

YOUTH WORK REDISCOVERED IN A SCHOOL CONTEXT: UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS OF EXCLUDED YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES BY SEEING BEYOND THE PROFESSIONAL

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ABSTRACT

This article considers ongoing concerns about the difference in schooling outcomes between educationally disengaged (mostly excluded) students and their peers. Consecutive state funded secondary schooling models appear to be struggling to address this (Edwards 2018; Farouk and Edwards 2021). We suggest that this has been exacerbated in part by an outdated curriculum (see Edwards and Palmer 2021; House of Commons 2017) and overreliance on the punishment and deficit focussed responses written into many behaviour policies (Edwards and Farouk 2024). While these policies may, they argue, promote best conditions for teaching, inappropriate responses to disengagement and disruptive behaviour may be making the issue worse. We therefore consider the role that youth work might play in addressing these concerns. Specifically, we look at youth work through the lens of a civic activity as part of upbringing (Davies 2016; Edwards and Evea 2025) emerging from within community and family relationships that may provide a way forward. Drawing on our own experiences of implementing youth work practices in and with Senior Leadership Teams in secondary schools, we demonstrate how youth work practices can enhance the educational and personal development outcomes of students who are, or who are in danger of becoming disengaged with their education, particularly those facing school exclusions. Furthermore, we argue youth work can be used to help resolve some of the issues created by a rigid and inflexible education system with its over-reliance on zero tolerance behaviour policies.

Keywords: disengagement, exclusion, relationships, community, covenant

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THE SAME OLD PROBLEMS WITH SOME SECONDARY SCHOOLING

In July 2024 Beth Prescott, Education Lead at the centre for Social Justice is quoted in a media statement as saying of the release of the then latest school exclusion and suspension data,

These are truly shocking figures, with both school exclusions and suspensions at a new record high. Combined with the crisis in in school absence, with so called ghost children at near record levels and 1 in 5 kids persistently absent, there is a pressing and immediate emergency unfolding across our schools

She goes on to say that

A tidal wave of challenges hitting children families and schools (...) has resulted in an increasing number of children struggling to fully engage with their education, with potentially catastrophic and lifelong consequences for their lives, for wider society and for the economy

The following data support her assertions;

According to DfE statistical data releases (DfE 2024) there were nine thousand three hundred and seventy-six permanent exclusions of children from state funded secondary schools during the school year 2022/23. In the autumn term alone of 2023/2024, the number increased year on year to four thousand one hundred and sixty-eight. An increase of more than one thousand. The issue of permanent exclusion appears to be growing.

Further, during the spring terms of 2022/2023 one hundred and fifty-eight thousand pupils were severely absent - they missed over fifty percent of their lessons. During the academic year 2023/2024 there were an estimated thirty-three thousand children missing education.

These children are disengaged with much of their education and schooling. This lack of engagement self-evidently leads to lower grade outcomes (see Farouk 2017; Farouk and Edwards 2021). For those permanently excluded the damage to life chances is more profound (Farouk 2017). The Department for Education have produced and published extensive data sets on all the above and more.

However, Ofsted inspections tell us that there are a significant number of outstanding schools in England and that the majority of schools are good (Ofsted March 2024). Most young people in England and Wales are being well taught in safe and secure learning environments. They are making good progress. Yet exclusion rates are high; social and economic inequality appears to be widening; the grade gap is also growing; mental health issues are beyond the capacity of local authorities to deal with and the covid pandemic and

post-covid period has exposed more clearly (or perhaps exacerbated) the extremely high levels of deprivation of all types that affect the life chances of many of young people.

This is after fifty years of a comprehensive education system introduced in 1975 to provide a more just system that many head teachers embraced and committed to its ideals. Many head teachers believed it possible, and just, to provide every young person with the opportunities that they too had enjoyed. Yet, there is little credible evidence that this social experiment brought about any significant improvement in the life chances of all students.

Moreover, we might also ask whether all young people have genuine access to an aspirational, broad and balanced curriculum enriched by a wide range of extracurricular activities or has the constant pressure on schools and on individual teachers to achieve grade or level-based targets led to an ever-narrowing focus on student grade outputs as a measure of academic and arguably moral progress?

Nonetheless, there is an impressive year on year improvement in the way that most teachers commit to their pupils and demonstrate resilience through periods of economic downturn and the almost constant tinkering on the margins of the system. This is also despite a dramatic development of planning and evaluation of teaching and regular assessment of teacher's performance. Changes in the learning environment have been profound but there is no real evidence of change in the fortunes of the least well positioned.

Surely now is a time to ask what can and must be done to deliver a more just distribution of the educational opportunities enjoyed by the majority. It will take far more than governments simply allocating targeted funds though. Pupil premium monies, funding for disadvantaged young people, additional money for looked after children, additional funds for young people with mental health issues are only of value if they can be spent in ways that address the underlying needs of these young people. Funding delivered to schools based on a formula that groups together undifferentiated cohorts of children needs to be perhaps carefully targeted at those who need it most. Not all children in receipt of free school meals for example need additional or differentiated support. The authors' experiences as practitioners and academic researchers is that there may be a statistical link, but it is not necessarily a causal one.

Perhaps an answer lies in Kwame Appiah's (2018, xiv) thoughts that "*we are living with the legacies of ways of thinking that took their shape in the nineteenth century, and it is high time to subject them to the best thinking of the twenty-first.*"

But what might best thinking look like in an age of political, economic, social and technological (particularly generative AI) uncertainty?

Whatever we consider best thinking is, a sense of urgency in the need to look for and achieve profound change in our state funded secondary schools remains. However, if there were simple and straightforward answers to the question of how we begin to address the inequalities in our education system,

and principally in our secondary schools, we would be adopting them wouldn't we? There are no simple solutions it seems but there are ways forward and starting points if we are willing to try them.

REVISITING YOUTH WORK WITH A HOLISTIC, ASSET LED APPROACH

One starting point may be to adopt a different mindset and to debate and analyse underlying problems through more than one lens that allow us to find ways of understanding the barriers to learning that are faced by significant numbers of our young people. It seems we have arrived at a point where a less binary and more holistic approach to working with students is needed.

Specifically, we are starting a dialogue that explores ways in which two of the agents involved in young peoples' upbringing might work with those who are disengaged or at risk of disengaging with secondary school education. We focus here on adults working in secondary schools, and adults involved in youth work activities both in and out of school. That is, youth workers and school educators including school leaders.

The problem is clearly a secondary school issue and we argue that two of the key issues are that of the relationships between teachers and students and the nature of the curriculum. We use the term curriculum in its broadest sense to include all aspects of curriculum structure and delivery including timetabling. We focus specifically on two points - trust and motivation. Who and why do children trust and what motivates them to apply themselves at school? Can there really be any schools without at least one member of staff who can act as a mentor for a young person? And can there be a community served by the school that does not have an appropriate adult that can be supported to fill the role? Working with a trained youth worker empowered to work in the way outlined above might make a real difference.

A particular context for supporting the development of positive relationships between students and teachers might be the initial two years of transfer from primary to secondary school. Here, children leave their secure primary school setting where they have formed a relationship with their class teacher and have been engaged with a coherent and well-planned scheme of work delivered largely by their class teacher who knows them well (Farouk and Edwards 2021). Most then enter their secondary school and must form relationships with upwards of a dozen teachers in a variety of learning spaces and contexts. Many find this exciting, but some find it very challenging (Edwards and Farouk 2024). They also move from a curriculum primarily delivered by one teacher to a curriculum that is delivered often by more than a dozen teachers. Learning how to respond to a dozen different sets of expectations and a dozen interpretations of the school's behaviour policy is a challenge that some students find overwhelming.

Situated within a broader body of corresponding practice and research-based evidence submitted to the House of Commons Select Committee for Education, Edwards and Farouk (2024) provide extensive evidence specifically related to boys' attainment, which they claim.

demonstrates a reciprocal relationship between performance and engagement which appears to be unaddressed by the school. When a boys' performance is poor (...) he becomes disengaged and seeks self-efficacy elsewhere by misbehaving at school. This is often left unaddressed by the school until it reaches a stage, usually in Y9 or Y10, when the student has fallen so far behind that the school is unable to bring him back on track. The student's engagement then drops even further as he either stops attending lessons or he stops attending school altogether (p 3).

Their findings corresponded with a wider body of evidence submitted in the same report that corresponded with similar issues encountered by girls. They make three recommendations to parliament. We consider two.

The first that schools provide a more child centred education and support during transition from KS2 to KS3 particularly from form tutors with access to leadership teams, and second, that schools might develop intervention work with individual students at KS3 that apply youth work informed mentoring (see Edwards 2023) and also counselling (Farouk and Edwards 2021). Here, mentoring and counselling processes involve bringing young people, their parents and teachers together to help the student to create a new trajectory for their self-narrative by drawing on their positive experiences of primary school and the support of the school and other significant figures in their life. These experiences can then be used to guide changes to curriculum and teaching practices (through differentiated lesson plans) that allow them to engage with their education in the classroom and broader school site. This also establishes a point of contact with a trusted adult in the school who maintains positive relationships with both the student and their parents.

The above is not a panacea but a recommendation that draws on successful and established practices, albeit on a small scale but which does sit within broader and similar practices submitted to and published by the House of Commons Select Committee for Education. However, we suggest a way forward that builds on these models and which might be applied more extensively.

Our starting point is an article by Richard Davies (2016) and his argument that youth work based on a covenantal relationship of trust offers an ethical basis for more substantive goods to emerge. Sacks (2008, para 14), elaborates.

A contract is made for a limited period, for a specific purpose, between two or more parties, each seeking their own benefit. A covenant is made open-endedly by two or more parties who come together in a bond of

loyalty and trust to achieve together what none can achieve alone (...) Covenants belong to families, communities, charities, which are arenas of co-operation (...) Covenant is about identity.

Davies argues covenantal relationships are based on a mutual understanding that the primary focus is on securing good outcomes for the young person. He emphasises.

The relationship is not concerned with the exchange of money for services, but collaborative acts with those with whom they are relationally close (Davies 2016, 11).

Evidence discussed in this article and our own experiences of working with young people at the margins of education is that they, along with their parents, are very reluctant to give their trust simply on the basis of an adult wearing a perceived professional label (see Edwards et. al 2020; Edwards and Eves 2025 forthcoming; Farouk 2016; Farouk and Edwards 2021). Trust is at the heart of the relationships we are advocating here. This is often hard earned. Professionals earn their living achieving aims often over and above the needs of the individual. In many cases professional youth workers and teachers have external targets to be met that focus their attention on external outcomes rather than the immediate needs of the individual young persons. Those targets may be the reduction in knife crime or the reduction in gang related criminal activities for youth workers or the achievement in progress eight value added for Senior Leaders in schools. The young people we are arguing for need to believe that they are central to the relationship with a trusted adult if they are to listen to and be guided by them and for goods to emerge.

Trust is a process and Edwards (2023) describes the process of relationship and trust building between excluded students, their parents and community youth workers that allows the student to voice their social realities and educational experiences. This enables the youth workers to become mentors and to jointly facilitate encounters between the student, their parents and teachers and / or other professional workers (ie social workers) that enables all parties to address social and curricular barriers that restrict access to education for the young person in school. We also argue therefore that skilled adults from the local community who have the trust of that community can be trained as youth workers to support targeted young people in ways that professional workers cannot.

Community located youth workers, both paid and unpaid, with access within and beyond the school site to young people who are becoming disengaged with their education, could develop such strong relationships with those young people. At the same time these young people could be provided with opportunity to form a strong and trusting relationship with a teacher or member of the school staff who can advocate their experiences and concerns

with them. Further, the teacher or youth worker could also be in a position to advocate with the student to the schools' senior leadership team. This would be necessary in order to bring about any necessary curricular changes and developments in in service training for early career teachers.

Coinciding with this process, Farouk and Edwards in their research that developed a model of narrative counselling for adolescents at risk of exclusion from school (see Farouk and Edwards 2021), demonstrate a way of working with disengaged young people to help them navigate their way through the processes of developing their sense of being who they are in the present yet becoming who they want to be that takes into account their unique personal circumstances. The focus in Farouk and Edwards' work and this discussion is on gaining the trust of those young people most at risk of educational disengagement.

Moreover, this relationship recognises the environments in which young peoples' upbringing takes place and communities in which most schools are situated.

A STARTING POINT: THE STUDENT - TEACHER RELATIONSHIP NOT SYSTEMS AND BEHAVIOUR POLICIES

Moreover, by developing such relationships, it would become more evident and immediately identifiable each student's understanding of the purpose of the curriculum and their understanding of the importance of engaging with school, which varies both socially and culturally. The complex set of intersections between gender, culture, community, SEND and class are all significant variables that would also become more evident and identifiable.

Factoring in bias and prejudice on the part of student, parents, teachers and the community, both conscious and subconscious, makes the picture even more complex but developing trusting and consistent relationships with members of teaching staff and school leaders will create the context of mutual understanding and perhaps the co-production of interventions that meet the needs of the student more fully.

However, over-reliance on punitive sanctions to address nonconformity with behaviour expectations by class teachers and senior leaders may be part of the problem that exacerbates much of these underlying and unknown variables. At the extreme end permanent exclusion meets the test of necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for punishment since it is clearly the infliction of pain by a person in authority for breaches of rules (Peters 1966). The penalty imposed on these children is surely grossly disproportionate and unethical, regardless of ethical position (Kantian, Aristotelian or Utilitarian). Moreover, a particular faith-based approach located in Buddhism would assert that punishment in schools is not only wrong but unwise. We should not therefore wilfully inflict pain on others and especially not on children. Here, there are two principal

causes of wrongdoing - ignorance or pressure. Consequently, we should teach children that what they are doing is wrong and why but we should determine what pressures are responsible for the wrongdoing and then work to remove these pressures. The challenge, of course, is to do so while allowing all other children to learn and teachers to teach. As a minimum requirement the child needs to understand and accept the validity of the rule broken and secondly the validity and nature of the authority of the adult giving the punishment. If either or both conditions are not met then the action will be seen as arbitrary and consequently unjust. To take this approach would though, we argue require time space and a very particular relationship based on trust.

Hence, one way forward is for schools to work closely with youth work led organisations and services and, in doing so, work with students differently. In youth work the relationships established between young people and youth workers are, in most cases different to the formal relationship between teacher and student. Youthwork, according to the National Youth Agency *'is a form of education pedagogy; it provides non-formal education and offers informal learning opportunities'* (DfDCMS 2023, 5). Here, adults work with young people aged primarily between 11-18 years for which the youthwork *'requires a distinctive commitment to particular ethical behaviour from the adults involved'* (Davies 2016, 1). The NYA summarise these processes within its purpose statement that claims youth work *'Enables young people to (...) develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential'* (DfDCMS, 2023, 5).

It is within the above definitions that youthwork in England is framed, which historically has its origins as a social movement characterised by a mix of voluntary community (often faith based) activities that focused on adolescent social and moral character development alongside some political education (in the broadest sense). Essentially, the youth work relationship is based on mutual trust and collaboration where the young person's voice has equal value to that of the adults. The youth work relationship is also entered voluntarily by the young person.

We argue here for a particular conception of youth work to be applied in our thinking of how youth workers might work with schools. Specifically, we argue that we return to a conception of youth worker as someone based within a community working within the community providing support for the upbringing of young people within that community.

SO, WHAT CAN YOUTH WORK OF THIS CONCEPTION BRING TO THE DISCUSSION?

Learning outside school has been transformed though. Family structures have changed and attitudes to parenting have altered. Communities even more so. Attitudes to and prejudices regarding skin tone, ethnicity, gender, vestemes

and praxis vary across the country. Gender is contested and trust in institutional authority is low. Consequently, and in view of growing national concerns in the substantial increase in elective home education it could be argued that parental understanding of and commitment to schooling varies more than ever. Such a youth worker would likely understand community and contextual factors that influence the young person and parents' experiences of education and the schooling processes. Youth workers would support young people in creating their identities as they grow through adolescence and become young adults. So too can they help parents and significant others (to the family relationships) within the community engage with the school's vision and help the school leaders understand where their message needs to be adjusted.

An example can be found in an article by Round (2024) who examines and quotes the welcome statements of the headteachers of a small number of elite schools. He argues

'The Head's Welcome ties ethos to the legitimacy of the school as a whole, and presents this legitimacy of authority as part of the fabric of 'taken for grantedness' of the institution'(p2544).

We suggest that this illustrates that income and the ability to choose private education influences understanding of the role of particular schools and motivation for a young person to engage. This school will help to open doors for my child. If I work hard, engage and learn I will acquire significant social capital even though I may not understand how my life will be better. Imagine a parent of a pupil at Eton attending the careers evening at a comprehensive in their town; how different might this be to the opportunities offered and promoted at the college.

We, the authors, were given an insight by a member of a school-based youth centre located on a school site where we worked together. The lead author was head teacher of the school and the co-author was the youth centre manager at the time. Essentially the young person argued that he and his peers understood the headteacher's message that working hard to get good grades would lead to getting what was seen as a good job. But, they said, the people we see with good jobs leave home early get home late and consequently are poor parents and partners. They wanted to be told how hard work leading to high grades would enable them to become good parents and good partners. Apparently good parenting and good relationships with family were important elements of their view of a good life.

A community-based youth worker will gain an understanding of the impact of community, family, friends and social media on a child's expectations and aspirations and on parents understanding of the purpose of school and their possible role in bringing about access to a good life. Further the conception of a good life varies and impacts similarly.

YOUTH WORK IN PRACTICE

To illustrate the background to a proposed different way with working with young people in state funded secondary schools who show early signs of possible permanent exclusion from school we turn to an intervention developed in one of the projects led by the co-author (Edwards 2024), which includes details of an intervention with a young female called Leonie who had been excluded from mainstream school 18 months previously and had been attending a holding PRU whilst they sought alternative provision. Leonie had been excluded from the PRU and her attendance was low such that her parents were facing fines for her non-attendance.

The article discusses a relational pedagogy underpinned by youth work competencies and practices endorsed in the National Youth Agency's (NYA 2021) occupational standards for youth work. The article discusses the processes employed in the initial stages of a mentoring project called Beyond the School Gates that draw on Freire's (1972) decoding model to create relational spaces within excluded children's homes in order to facilitate critical dialogue between mentors, students and their parents.

In the account, Leonie joins a meeting 40 minutes late with a snake around her neck. The meeting takes place in Leonie's home. Already at the meeting are a youth worker (the co-author) who leads the intervention, a community volunteer who is a mentor, Leonie's mother and her father who does not live at home.

The meeting was not a surprise or shock for Leonie. She had agreed to the meeting in principal because neither the youth worker nor the mentor were there on a professional visit with an agenda. That is, the visit was neither made in response to a referral by the school or other agency or was there any payment involved for youth work services. Leonie and her parents had voluntarily contacted the organisation Beyond the School Gates via their website telephone number. There was no contractual obligation on Leonie but she did understand that the adults all wanted good outcomes for her. All four adults were known and broadly trusted. A covenantal rather than a contractual relationship was envisaged. The meeting took place in Leonie's home with her mother and father present. This would not be normal in most youth work practice but essential here since Leonie had become a recluse. Nor would it be normal youth work practice for parents to be involved but their understanding and commitment were seen as crucial and Leonie had requested their presence.

We see a youth worker based in school and the community working in this way for the most extreme cases but using the co-constructed knowledge to inform senior leadership teams to enable them to support students disengaging from schooling before this stage is reached.

One of the findings here, supported in interviews carried out by Farouk (2016) is that young people must be both seen and heard as they are in their primary school setting if they are to have the necessary feedback on their being

– that is who they see themselves as now, in order to inform their becoming – who they want to become.

In the opening chapter of “Practices of Selfhood” Bauman and Raud (2015, 2) assert that three properties of the modern self were “brought together and blended in Pico della Mirandola’s 1486 manifesto”. In the manifesto, called *The Dignity of man*, Pico della Mirandola unpacks the Dignity of Man, according to Bauman and Raud, as “a status bringing to mind a sort of remarkable- and thoroughly unique – ‘three in one, one in three merger/union of a violinist, a violin and the recipient and judge of pleasurable sounds which the violinist extracts from the violin.”

A metaphor of our being is a sort of three in one as we develop our self-identity. At our core, our internality, we are like a violin. In our externality we perform to others and our reflexive learning and the adjustments we make are based on audience feedback. Audience is crucial. We can learn and adjust our performance. Our internality is complex, as Leonie demonstrated.

To have an audience is to be seen and to be heard. The absence of an audience must surely have a profound impact on our future orientated (see Giddens 1991) becoming self and make being now, in the present, problematic. Hence, when we apply this lens towards looking at the experiences of some of our least well served young people we can develop a far deeper understanding of what might be done.

Leonie, other permanently excluded young people and those disengaging with their education want, and in fact need, to be seen as a person(s) in their own right. Early career teachers may need to be guided to answer some or all of these basic questions. We can ask: Are students regularly greeted at the door, are they called by their first name in class as if it is important? Are they seen as a person or as a girl with inexpensive clothes and hair style and with minimal but distinctive makeup not simply by teachers but by also by peers?

Where do they sit? Which prejudices might be at play? How can answers to these and other similar questions be fed back to the range of teachers they will encounter across the week? They can similarly be regarded as a representative of those who say that they are not heard. Are they encouraged and able to express an opinion, are their views and opinions sought and will they be respected and valued?

Teachers are guided and to an extent educated to develop excellent relationships with their students. Relationship with students is a key element of the grading of teachers. But in most secondary schools the timetabling of individual subjects may place, for example a music or an RE teacher in KS3, with the challenge of forging relationships with up to 350 children over at best one hour per week. At best a math teacher will see a class of 25 to 30 students for three separate hours per week but that class group is one of at least six groups. A minimum of 180 relationships based on maths teaching and learning. They will likely have a tutor group so another 30 relationships. How can we

expect both teacher and student to develop the quality of relationship enjoyed at primary school?

Physical and emotional maturation during adolescence occurs at different rates. Home and community circumstances vary hugely. So young people negotiate this period in different ways. Some need support - mentoring and advocacy at least. Time and space are needed though and one way forward has been evidenced (for example Farouk and Edwards 2021) to provide a dedicated space where a young person can be withdrawn or withdraw to be with a youth worker to address issues.

The authors, one as youth worker the other as headteacher created such a space at the school site on which the youth centre the co-author managed was situated. Students attended the majority of their lessons but were able to negotiate time in a youth centre space to pursue alternative curriculum offer including ASDAN's COPE award and food hygiene certificates on an individual basis. They also designed and raised funds for a cafeteria and developed a leadership team. The authors were able to share and discuss ways in which all students needs could be met.

This model was similar to an online centre for students with hearing impairment or physical impairment in a south of England School. Here the head teacher at the school held as an essential philosophy was that all students were entitled to attend all mainstream lessons and activities and would do so unless a more important or relevant need required consideration.

However, the provision of a dedicated space will be a challenge for many schools, but not impossible. It will, in the end be a matter of priorities. If the joint and simultaneous priority for a school is ensuring that all children can learn, all teachers are free to teach and no child is permanently excluded from full time attendance at school then the budget required and the rooming on the timetable take precedence. There will be have to be compromise elsewhere.

Regular exchanges between such a youth worker and leadership teams in school can facilitate mutual understanding. Understanding of the thinking behind curriculum decisions and feedback on the impact on the perception and consequent reactions of students. This can also lead to work with key staff to support students in acquiring and using a vocabulary and the skills necessary to understand who they are and who they are becoming. This could also create space to mediate the competing claims for what is considered to be a good life.

This dialogue will also help the adults concerned to understand and explain the virtual worlds occupied by students today and to consider appropriate responses to the challenges that arise. Hence, youth workers supporting individual young people and their family can jointly learn the impact of and the nature of this new way of interacting with the world, the audience it provides for the emerging adult and some joint understanding of ways that its undoubted power might be harnessed. This would provide a different and additional lens. Together the mentor and the young person will co-create new knowledge and ways forward that meet their individual needs.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

There clearly is no easy solution to the problem of disengagement from their formal education by so many of our secondary school students. This disengagement is occurring during their adolescence and during a period of social change. We see good teachers in good schools who are under pressure to achieve demanding grade targets in a narrow range of knowledge-based subjects. Young people also have the modern challenge of self-creation through a reflexive process that relies increasingly on feedback from significant others and digital media. Moreover, during the transfer to secondary schools some children find the creation of positive relationships with school-based adults a challenge. Some also fail to see the relevance of the knowledge content of much of their curriculum. Some parents are in a similar position.

In this article we have argued one way forward may be to create space for such students to build covenantal, open-ended rather than contractual and output focused relationships with trained trusted adults so that they can be supported to address barriers they face that restrict their access to the educational goods they need to have a good adult life. Within these relationships, they and their parents may also be supported in advocacy for curriculum change and change to behaviour policies.

Moreover, much current research into school exclusions, the severest disengagement, focusses on broad categories of students that have statistical correlations. Since these are often not causal relationships we argue that more attention should be paid to individual cases in order to supplement and complement the knowledge we have currently in order to seek more productive, contextual pathways to addressing these issues.

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Simon Edwards led Boundstone youth wing, a West Sussex Youth Service funded youth centre, based on Boundstone Community school site for five years. Following government withdrawal of youth work funding Simon gained QTS and, over a six year period, taught in mainstream and special schools and then led an alternative provision. On gaining his PhD in Education philosophy, he entered higher education where he established with Richard Eeva the charity called Beyond the School Gates. He addresses educational issues in his

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