	38.4 million
<b><i>What is the population of people under the age of 18 in your country?</i></b>	6.9 million
<b><i>How many children there are in education in your country?</i></b>	3 000 000 children in primary schools, 355 000 in secondary schools, 850 000 young people in high schools In total 4 205 000 young people in education system excluding pre-schools and nurseries.
<b><i>At what age does compulsory education finish in your country?</i></b>	18 years



***Brief description of the education system in your country  
(l.e. primary to secondary schools, age of transitions etc.).***

The ongoing reform of the school system, initiated in December 2016, re-introduces some of the principles underlying the school system before 1999. As of 1 September 2017, the Polish Parliament has re-established an 8-year primary school (previously existing until 2000). As from the school year 2017/2018, pupils finishing grade VI of the pre-reform primary school continue education in grades VII and VIII of the new 8-year primary school. Currently, primary education is divided into two stages: the first stage (grades I to III) offering integrated early school education, and the second stage (grades IV to VIII) providing subject-based education.



## Country Overview

When it is fully implemented, the structure of the Polish school education system will comprise the following types of schools:

8-year primary school (single structure education covering ISCED 1 and 2): compulsory for all pupils	Post-primary (secondary and post-secondary) schools, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 4-year general secondary schools;</li><li>• 5-year technical secondary schools;</li><li>• 3-year stage I sectoral vocational schools;</li><li>• 3-year special schools preparing for employment;</li><li>• 2-year stage II sectoral vocational schools (where students finishing a 3-year stage I sectoral vocational school can continue education);</li></ul>
post-secondary schools with programmes of up to 2.5 years for those who have completed second-dary or sectoral vocational secondary education.	

The school system which is now being put in place provides for two external examinations: the eighth-grader exam and the maturity exam. The functions of these exams do not change as compared to the lower secondary school exam and the maturity exam in the pre-reform system.

(Based on Eurydice report: [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/organisation-education-system-and-its-structure-56\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/organisation-education-system-and-its-structure-56_en) )

***Do cultural variations of the population in your country reflect on disengagement in the school system (how do they reflect according to your opinion, if they do)?***

There are not many data on how cultural variations reflect on disengagement as Poland is still considered as a homogeneous country by both researchers and decision makers. In latest report of Przemyslaw Sadura and based on media coverage the situation of Roma children is fragile. Based on case studies Roma children don't have enough support on early stage education level, which makes their qualification inadequate and target them as students with special needs. Usually the judgement and opinion are based on language tests. For Roma children Polish language should be considered as second language. The difficult situation is also based on low economic status of most of Roma children.

***What is the policy in your country about disengagement in the school system (key causes and identifiable factors)?***

Based on the Euridice report 2018 the national legislation does not define special educational needs. The term is, however, understood broadly as depending on individual needs of a pupil or student. The need to offer support may result from, for example, a disability, specific learning difficulties, social maladjustment, behavioural or emotional disorders, long-lasting illness, traumatic situations or special talents.





## Country Overview

The disengagement is described only by educational researchers and is a systemic challenge in Polish school when it comes to civic engagement and pro-active, collaborative approach to school society. After the latest reform of the system there is no policy on national level, most of the schools use the opportunity to react on disengagement by internal procedures, such as agreed on yearly based preventive and educational program.

According to the Ministry of Education the preventive and educational program is the best tool to make the diagnose, implement and monitor the situation of students in the school and design the program answering o their needs. The head teacher is responsible for conducting the diagnose in the school and formulate the program accordingly, which means that the level of disengagement, causes and factors are formulated independently by each school.

The program is an internal procedure with allocated funds agreed by both teachers and parents representative and consulted with school psychological support. The program is obligatory for each educational institution.

Based on case studies from teachers working with TEA the disengagement is caused basically on various factors of discriminations. Starting from economic and social status, cultural background, finishing with gender identity and sexual orientation.

### ***What is the policy in your country to prevent disengagement?***

There **is** no national policies to prevent disengagement.

The school obligation 7-18 years old and student can't be **canceled** from the students list during this time. The school is obliged under the restrictions from the supervised institution to secure the place for each student.

As described above each school has **her** own internal procedures to work with disengagement.

Apart **of** the educational policies there is a social policy which supports parents to **grow** up children (financial monthly support 120 EUR per child) and children due to their low economic status by supporting board at school and consumables.

### ***What are the results in preventing disengagement due to the policy in your country?***

Lack of policy in preventing disengagement has mostly negative results in Poland. There is no systemic support and research in this area. The diagnose is subjective and depends on the headmasters and teachers who don't want to be assessed by the supervisor institution, so there is a chance that both diagnose and program won't answer on school society real needs and problems.

The projected flexibility in creating and implementing the program has been hampered by controlling, assessing and punishing by supervising institutions. The disengagement is mostly identified on individual level and no systemic approach is dedicated to the problem.



## Country Overview

### ***What is necessary to be changed in the policy in your country to prevent disengagement better? (Please give your opinion on the topic)***

The systemic approach is needed to identify the problem of disengagement and its factors. The systematic research on national level could work out with some recommendations for the new policy.

The previous policy cancelled by the latest education system reform could be an entry point for the discussion and re-opening the debate on more inclusive and equal education system.

Our recommendations:

- ➡ Indicated both national and institutional approach towards disengagement to show legal cause,
- ➡ Broad consultation of the policy with various environment,
- ➡ Take lessons learned and good practice from other education systems in EU,
- ➡ Designed roadmap and tools to implement the policy into practice and evaluate it.

## School perspective

### ***Please give definitions of disengagement to you and your school.***

The definition of disengagement in our school is very broad. Disengaged student shows no interest to what's happening either at school or at home; avoids work at school and is on "stand-by" mode most of the time.

They often skip classes, don't show any commitment in the classroom or outside, don't want to learn; neither knowledge nor skills have any value for them. Some of these students are very shy and want to be "invisible", others are pretty outgoing, extraverted. Disengaged students don't care about self-development either. Such approach of young people results in social exclusion.



### ***At what average age does disengagement take place in your school?***

It starts in primary school around the age of 13/14 and students with such problems come to our school (high school).

### ***Is there a balance or imbalance with gender disengagement in your school?***

There's no imbalance with gender, it depends on the year/ class.



## School perspective

### ***What initiatives have you or your school taken to change disengaged behaviour of students?***

We show students various techniques how to learn, how to reflect on one's life and its objectives. It happens mainly during classes with the form teacher but not only. Students have meetings with the school's psychologist where they can talk about their problems. There's a programme conducted by my colleague Iwona "Explore the world and yourself" which focuses on self-development and geographical knowledge. Students get acquainted with motivational activities, they perform various tasks in groups but the results are not as satisfactory as they used to be in the past.

I organize classes/ workshops that focus on difficult topics/ problems such as discrimination, tolerance, etc. During such classes every student has an opportunity to express their opinions/ thoughts.

We lack systemic/ bottom-up initiatives/ programmes.

### ***What initiatives have you or your school taken to prevent disengagement of students?***

The above-mentioned initiatives/ programmes serve also as a prevention of disengagement. Additionally, teachers organize various classes to encourage students to come to school, where students can develop their interest and build up their self-esteem. We talk both with parents and students during teachers'- parents' meetings throughout the year.

#### Case Study

### ***When and how you noticed that someone was becoming disengaged from learning?***

It can be seen after the first two months of the school year. Students skip classes especially when there are tests/ exams, they are not active during classes, don't do their homework, they want to become "invisible" in the classroom/ school. Therefore they often wear dark/ grey clothes, cover their face with hair. They don't want others to look at them. I noticed such a student in my class in the first month of the school year last year. It was during a class meeting outside school where everyone socialized except for her. I talked with her but she didn't want to say why she was standing outside the group. From then on I observed her carefully.

### ***What you did to help him/her/them?***

I talked with other teachers about my observations to find out if it's not only the case of the subject I teach. I immediately consulted the school's psychologist and the parents. Family situation has always to do





## School perspective

with the student's behavior at school. The student is very weak at almost every subject. Yet the parents want her to be in high school and not vocational school which might be easier and more suitable for her. The girl cannot make her own decisions because she's never had to make them. Her mum made the decisions for her with the girl's approval.

### ***What was the end outcome of the situation?***

Last year after a number of tests and meetings with psychologists & psychiatrist the girl was given lessons at home (home schooling provided by the teachers from school) in the second semester. She got positive results at the end of the school year and came back to school after summer holidays. The first two months of the second year were fine, the student was part of the group, smiled and took active part in classes. The problem appeared again a month before the end of the first semester. Her mum immediately began to organize individual lessons (at home) for her daughter. The student shall start her lessons in the second semester after winter holidays.

Yet we (teachers) realize that it won't solve the problem. It was the parent's decision imposed on school.

### ***What do you believe causes disengagement in your county? Do you agree or disagree with the policy in your country?***

It is the family and educational situation that contributes to disengagement in my country. Parents show little or no interest to what's happening at school with their kids. They make the school and the teachers responsible for the effects of learning. It is the indirect result of the country's policy, where the citizen is only given everything and has no duties nor responsibilities. Parents have only their rights and teachers have only duties. If teachers do something that differs from the parent's point of view, they are threatened by the parents or the authorities. Teacher's profession has become even less popular and prestigious (if we can talk about any prestige at all) after last year's teachers' strike in Poland. Everyone seems to have forgotten that teacher's profession is one of the most important and needed for the society. It's difficult to expect positive teaching results if there's no cooperation between the school and the parents. The young generation has been left on its own, living virtually, with hardly any values. Families, parents don't teach children any values, life principles, but show and promote consumerist lifestyle. If a parent doesn't want his child to attend either religion education or ethics classes (both are optional at school), how can a young person know what's right or wrong?

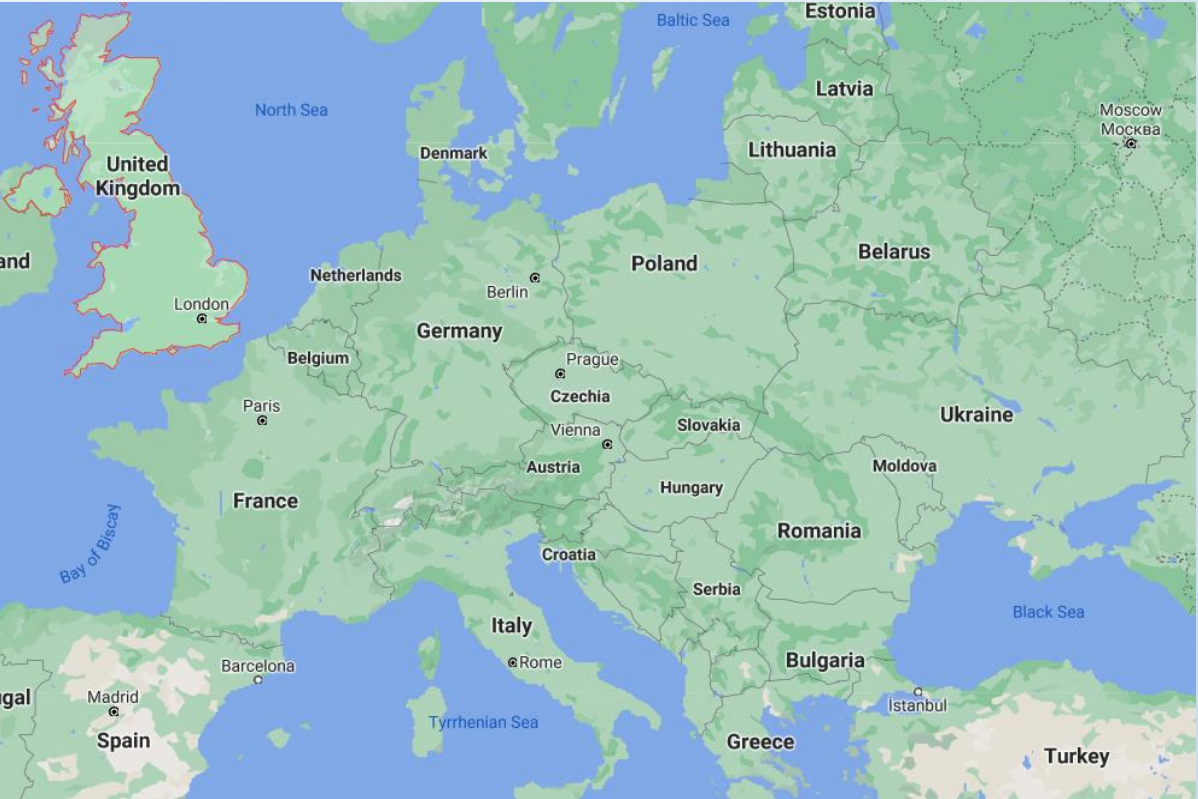
Moreover, a number of parents excuse students' absence at school and anything they do. Consequently, young people feel safe and don't bear any responsibility for their actions.





Country Overview

<b>What is the population in your country?</b>	66.4 million
<b>What is the population of people under the age of 18 in your country?</b>	13.3 million
<b>How many children there are in education in your country?</b>	10,320,811 full and part time pupils at school in the UK.
<b>At what age does compulsory education finish in your country?</b>	18 years



**Brief description of the education system in your country (I.e. primary to secondary schools, age of transitions etc.).**

**Non Compulsory Education from Birth to Four Years Olds in the UK**

Since 2010 all 3 and 4 year olds in England are entitled to 15 hours a week of universal funding for education and childcare. This was extended in 2017 to include an additional 15 hours (bringing the total to 30 hours per week) of funded education for those meeting the eligibility criteria associated with income and specified individual needs of the child. In 2018 this resulted in 94% of 3 and 4 year olds in England receiving free 15 hours of education or childcare a week and 82% acquired 30 hours of funded education and childcare a week. In

*Note: The United Kingdom has devolved government with certain powers such as education being determined by regional Assemblies in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Department Of Education f(or England). There are therefore difference across the four countries which constitute the UK. In order to avoid over complexity, the information provided below is for England which contains the largest population and the majority of schools within the UK. Please refer to the regional education websites for further information on education provision in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.*



## Country Overview

In addition 72% of 2 year olds in England received 15 hours of funded education or childcare in 2018.

The department for Education has established the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework that sets out the standards for learning, development and care that all children from birth to five year should receive and that all schools and Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) registered early years providers must follow. This includes childminders, preschools, nurseries and school reception classes. For further information on the Early Years Foundation Stage please refer to <https://foundationyears.org.uk/eyfs-statutory-framework/>

### **Compulsory Education 5-16 Years Old**

Compulsory education in England is divided into age phrases termed key Stages

- Key Stage One-5-7 year olds delivered in *Infant and Primary Schools*,
- Key Stage Two – 7-11 year olds delivered in *Primary Schools*,
- Key Stage Three – 11-14 year olds delivered in *Secondary Schools*,
- Key Stage Four – 14-16 year olds delivered in *Secondary schools*,
- Post Compulsory Sector- 16-18 year olds delivered in *secondary schools, further Education Colleges and through Apprenticeships and training programmes.*

Types of Schools and settings providing compulsory education in England:

#### **Maintained Primary and Secondary Schools:**

Schools funded by the State and controlled by the local authority. They are required to teach the National Curriculum.

#### **Academies:**

Schools funded directly by the State but are independent from the local Authority. They can select their own curriculum and do not need to teach the national Curriculum but should teach a broad and balanced Curriculum.

#### **Free Schools:**

Schools that are new and have been established by local organizations. They are publically funded directly by the State and do not have to teach the National Curriculum but are expected to teach a broad and balanced curriculum.

#### **Faith Schools:**

These are schools that are controlled or maintained (supported) by a religious faith e.g. Church of England, Roman Catholic, Baptists etc. They receive public funding and more usually teach the National Curriculum but will follow a Religious Education syllabus established by the faith.





## Country Overview

### **Special Schools:**

These are schools that usually cover the primary and secondary age and support children with specific learning needs, physical needs or behavioral needs. Generally, but not exclusively funded by the State. They refer to the National Curriculum but also adapt and amend to meet the needs of the children and young people who attend. There are 1,256 Special Schools in the UK.

### **Pupil Referral Units:**

These are settings that can provide greater support than mainstream schools can provide but unlike Special Schools they are intended as long-term solutions. They cater for children who have been excluded permanently from their school, may have emotional and behavioral needs etc. There are 351 in the UK

### **Grammar Schools:**

These are maintained secondary schools funded by the state but which select pupils for entry to the school through an academic examination at the age of 11 years old.

### **Independent Schools:**

These are private fee-paying schools. They set their own curriculum and are independent from the state education sector.

### **Sixth Form:**

These are departments attached to secondary schools that offer 16-18 compulsory education in the form of Advance Level and BTechs qualification.

### **Further Education Colleges:**

These are state funded colleges that offer a wide variety of Advanced Level qualifications in academic disciplines and BTechs in vocational training.

For further information on the National Curriculum used by all maintained primary and secondary schools in England please access <https://www.gov.uk/government/col-lections/national-curriculum>





## Country Overview

***Do cultural variations of the population in your country reflect on disengagement in the school system (how do they reflect according to your opinion, if they do)? Definition of Disengagement In the UK***

Disengagement in the UK is regarded as multi-dimensional and lies on a spectrum. However there is a consensus around the notion NFER:2012, that disengagement is concerned with the attitudes and practices that prevent children and young people from learning and other benefits from schools (NFER:2012 and The Careers & Enterprise Company:2016). However there is a significant amount of research evidence that clearly identifies those communities within England that are at most risk of being disengaged. A number of indexes are used by researcher as indicators for disengagement. These generally include reference to unauthorized absences from school, not meeting the expected educational outcomes for their age, not being in education, employment or training (NEET) and indexes related to Multiple Deprivation. The key groups most at risk of disengagement with education within England are identified below.

Geographical location - The North-South divide in England

There are clear geographical differences evidenced in UK reports e.g. The Careers & Enterprise Company Report. (2016). *Mapping Disengagement: Exploring Young People's Engagement With School* that are well-documented which demonstrate a clear divide between the north and south of England in terms of the restructuring of the economy, levels of economic investment, growth in new industries with secure and high paid jobs, investment in infrastructure and levels of central government funding (e.g. transport, the arts) which have created an economic gulf whereby the majority of the most deprived areas within England are situated in the north of the country. Alongside this the country has experienced nine years of 'Austerity' with the UK government cutting budgets for welfare, education, health and local government services which have most severely affected these same communities. It is these poorest communities found in the north of England which correlate exactly with the areas of the highest levels of disengagement from school illustrating a clear link between disengagement and the socio-economic context that children live within.

Poverty impacts on children's disengagement in several ways. Children growing up in poverty are more likely to have language developmental delays, inhibiting academic progress throughout school. Black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys are less likely than their peers to enter school with a 'Good Level of Development' (the government's measure of adequate achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage impacting on future attainment.



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The level of anxiety and stress that deprivation causes are inextricably connected to poor health and high levels of emotional wellbeing and mental health issues. Research by Demie and Lewis (2014) identified that young people's outcomes can be negatively affected by exposure to stress at home and that this is particularly likely where there is a shortage of financial resources and in single parent households, where money and time can often be placed under greater pressure. International reports highlight significant challenges for the UK regarding our children's wellbeing (See PISA:2015 and UNICEF:2018) and the impact that this has had on educational engagement.

Furthermore poverty significantly impacts upon poor diet and the ability to provide opportunities for additional activities and enrichment experiences. This has been further exasperated by cuts to school budgets impacting upon how well schools can provide the opportunities that families and the community are financially or socially unable to do. There is evidence within English education literature and acceptance by subsequent UK governments of an 'education gap' with children from higher socio-economic communities achieving higher grades in education examinations and attending universities than their compatriots from lower socio-economic communities. In addition, it is also documented that there is a corresponding 'participation gap' by which those children and young people from higher socio-economic communities have greater access and higher participation rates to a greater level of experiences within sports, culture, the arts and access to natural environments than those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Reports such as the 2015 Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value and the Department for Culture, Media and Sports Cultural White Paper (2016) confirm the value that such experiences have upon educational attainment, motivation, personal and social development, life-long learning and for career and employment opportunities.

Gender Gaps with Boys significantly more likely than girls to experience disengagement

In this category boys can find themselves frequently in the NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and therefore missing out on their compulsory education. Evidence identifies that it is white working class.

Disengaged with School but not Education – Black Caribbean Boys

In this category boys are disengaged from school and lessons but still hold aspirations to be involved in education. Evidence suggests that statistically it is boys from the Black Caribbean community who are more likely to be within this group. They frequently feel negative towards school, face challenges in terms of school discipline and are likely to play truant. Their behaviour in school can present as challenging





## Country Overview

as they may challenge the behaviour conventions within school culture leading to temporary and permanent exclusion from school and their removal to Pupil Referral Units. However they do display aspirations for education and see education as a good tool to help them advance. Research suggests that is the structure and culture of the school that can present challenges for boys from this community.

Disengaged with no interest in School or Education – (White Working Class boys frequently but not exclusively from northern England)

In this category boys can find themselves frequently in the NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and therefore missing out on their compulsory education. Evidence identifies that it is white working class boys (often northern) who are at most risk of being in this group. While pupils eligible for free school meals have lower attainment on average than their non-eligible peers, the impact of deprivation on white pupils (and boys in particular) is more pronounced than in other ethnic groups according to research.

(Cabinet Office, 2017; Shaw, Baars, Menzies, Parameshwaran, & Allen, 2017; Strand, 2014) cited in Millard. W et al (2016).

Additional risk factors include those from homes with one or more parents unemployed, in low status and low-income employment and in step or single parent families. They tend to have a 'wait and see attitude to the future' rather than a plan or aspiration for what and where they might like to be. They experience difficulty in regulating their behavior and in managing (and boys in particular) is more pronounced than in other ethnic groups according to research their anger. Risk factors are further heightened if they do not form positive relations with teachers. They experience difficulty with the culture around school rules and structure of lessons.

Fixed Term and Permanent Exclusions (Boys from Roma, Gypsy and Irish Traveler Communities)

Fixed Term and Permanent Exclusions are used by schools in England to sanction students who violate the rule so the school either repeatedly or at a very serious level. Fixed term is for a short-designated time period. Permanent Exclusion involves the student being removed generally to a Pupil Referral Unit. Evidence identifies that boys with Special Educational Needs are six times more likely than those without SEN to be excluded, Boys from the Traveler communities are four times more likely and those from the Black Caribbean are three times more likely the general population of boys. Exclusions most frequently appear to occur in Year 9 (14 years of age).



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England appears to have a high rate of exclusions compared to the other home nations in the UK and according to the Office of Children's Commission the use of Exclusion as a discipline tool is not common in other European countries (OCC:2012). Research is suggesting that the disproportionate rates of exclusion amongst some groups (see above), "reflect a long standing pattern of social inequality and has been an enduring concern for schools, government, Charitable organisations and researchers but there is limited evidence of improvement in outcomes".

Looked After Children (Children removed from their families and in the Care of the Local Authority or who have been adopted)

Attainment data for looked-after and previously looked-after children shows that they do not perform as well at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 when compared to non-looked-after children. Causes for this can be disengagement brought on from causes linked to the trauma of being removed from family and siblings, sometimes frequent moves to different foster families and children's homes, emotional and psychological challenges due to disruptions within early child development and health issues that can impact on memory and processing speeds etc. Despite, funding, government policies and educational priorities, progress in closing the enormous gap between those children designated Looked After and those that are not has persistently remained and it is this group of children who are most likely to leave compulsory education with no and few qualifications. According to the Department of Education in 2018 39% of LAC were not in education, employment or training and this compared with 12% of those who were not LAC. It is these children that are the most vulnerable to becoming homeless, going to prison or involved in harmful activities such as drug taking upon leaving the education system.(DCSF:2009)

***What is the policy in your country about disengagement in the school system (key causes and identifiable factors)? Factors Impacting upon disengagement in the UK***



It is recognised in the UK that disengagement is a multi-dimensional problem and is caused by a range of factors, some universal and others specific to an individual cultural group as identified above. Factors can be classified in terms of inside and outside school influence.

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### Inside School

Research consistently identifies issues connected to school culture and practice that negatively impacts on boys from certain communities identified above. These include:

- Attending a quality pre-school setting is associated with 'a positive and long-term impact on children's attainment, progress and social-behavioural development', improved GCSE outcomes, and longer term economic benefits (Taggart, Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, & Siraj, 2015; Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj, Taggart, Smees, Toth, Welcomme & Hollingworth, 2014). This finding was corroborated by OECD analysis indicating that students who received two years' early childhood education perform better on average in assessments aged 15 (OECD, 2017). Furthermore, later and/or remedial interventions with older children can be more expensive, so early intervention offers cost efficiency (Taggart et al., 2015),
- Lesson content that is not seen as relevant or related to the real world,
- Pedagogy that is not active, kinaesthetic, experiential or supportive of social learning,
- School culture and notions of discipline and rules can present challenges,
- The level of exclusions both fixed term and permanent which disproportionately impact upon boys from black Caribbean and white working class boys and prevent them from accessing school,
- Clarity of instructions and direction on improvement,
- Lack of role models,
- Teachers' expectations and bias -Teachers' unconscious biases can shape their interactions with, and expectations of, pupils. For example, pupils' class, race and gender can influence teachers' expectations. Teachers may have higher expectations of white and Asian students' academic potential. Furthermore, non-black teachers can have lower expectations of black students (Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2016; Gillborn, Rollock, Vincent and Ball, 2012), and are more likely to negatively judge (such as discipline or label) pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds (Hattie, 2009),
- Unintentional racism through a lack of understanding and awareness of the cultural values and practices of different communities. This is particularly problematic for those boys whose community maybe be a significant minority within the school.





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### Outside School

- Negative peer pressure and a lack of positive role models - All young people can experience peer pressure, and it can be particularly acute for black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys (Scott & Spencer, 2013). Media stereotyping, the influence of social media, and an absence of positive role models in school and media (made worse by the lack of diversity in the teaching workforce) can exacerbate this (Demie & Mclean, 2017),
- The portrayal of youth culture– and of black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys in particular – can be disproportionately negative, often focusing on crime and anti-social behaviour (Tucker, 2010; Demie & Mclean, 2017). This can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy linking how young people are portrayed to how it affects how they see themselves and, in turn, their behavior. Negative Media perceptions of some communities as being 'criminal, violent and involved in drugs and gangs. Young people are very aware of these stereo types and reiterate their concern over them when given voice,
- Level of family education and attitudes of the family and community to schools and education. Many families have had negative experiences and these perceptions are passed on through generations.

Research by Francis(2000), Frosh et al (2002) identify that boys can adopt a 'macho masculinity from their community and from the media which can make them feel that schoolwork is feminine and inappropriate for men and which can inform their responses to authority.

### ***What is the policy in your country to prevent disengagement? Early Years Education***

Since 2017 30 hours per week of funded education has been made available for those meeting the eligibility criteria associated with income and specified individual needs of the child. In addition, the curriculum of the early Years Foundation Framework places a focus on developing young children's language skills and social skills to help them become 'school ready' with the intention of enabling those children from disadvantaged homes better able to match their peers. However, this is not universal free education and only 82% of all three year olds acquired funding for 20 hours and only 72% of Two Year olds received 15 hours. Access to full-time Early Years Education from Two years of age is still dependent upon parental ability to pay. There are also issues being reported in terms of the level of government money being given for funding Early Years Places with Early years Settings stating that the funding is insufficient to meet the actual costs, Researcher and professionals are also calling for the requirement of a fully qualified Early years Education teacher to be employed in all

## Country Overview

settings to ensure the quality of the learning and meeting the individual needs of the child and suggest that this would be even more effective for children's progress than just the quantity of time spent in the setting.

### Pupil premium

This is extra funding provided by the government to schools to support vulnerable pupils and those from low incomes as it is understood that deprivation is a significant factor in under achievement.

#### Funding

- Children in Reception to Year 6 who are, or have ever been, entitled to free school meals based on their family income: £1320 per pupil, per school year
- Children in care: £2300 per pupil, per school year
- Children previously in care who have been adopted, or who have a special guardianship order, a child arrangements order or a residence order: £2300 per pupil, per school year
- Children recorded as being from service families: £300 per pupil, per school year
- Schools can select how they wish to use the money but typical ways that the money can be spent are;

**Schools can choose how to spend their pupil premium money,** as they are best placed to identify what would be of most benefit to the children who are eligible.

Common ways in which schools spend their pupil premium fund include:

- Extra one-to-one or small-group support for children within the classroom.
- Employing extra teaching assistants to work with classes.
- Running catch-up sessions before or after school, for example for children who need extra help with maths or literacy.
- Running a school breakfast club to improve attendance.
- Providing extra tuition for able children.
- Providing music lessons for children whose families would be unable to pay for them.
- Funding educational trips and visits.
- Paying for additional help such as speech and language therapy or family therapy.
- Funding English classes for children who speak another language at home.
- Investing in resources that boost children's learning, such as laptops or tablets.



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However, schools can choose to use the money in other ways so that that all children benefit e.g. funding a Teaching Assistant for the class.

In terms of its success, it has clearly been effective in providing support for some children. However the past nine years have seen continuous cuts to school budgets (over the whole period that pupil premium has been in place for, which has had the impact of reducing the overall benefit and subsequent impact that this additional money brings to the school and the individual child. Schools are currently in severe financial difficulty.

### **New Curriculum Focus on ensuring a Broad and Balanced Curriculum**

Since September 2019 the new Inspection Framework for Schools has a focus on investigating how broad and balanced the curriculum is inside primary schools and at key stage Three is. This is as a result of concerns that have been expressed since the introduction of the latest version of the National Curriculum in England was introduced in 2013 and which appeared to coincide with a reduction in time being spent on subjects other than English and Mathematics and inspections that focused upon school attainment in the national tests which only cover English and Mathematics. This led to some schools focusing upon these subjects at the expense of the foundation subjects (the arts, humanities and sciences). Growing concern and increasing evidence that demonstrated that a broad curriculum which included all subjects was the most effective in maintaining student motivation, engagement and increased attainment. The anticipated impact of this focus is to provide support and encouragement to all schools in

the delivery of a balanced curriculum that addresses student interest and need for a curriculum that engages and appears relevant to modern life. However not all schools (e.g. Academies) are required to teach National Curriculum and therefore it remains to be seen if this policy redirection alters the nature of the curriculum on offer in schools and therefore addresses some of issues identified as factors in disengagement inside schools.

### **Mental and Emotional Health Awareness**

2020 will reveal the UK governments policy in relation to Mental Health inside schools and is reported to include e a Mental health Advisor inside each school and the reinstatement of a Personal and Social Health Education curriculum. This is a recognition of the significant impact of well-being and mental health issues upon children inside school.







## Country Overview

### Exclusions

It is understood that England has a high level of Exclusions being used as a discipline tool inside schools. Exclusions have been identified as a factor that can promote disengagement and lead children to 'dropping out of education, employment and training. A 'zero policy' towards Exclusions for young children have been emerging with many primary schools now operating an open Zero Exclusion policy which they advertise on their website alongside others who are quietly adopting this policy within the culture and practice of the school. However, it does remain a feature in secondary schools. Two policy changes have come into place. The first is the replacement of an Independent Appeals Panel with an Independent review panel. This replacement provides no power to reinstate excluded pupils even if they find that the exclusion has been unfairly given. It is therefore difficult to see how this policy will impact upon reducing the number of Exclusions that are unwarranted.



### Troubled Families Programme

This is a short-term intensive family intervention programme established in 2015 with the intention of working with 400,000 'troubled families' over five years. The aims are;

1. worklessness,
2. poor school attendance,
3. mental and physical health problems,
4. crime and anti-social behaviour,
5. domestic violence and abuse,
6. children who are classified as in need of help and protection.

The programme is delivered by Key workers building relationships with the whole family and utilizing multi agencies as needed. The Evacuation Report suggests that it has impacted upon some families but not all or as many as it had been hoped. illustrating the complexity of needs within families that are struggling. However it has evidenced an impact on significantly reducing the proportion of Children being taken into care and therefore becoming Looked After and it appears to have supported early intervention through identifying and supporting those children in need of care and protection and enabling support to be put into place to stop this from escalating into children being taken into care. In addition there is some evidence of impact on anti-social behaviors. However, the impact in relation to work and to attendance is not clear.





## Country Overview

Changes identified from the research that would support disengaged children are listed below.

- ➡ Enhancing pupils' emotional wellbeing and mental health through the use of PHSE activities and Outdoor learning.
- ➡ Working with parents, families and local communities, involving them in their children's education.
- ➡ Securing access to high quality early years provision (free) with a fully qualified Early years Teacher in each Setting.
- ➡ Raising teachers' expectations and addressing their biases. Supporting their understanding of different cultural values within their communities.
- ➡ Recruiting and retaining a more diverse teaching workforce. Supporting teachers' wellbeing and reducing workload so that more time can be spent on meeting the needs of individual pupils and planning an engaging curriculum.
- ➡ Enhancing access to work experience opportunities, careers guidance, and support into employment for KS 4 and 16-19 Year Olds.
- ➡ Encouraging the use of Mentors and role models within school.
- ➡ Developing a curriculum that reflects the twenty-first century and is investigative, active and provides a meaningful outcome for students. Research evidence from the USA and Australia related to Place Based Education and Discovery Learning offer opportunities to embed the key approaches that have been recognised as factors that could engage those groups that are currently disengaged from education.

## School perspective

***Please give definitions of disengagement to you and your school.***

Studio Schools teach specialist vocational qualifications, alongside traditional curriculum subjects, providing the opportunity to specialise in certain subject areas – in our case, creative, digital and entrepreneurship pathways. The Studio, Liverpool educates young people for success in a digital world – in particular for employment, entrepreneurship, a new business venture or further study in the digital media sector.

Digital enterprise appears to appeal to the autistic brain. Autism is a lifelong neurodevelopmental disorder resulting in difficulties in social, emotional reciprocity and rigidity in terms of thoughts, behaviour and interactions. 12% of The Studio have communication and interaction difficulties and this can lead to struggles with engagement in school.





## School perspective

Young Minds –the UK's leading charity fighting for children and **young** people's mental health – claim that 3 students in every classroom struggle with mental health issues. This has a huge negative impact on engagement in education. The reasons for such high numbers are wide and complex but, in our school and those in Liverpool, social media and gaming addiction has a role to play. Gaming addiction can result in extreme tiredness. A significant number of our gaming addicts are the sons of single mothers who struggle to enforce discipline when the boys reach adolescence. The students struggle with a poor quality of sleep as excessive exposure to the light that their devices emit; added to the mental activity of playing the games themselves, promote wakefulness. Parental challenge can lead to conflict at home. If a parent has other stresses to deal with in their lives, it might be easier for them to 'give in' to their children's game playing. In the same way, social media can also be a significant distraction for young people. It can be a huge time waster – that serves only to undermine the self -esteem of those who access it as well as offering unreal expectations of those who think a future being a Youtuber is achievable. Obsessive social media consumption results in anxiety as students prioritise their on- line personas more than education. They fall behind, their anxiety increases and this can result in poor attendance.

Disengagement to us means that the student isn't participating in the lesson – there is little interaction between the teacher and the student and little interaction between the student and their peers in group work. Students who disengage are reluctant to share ideas or opinions. They can struggle to see the point of education and often have little ambition as they fear the future and prefer not to have to think about it. Gaming addiction can result in extreme tiredness. Disengagement can be when the student is too tired to listen, contribute and complete tasks. Homework never takes precedence over gaming and students can start to fall behind. When challenged, some students can respond badly which leads to conflict at school.

In its extreme form, disengagement can lead to refusal to attend school and then the cycle of anxiety is hard to break.

***At what average age does disengagement take place in your school?***

14-18

***Is there a balance or imbalance with gender disengagement in your school?***

Not really although, generally speaking, girls seem to be affected by social media and the 'persona' they show to the world and boys by gaming addiction.



## School perspective

### ***What initiatives have you or your school taken to change disengaged behaviour of students?***

OSSME – Autism Initiatives – outreach service comes to do 1:1 sessions with our ASC students every fortnight

Disengaged students have 1:1 coaching sessions

YPAS Wellbeing clinics

Reduced time tables, collapsed curriculum and after school catch up sessions to help support the return to school of persistent absentees

8 week PHSE type projects – covering topics such as 'Use of Social Media', 'Becoming a Creator rather than a Consumer' and 'Diversity' - this work consists of outside speakers, assemblies, booklets to complete

### ***What initiatives have you or your school taken to prevent disengagement of students?***

- First quality teaching that is varied, personalised and engaging,
- Personalised passports for students with ASC which have specific strategies to support individuals,
- Parent support workshops,
- Learning Agreements discussed upon entry to the school,
- A full Inclusion Team to support parents, students and staff.

#### Case Study

### ***When and how you noticed that someone was becoming disengaged from learning?***

L started The Studio in Year 9 after having been out of education for a year. Staff were quick to notice that he struggled with all forms of social interaction and with following even the simplest of instructions. He would not work with his peers when group work was called for and was reluctant to pick up a pen. Within a few weeks of starting school, L was involved in a fight with another student and was excluded for a day.

### ***What you did to help him/her/them?***

We invited L's parents in and discovered that he was ASC – his inability to maintain friendships and to interact with his peers stemmed from this. In his



## School perspective

### ***What you did to help him/her/them?***

We invited L's parents in and discovered that he was ASC – his inability to maintain friendships and to interact with his peers stemmed from this. In his previous school, he had been bullied for 'being different'. After sharing the P4C ice-breaker ideas with two of the Year 9 coaches, we decided to try out one of the activities to see if L would join in and work with the group. The coach selected the activity called '21'. All members of the coaching group were encouraged to participate. There were 17 students who participated. The coach acted as the facilitator.

### ***What was the end outcome of the situation?***

All the students LOVED the activity. After watching and listening for a couple of rounds, we were delighted to witness L joining in. He got caught up in the excitement and he managed to regulate his frustration when they didn't succeed well. He was part of the group for the first time.

The coach is keen to implement more P4C into their coaching sessions and the students have asked if they can 'play' 21 again – including L. L is less likely to refuse to work in groups in lessons now although he still does occasionally say no. He has not refused to participate in group work in his coaching group though.

### ***What do you believe causes disengagement in your **county?** Do you agree or disagree with the policy in your country?***

Underfunding in schools means schools have fewer resources or services that they can offer to students with SEND.

Underfunding of children's services means little can be done for SEMH unless CAMHS involvement is required – the waiting list is very long

Austerity has created tremendous stress in the lives of parents – particularly for those living on one income

The Government are being very slow to hold social media platforms to account for content that causes anxiety to young people

Our country has no policy regarding disengagement apart from holding schools responsible and the Government accepts no responsibility for it themselves.

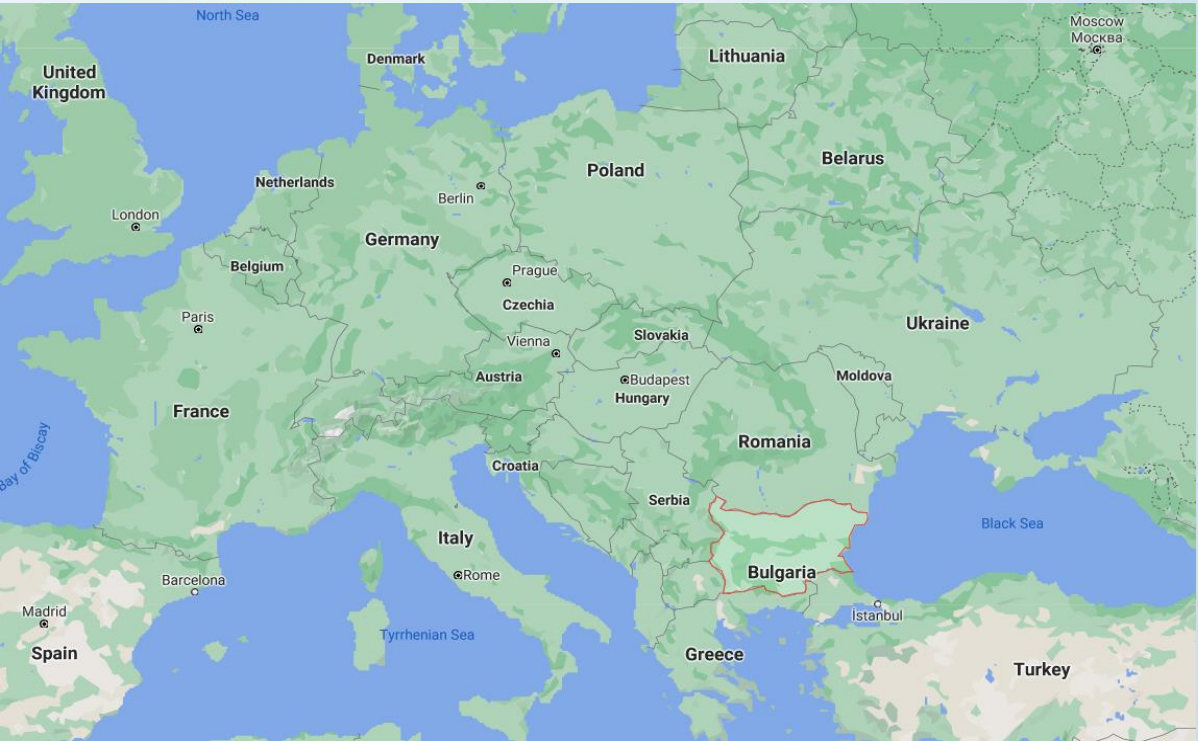






Country Overview

<b><i>What is the population in your country?</i></b>	7 million
<b><i>What is the population of people under the age of 18 in your country?</i></b>	1.3 million
<b><i>How many children there are in education in your country?</i></b>	580.000 children in education in Bulgaria
<b><i>At what age does compulsory education finish in your country?</i></b>	Compulsory education in Bulgaria finishes at the age of 16 (sixteen).



***Please give a brief description of the education system in your country (I.e. primary to secondary schools, age of transitions etc.).***

Compulsory education in Bulgaria begins with preparation pre-school groups for children at the age of 5. The education in Bulgaria is compulsory until the age of 16. Primary and secondary education is for free.

Primary education in Bulgaria is from first to seventh grade and covers children from 7 to 13, 14 years old. It is divided into two parts:

The first part of primary education is from first to fourth grade and covers children from 7 to 10, 11 years old;

The second part of primary education is from fifth to seventh grade and covers children from 10, 11 to 13, 14 years old.

Secondary education in Bulgaria can be two types:

Secondary education is from eighth to twelfth grade and covers children from 14, 15 to 18 years old;

Secondary specialized education is from ninth to thirteenth grade and covers children from 15 to 20 years old.

Higher education (university) is possible only if secondary education is finished.



## Country Overview

***Do cultural variations of the population in your country reflect on disengagement in the school system (how do they reflect according to your opinion, if they do)?***

Cultural variations of the population in Bulgaria do strongly affect on disengagement in school system. The early school leaving rate (ESL) in Bulgaria is fifth highest in the EU for 2018 and is 12,7% and it remains the same as 2017. Bulgarian government set a goal to drop this share to 11% in 2020. For that reason a governmental program (mechanism) is developed. This mechanism is performed by schools, police forces and municipalities. In 2019 the mechanism gave a good result, as about 40000 disengaged students were returned back to school system.

The ESL is higher in the countryside (rural regions) and among gypsies where poverty is greater and school quality is worse. About 75% of disengaged children belong to the gypsy and Turkish ethnic groups. This is due to some main reasons: early marriage, poverty, lack of interest for education, difficulties in learning. The statistic shows that 23,2% of Roma children who are in the range of mandatory education don't visit school, 11,9 of the children in the Turkish ethnic group don't visit school and 5,6% of the children in the Bulgarian ethnic group don't visit school.

Disengagement is a great problem for labor market, because of the increasing need of highly qualified workers and the decreasing number of people in working age and students.

Another problem is the lack of young teachers, which is quite visible in small towns and rural regions.

A big number of the teachers are in pre-retirement age. Because of that there is a government plan to double the teacher salaries in the period 2017-2021.

***What is the policy in your country about disengagement in the school system (key causes and identifiable factors)?***

Disengagement in school system is still a big problem in Bulgaria and the rate is higher than the average in the EU. A key cause for that problem is disengagement amongst the gypsy ethnic group. That is determined by some typical ethnic features like early marriage, having more children than average, lack of interest for education, etc. These features lead to bad social status and poverty which affects in higher risk for disengagement of Roma children.

One of the policies that is directed against disengagement in the school system is that the state provides all children in primary education with free textbooks. That is a huge action which doesn't depend on the social status of the family.

Another policy is connected to suspension of social assistance for parents whose children doesn't go to school regularly. If unexcused absences of the child in school are more than accepted, an act of administrative misconduct is published by the municipality and the parents are fined.

NGOs work on different programs and projects in ghettos and regions with predominantly gypsy population to achieve progress in decreasing disengagement in the school system.

## Country Overview

### ***What is the policy in your country to prevent disengagement?***

Bulgaria is one of the first member states of the EU that identified the problem of disengagement and early school leaving and developed politics for decreasing disengagement in the school system. A National strategy for reducing the proportion of early school leavers is adopted in 2013. The timeframe of the Strategy is between 2013 and 2020. Its main goal is to decrease the early school leaving rate (ESL) to 11% until 2020.

A mechanism for coordination is developed, as the implementation of the strategy is connected to collaboration of different ministries.

Disengagement is associated with complex reasons, which are mainly social and economical. Disengagement in primary school is often due to family and community factors. Disengagement in secondary education could also be caused by the background of the students or the lack of well prepared teachers to work with them.

The main goals of the Strategy are as follows:

- Development and monitoring of a complete and integrated policy for increasing the range of the educational system;
- Identification of risk causes for disengagement;
- Promotion of inclusion in the educational system for risky groups;
- Increasing the variety and the efficiency of the mechanisms and stimulus for inclusion in the educational system;
- Building of nationwide trust and support about the policies for prevention and decreasing disengagement.

Achievement of the main goals is implemented by the following key actions:

1. Prevention the occurrence of premises for disengagement. Policies for prevention are aimed at education from early age until finishing the secondary school:

Providing of  
positive  
education  
environment;

Development and  
implementation of  
policies in kinder  
garden and school;

Development of  
municipal  
policies;

Development of  
national  
policies;

Increasing the quality of education as a  
prerequisite for developing personality of  
every student and prevention of early school  
leaving;

Providing accessibility to education  
and increasing the quality of  
education for students belonging to  
vulnerable ethnic groups;

Access to quality  
education for students  
with special  
educational needs.





## Country Overview

### 2. Intervention through which conditions for decreasing disengagement will be established:

- ▶ Increasing of participation and involvement of the parents;
- ▶ Implementation of individual and group mentoring;
- ▶ Career guidance and consulting;
- ▶ Development of patterns for gaining professional qualification;
- ▶ Support for development of the students;
- ▶ Development of interest activities;
- ▶ Support for students in risk of disengagement due to economic reasons.

### 3. Stimulation for disengaged students to be included in the education system again, through offering diverse and accessible ways for returning them back to the system:

- ▶ Development of appropriate conditions for reintegration of disengaged students back to the education system;
- ▶ Development of national policy for validation of competencies acquired through informal learning.

### ***What are the results in preventing disengagement due to the policy in your country?***

The results of the National strategy are going to be analyzed in details after its timeframe is over in 2020. Nowadays The ESL for 2018 is 12,7%. There is no data for 2019 yet.

Here we should have in mind that not a small number of students that are considered disengaged have left the country and live abroad, together with their families. Most of them probably go to school there, but they have never given information about that in their previous Bulgarian schools.

The Strategy through its mechanism for reintegration of disengaged students back to the education system has given some results, as about 40000 students were returned to the system in the past few years.

There is more permanent control now about students who don't visit school regularly. Also a system for penalties and fines for their parents is developed, which somewhat influences students' behavior.

As a conclusion, there are positive results in preventing disengagement in the last few years. The ESL decreases constantly although it's slower than expected and is still the fifth highest in the EU for 2018.

The big challenge now is that these students who are reintegrated must be kept in the educational system. This could be achieved through successful implementation of the arrangements of the National strategy.

## Country Overview

***What is necessary to be changed in the policy in your country to prevent disengagement better? (Please give your opinion on the topic)***

The National strategy is giving some good results in the last few years. Nevertheless, a faster and more effective actions are needed, in order to accelerate the reintegration of students in the educational system and improve the level of disengagement.

The following actions will be useful:

- Improving social and economic condition of most vulnerable groups of the society;
- Insistent integration of the Roma ethnic group;
- More trainings for teachers dedicated to tackling students in risk of disengagement;
- Developing of modern textbooks and teaching methods, which will make easier for students in risk of disengagement to understand the lessons` content;
- Programs for changing parents` attitude to education, especially for the Roma ethnic group;
- Better coordination of all ministries, responsible for implementation of the Strategy;
- Better financing for projects fighting against disengagement in the educational system, including more NGOs and mediators working on the field with vulnerable groups.

## School perspective

***Please give definitions of disengagement to you and your school.***

In my opinion there are four areas of change in teenagers that can affect their attitudes towards the learning situation:

- Psychological - they contact/meet people who commit crimes or offer easy and enjoyable time and money or they just cannot handle the changes that result from puberty;
- Physical - they are not prepared to accept the changes that occur in their bodies; (some of them are still with childish behaviour but with grown-up bodies, others - just the opposite).
- Cognitive - their brain works at different speeds and some students lose motivation and give up;
- Social - students do not have a good family environment or/and friends.

Disengagement occurs mainly when the students do not have friends, parents, or authority - teachers, adults, etc. to help them to deal with the problems.



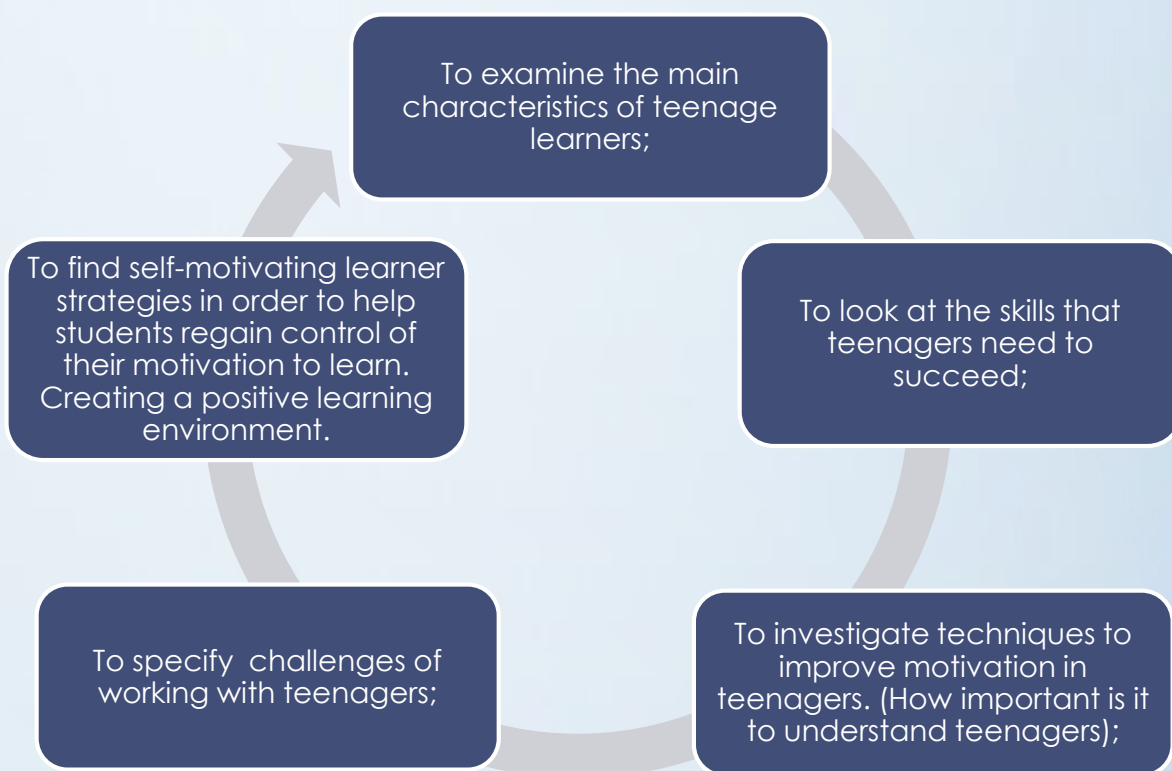
## School perspective

### ***At what average age does disengagement take place in your school?***

The average age is between 12 and 14. At that age students give in to influence easily and do not yet have confidence in their opinions and values.

### ***Is there a balance or imbalance with gender disengagement in your school?*** - It is hardly observed imbalance with gender disengagement.

### ***What initiatives have you or your school taken to change disengaged behaviour of students?*** - We came up with a plan that we need:



These strategies are partly concerned with eliminating negative environmental influences and partly with exploiting positive environmental influences by making the environment our ally in our pursuit of a difficult goal.

### ***What initiatives have you or your school taken to prevent disengagement of students?***

The biggest challenge is to make students to trust the teacher and to believe that the teacher can help him or her not only to learn, but to feel self-confidence and self-respect. That can be done through the lessons or organizing different extracurricular clubs showing their special abilities, e.g. using discussions, working in pairs, making different projects, organizing Drama club, sports initiatives, making a library for themselves, chess club, making a magazine for their school life (we organized a chat place for enjoyable activities), making exhibitions, organizing reading club, club for young writers, etc.





## School perspective

### Case Study

#### ***When and how you noticed that someone was becoming disengaged from learning?***

This was a conflict caused by differences or tensions between individuals within the group. It might be connected to different levels of ability in a heterogeneous group of students; it might also be caused by an inharmonious mix of ages, personalities, sexes, or nationalities.



This type of conflict does not always directly involve the teacher, so there was a risk that the problems would remain undetected.

I had one class which was very difficult to teach because of regular disagreements between two rival pairs of students. These disagreements would quickly turn into arguments and even fighting. The effect on the class was very disruptive but I didn't know what to do. It was clear that the problem was not caused by my lesson – it was a long-standing conflict between these particular students. The situation had no explanation for anyone, neither the teachers nor the parents. It happened that one of the students refused to attend school. He lost motivation and his results were getting poor.

#### ***What you did to help him/her/them?***

I took aside time for individual interviews with students. I was keeping in touch with the opinions, feelings, and reactions of both students and parents. For teenagers, friends are extremely important and influential people. I put the students to sit next to friendly classmates and I asked to help them catch up with the material. After school, they met and helped the boy who was behind. I asked them to join a project for a school library and I gave them a specific task which they had to perform in groups. It turned out that sitting next to a good friend not only affected the way teenagers behave – it also impacted upon the way they think.

Certain emotional states or moods – such as anxiety, fear or hopelessness – may disrupt or inhibit action and may undermine our determination, whereas others will put things in an optimistic, positive light.



## School perspective

### ***What was the end outcome of the situation?***

1. Teenagers began feel safe and secure in class.
2. They made decisions and discussed all opportunities.
3. Students stayed motivated.
4. A pleasant, relaxed atmosphere appeared in the classroom.
5. Last but not least – they found friends.



### ***What do you believe causes disengagement in your county? Do you agree or disagree with the policy in your country?***

I partly disagree with the policy in my country:

☆ I do not agree that writing papers and explaining what teacher does/will do is more important than practice or conversations;

☆ More work should be done with students with behavioral problems but who have no learning problems; (Emphasis is now on working with students with special educational problems).



## Look at the findings

When reviewing the four country's reflections both governmentally, and by the options of the schools, the first observation is that age can link the four together. Across the countries, the age of disengagement, as pointed out by schools, comes around the time of adolescence. When a child reaches the age of 12 - 14 they begin to withdraw from learning and become 'disengaged'. When a child enters into adolescence they begin to form and question their own sense of self, identity, and confidence. Their self-esteem, and confidence can mean that when a child is struggling, the fear of this means it becomes easier to withdraw than try.

The mental health of the young person is vastly important to the ability to engage in learning. When a child experiences anxiety and/or fear, the child can easily 'disassociate'. Disassociation is when a person detaches from their emotions, and from the situation. This often gives the impression that person no longer cares, and is disengaged. In fact, they care so much that they become overwhelmed and unable to process how they are feeling, much like when a switch overloads if it has too much energy passing through it, the mind has a similar fuse. Support networks and in the involvement of professionals during this time become vital to help the child reflect on their issues and plan towards re-engagement in learning and themselves.

As all countries have outlined, they are cog in a much larger machine which includes; parents, geography, social circumstances and peer groups, these all play a part in a child's/young person's education journey. Although there are methods of reengaging pupils and governmental initiatives, it always falls to the schools and teachers to provide this support. The role of the teacher has moved from educator to one that also encompasses, teacher, parent, social worker and therapist. There was also value on the shaping of the individual into someone who has respect for themselves and therefore their learning.

Creating spaces for these young people to help find themselves and reflect on why they have become disengaged from learning is key for re-integration into education. The case studies from schools all focused on using a collection of techniques that puts the person in the centre of their journey rather than decisions being made for them. The next section outlines some key finding on using dialogue and drama with such pupils and the effect it has and helping them to bring about change.





## Engaging the disengaged through dialogue – why use dialogue

Using dialogue in the classroom has given a voice to children who otherwise did not have one. The use of children leading their own discussions and controlling its outcome has inspired children from all different ages, backgrounds, areas to believe that their opinion matters. Through using dialogue with disengaged learners, we have seen children who were on the edge of permanent exclusion stay in schools to get their GCSEs and move on to vocational qualifications, collages and even university.

### Dialogue models

What we mean by dialogue is a culmination of different methodologies, theories and ideas. In the UK there is the main models, Philosophy for Children (P4C – Sapere). P4C is a model for using dialogue in the classroom that have set structures to follow for dialogue. P4C is a model that comes with training that can be only run by SAPERE. Saper and P4C information can be found - <https://www.sapere.org.uk/>. Although this review focuses on dialogue as a whole some of the methods have been adapted from P4C.

However, the main reason for deviating away from a method like P4C when working with more disengaged pupils is that some pupils due to a variety of reasons may be unable to fully engage and hold interest for the full structure of dialogue. This can be that they are incapable of individual reflection, or in small, unsupervised groups their attention may deviate from the topic at hand. This resource addresses those issues by creating a combination of activities used by practitioners who have worked with children whose behaviour was categorised as “disengaged” from learning.

With dialogue in the classroom, there is a flow of reflection and self-discovery for the pupils in the sessions and each session has the added value to help engage learners in reflecting on their behaviour. The goal for the learner is to see if they can identify for themselves, times where behaviour was not acceptable.



Although using spaces for dialogue in schools is not a therapy, there can be a therapeutic element of sharing and being listened to in the sessions that possibly these children may not have had in other parts of their lives. Therefore, caution is advising about the level of depth that is allowed when talking about the topics in this resource. When using dialogue in the classroom for any learner it is most important in creating a safe space. The more comfortable a pupil feels in a space the more free the dialogue will be.



### Role of the teacher

The teacher uses the title of 'facilitator' that term is used to try to differentiate the role from the traditional one of the teacher as the fount of knowledge. Although it will always be some part of a teacher's role to impart knowledge. It will increasingly be their responsibility to assist others in processing the information they receive. The role of the 'facilitator' has the literal sense of easing others into appropriate practices such as questioning, reasoning, evaluating and generating alternative interpretations.

A prime step in this is to cultivate the social and emotional security that will enable members of the group to contribute their best to the enquiry. This almost always involves giving primacy to others, their ideas and their feeling's. In that sense, the role is similar to that of a chair or referee who is charged with seeing 'fair play'.

There is also the responsibility though, especially with children, to guide the group towards better ways of thinking together. This may involve such interventions as calling for clarification of examples, or for reasons or conclusions etc. It may also, occasionally involve putting a question to the group that is designed to deepen or widen their thinking. It does not; however give a facilitator license to push the enquiry into a particular direction just because it suits their own particular interest. It is the interests of the community that counts, though there is often a difficult balance to be achieved here in managing the needs of the particular group with those of the context and the curriculum. Sometimes a problem arises in the discussion and here it is important to ask the group how best to overcome that problem, thus gradually moving them to self –facilitation.

Strategies to extend and develop student thinking include:

1. Thinking time – encouraging pauses for thought or some moments of quiet meditation on a topic. Remember to provide at least three seconds thinking time after you have asked a question and three seconds thinking time after a child gives an answer.
2. Think – pair –share – allow individual thinking time about a question, invite discussions on the question with a partner, then open up for class discussion
3. Asking follow-ups – ask children to extend or qualify what they said by asking questions that challenge their thinking such as 'Why?' 'Do you agree or disagree?' Can you say more? ' Can you give an example?' Describe how you arrived at that answer (See Questioning techniques)
4. Withhold judgement – respond to student answers in a non-evaluative way e.g. a positive but neutral response such as 'Thank you', 'That's interesting', 'A-ha', I see.



## Engaging the disengaged through dialogue – why use dialogue

5. Invite the whole group to respond – encourage a response from the whole group by saying things such as; ‘How many people agree or disagree with that point of view?’ (Hands or thumbs up, down or side) You can also ask questions such as ‘Having heard that, what questions might we ask?’
6. Ask for a summary – promote active listening by asking for a summary of what has been said e.g. ‘Could you summarise Kim’s point?’ ‘Can you explain what Jane has just said?’ ‘Can you tell me the arguments so far?’
7. Play devil’s advocate – challenge students to give reason for their view by presenting opposing points of view, or by asking students to be devil’s advocates, ‘Who can think of a different point of view or an argument against that?’
8. Invite a range of responses – model open mindedness by inviting students to consider different points of view: ‘There is no single correct answer to this question. I want you to consider alternatives.’
9. Encourage student questioning – invite students to ask their own questions before, during and/or after discussion. ‘Has anyone a question about what has been said?’

### Key points of facilitation

Thinking includes a number of important elements that a leader can model and encourage to provide forward movement in a discussion. The leader is there to provide positive cognitive interventions that help take the discussion forward. During the discussion the leader needs to be aware of opportunities to focus attention on the key elements of thinking. These include:

- Questioning - asking good questions to provide a focus for enquiry;
- Reasoning - requesting reasons or evidence to support arguments and judgements;
- Defining - Clarifying concepts through making connections, distinctions and comparisons;
- Speculating Generating ideas and alternative viewpoints through imaginative thinking;
- Testing for truth - gathering information, evaluating evidence, examples and counter examples;
- Expanding ideas - sustaining and extending lines of thought and argument,
- Summarising - abstracting key points or general rules from a number of ideas or instances.

When using dialogue as a prompt for addressing behavioural change it is always vital to consider not going too deep too fast. A controversial topic such as name calling and bullying can be found even in the begging in of the process, for example from Hungary:





## Engaging the disengaged through dialogue – why use dialogue

### Case study

*An English teacher in Hungary of 13-14 year-old students used the “Naughtyometer pictures” (©Jason Buckley) as stimulus for an enquiry around the issue. With the help of the stimulus students realized how general the problem is. They formed their thoughts quite well in English, but when they noticed that some students could not take part in the discussion in English, as they were scared to become ridiculous (= being called a bad name), students added a new rule in the middle of the discussion: “Hungarian is also allowed”. Then, it was a great pleasure to see how good contributions came from students who usually do not show up during the English lessons.*

### Tips for consideration to establish good communities of practice

- Members of the community collaboratively draw up a code of conduct and agree to collectively ensure that this is adhered to.
- Request one member of the group to sit outside of the community (metaphorically at least) and map all concepts that are raised throughout the dialogue. This role can be rotated so that all members of the community do this on occasion.
- Similarly, one member of the group sits outside of the community and identifies examples of one of the 4Cs (caring, critical, creative or collaborative thinking), possibly focussing on a different one for each enquiry. This role can be rotated so that all members of the community are able to observe and identify the ingredients for a successful enquiry.
- Plot the community of enquiry using initials – draw a line showing the flow of dialogue during the building section. Notice members who make many contributions, notice those who are thinking and listening without making their own verbal contributions.
- Use either an open palm or thumbs up to indicate wish to speak. Each contributor chooses the next person. Agreement should be made that members of the community will always choose a person who is indicating who has contributed less.
- Give 3 counters to each member of the community and each time s/he contributes, a counter has to be surrendered.
- Be prepared to break down into smaller groups “middle words” during the building part of the enquiry.
- Ensure contributions are relevant “How does that help to answer the question?”
- Steer clear of too many personal anecdotes
- Enquiries may take place over two sessions to allow greater time for reflection.
- Provide opportunities for movement within the enquiry, e.g. an active stimulus, rotation of groups.
- Invite whole group responses through pair share, group work or individually thumbs up to agree and down to disagree or traffic light to show the extent to which participants ‘go’ with an idea.
- Ask for alternative opinions “What would somebody who disagreed say?”
- During first words encourage more than one response “Yes because ...but no because...”



# Making the change through drama and story

## What is Theatre for Social Change

Theatre for Social change engages people in topics that concern them by discussion and participatory exploration. Participants can explore a variety of different solutions to relevant issues and problems using theatre-based techniques. Theatre for Social change has 2 elements that are used with disengage learners; image theatre and Forum theatre.

Image theatre costs of using collectives of people to create large group stills or 'sculpts' focused around themes of oppression, power and balance. Forum theatre looks at collectively creation a piece of theatre around an agreed theme. It is the job of the whole group to discuss issues of concern that is relevant to them. This can range from bullying and racism to peer pressure and drug/alcohol abuse. Usually the stimulus for discussion could be one real situation or situations that the participants are worried about but don't know how to act, for example safety on public transport, how should you react if someone approached you. With disengaged pupils it is an opportunity to choose reasons perhaps why they are not engaging in education.

Once a stimulus is decided upon, a group of actors or participants or both create a piece of theatre exploring the problem. Be that with image, story or some way to express the issue at hand. As Much control you can give to young people the better so they can decide if they would rather use images, sounds or create pieces of Forum theatre

In the words of Augusto Boal the creator of Forum Theatre, "if we don't change the play the play will stay the same, if we don't change the world the world will sat the same".

## Forum Theatre – Full explanation

Forum theatre looks at collectively creation a piece of theatre around an agreed theme. It is the job of the whole group to discuss issues of concern that is relevant to them. This can range from bullying and racism to peer pressure and drug/alcohol abuse. Usually the stimulus for discussion could be one real situation or situations that the participants are worried about but don't know how to act, for example safety on public transport, how should you react if someone approached you. With disengaged pupils it is an opportunity to choose reasons perhaps why they are not engaging in education.

Once a stimulus is decided upon, a group of actors or participants or both create a piece of theatre exploring the problem. The play follows the story of one character "**the protagonist**" who the audience follow the journey of, battling through their problems and issues. The person they are battling is "**the antagonist**", they are the person we can not become but the person we as a community are trying to battle.



# Making the change through drama and story



Finally, there is an observer or bystander **“the Deuteragonist”**. This person can either be invited into the story by the person in the forum theatre piece or can be replaced by audience members to create an ally for the protagonist. The piece of theatre has many flawed areas; wrong decisions made that make the climax of the piece lead to a disastrous end.

As the play has been performed, it is then the audience's role to change the play for the better. The audience take turns discussing changes that could be made to the piece of theatre that the protagonist could have done differently. Then audience members are asked to stand up on stage and show us what they believe should be done in situations in the play.

The purpose of forum theatre is to create in safe controlled environment examples of problems that people are witness to in our day to day lives. Then as a group look at solutions to these problems. It encourages people to practice making positive change and will help them make real change in the future.

In the words of Augusto Boal the creator of Forum Theatre, “if we don't change the play the play will stay the same, if we don't change the world the world will stay the same”.

## Vital Elements of Forum Theatre

1. Issue of importance established.

2. Discover stories and devise that could be inspired by truth. However participants should not play themselves and dwell on their downfalls.

3. Avoid this or that stories, multi faced, multi faceted, multiple interventions, and blind alley's.

4. Protagonist is who the oppression happens to and should struggle “bravely” so the audience can struggle on his/her behalf; they must want to fight for them.





# Making the change through drama and story

5. Dyteragonist (do-ter-agonist) is a by standing characters or potential ally, someone who witnesses oppression in the original model and doesn't intervene but has the potential to can be brought into the model more if the spectator chooses an innocent bystander . The Specactors can change places with this person if they choose.

6. The Antagonist is the representative of oppression the oppressor.

7. Multiple points of crisis are essential. Moments of danger and opportunity. Always reflect the complexity of people's lives.

8. Introduce the parameters of the piece. The audience participation elements.

9. The joker breaks the 4<sup>th</sup> wall, could use games to relax an audience, he/she always explains the rules and controls the time lengths of the intervention and is the spark for debate.

10. Agree with the audience where the first point of conflict/area for intervention is.

11. Joker offers the exit route for Specactors in the forum. Be it due to the lack of relevance or other failings.

12. Teach your actors to start/prompt those who are intervening, and help them.

13. Even with the least productive interventions find the positives. As a facilitator research the possible interventions with actors to prepare them.

## Why with disengaged learners?

Using theatre with disengaged learners opens up a world for young people to express what barriers may inhibit them coming back to school. Where dialogue and safe spaces are based in discussing issues, using theatre is about practicing, rehearsing and working through barriers practically. Both complement each other as one a tool for discussing change and the other acting to make the change.

### Case Study

*Working with a group of 14-year girls in a School in the UK. All the girls were counted as 'disengaged' and some were at risk of exclusion. They participated in dialogue sessions but were worried that even if they wanted to change, they would be 'judged' by former teachers and they wanted to ask for help without asking, the girls decided to create a forum theatre piece asking teachers to support their changes.*



## Making the change through drama and story

*Teachers were invited onto the stage and gave comments like 'I will help you' 'If you want to change, I can help you with lessons to catch up'. Through Forum theatre the pupils were asking for help and the teachers were offering help but indirectly through 'acting' provides a shield for pupils to ask for help and not ask at the same time.*

Pupils use Forum Theatre to rehearse the 'real world'. Bullying, school problems, prejudice are all welcome to be explored in the theatre space. The play follows the story of one character "the protagonist" who the audience follow the journey of, battling through their problems and issues. The piece of theatre has many flawed areas; wrong decisions made that make the climax of the piece lead to a disastrous end. Often children create protagonist in issues that relate to them. They invite the group to help them in making a positive change.

As the play has been performed, it is then the audience's role to change the play for the better. The audience take turns discussing changes that could be made to the piece of theatre that the protagonist could have done differently. Then audience members are asked to stand up on stage and show us what they believe should be done in situations in the play.

The purpose of forum theatre is to create in safe controlled environment examples of problems that people are witness to in our day to day lives. Then as a group look at solutions to these problems. It encourages people to practice making positive change and will help them make real change in the future.

For more support please access the Engaging the Disengaged Toolkit.

