The Elton Report was a significant report, commissioned by the government in 1989. Although over twelve years old, it is a seminal document which addresses the issue of behaviour management in a positive and planned way. Discuss how teaching and learning links with classroom behaviour in the light of this and other more up to date reports.

"Teachers are the guardians of their pupils' right to learn, but the converse is also true: pupils must allow teachers to teach by behaving appropriately at school."

(http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/- last visited on 10/03/06)

This quote, to me, has great significance - as I believe that teachers do have a responsibility to provide students with the knowledge and skills to be able to learn about different issues, but at the same time, I believe that problems do arise if students aren't allowing teachers to carry out their role properly, the disruption of lessons leads to the teachers being prevented from teaching and some students from their right to learn.

This paper will discuss the issues of behaviour management, within classrooms, and how, if not managed efficiently, can hinder teaching and learning. It will consider the influential Elton Report (1989), the Learning Behaviour Report by Alan Steer (October 2005), dominant writers such as Lee Canter and Sue Roffey, documents and articles from the Department for Educations and Skills, websites and opinions.

Since the Elton Report in 1989, and through research, it is obvious to me that the fundamental principles of most authors on this subject seems to be that the management of behaviour in today's classrooms, come down to the following:

- Effective teaching and learning is linked to the promotion of positive behaviour
- In some cases, some specific learning behaviours need to be taught, reinforced and reviewed, as with the subject that students are taught
- Positive recognition and reinforcement of appropriate behaviour is likely to elicit continued positive behaviour
- Positive relationships with student are the key to the promoting of positive behaviour
- Inappropriate behaviour is kept to a minimum by having an orderly and purposeful atmosphere.

Even at this early stage, it can quite evidently be said that the promotion of positive behaviour plays a crucial role in classroom management and the motivation of students to achieve.

"Behaviour is contextual and interactive. The choices teachers make in responding to children’s behaviour are crucial in influencing the choices children make about how they will behave. The more teachers can be aware of and manage their own emotional responses to inappropriate behaviour, the more likely they are to be able to maintain a calm classroom atmosphere.” (Quote is taken from the Underlying Principles of a training session from the DfES on “Effective teaching and behaviour for learning” - Primary National Strategy 2005)

This above citation is related in some way to what Elton stated in one of the recommendations, and I firmly believe this to be true in that it is essential for teachers to be prepared and trained in the "personal qualities required for effective classroom management, particularly the potential ability to relate will to children” (1989:p.20). I also feel that it performs a major part of the delivering of teaching and the pupils' right to learn; If teachers are not prepared professionally or
mentally, and are not trained to cope with whatever situation or issue that may arise, possibly leading to the teacher getting emotional, a and unable to control the inappropriate behaviour.

Lee Canter wrote in his book about the myth of a good teacher (2001:p.4), he talks about this from the students' perspective, "A good teacher should be able to handle all behaviour problems" he writes that students assume that teachers are competent, therefore shouldn't have problems in dealing with behaviour, he mentions that this leave teachers feeling guilty, and in need of help. "Initial teacher training establishments are required to provide some relevant training, but what and how much is not specified. There is a widespread perception that new teachers are often not adequately trained in this area. The ability to manage behaviour is a requirement for achieving qualified teacher status." (Steer 2005:p.45). Therefore if this is the case, I believe that ITT institutions should be offering and including a more structured training process for new teachers on how to deal with such issues. Although I am a firm advocate of "being thrown in at the deep end", and believe that experience is one of the best ways of learning new things, but at the same time, I feel that this is the way that I learn - other people (in the same respect as children in schools) have different learning styles - some need to be given training tailored to their needs.

"You can see the classroom as a battleground, where the strongest win and the toughest survive. Plenty of teachers embark on the next round every time they go through the door. Others have given up and believe the students already have the upper hand. Their aim is just to get through the lesson, somehow, anyhow. They make little effort to make the lesson lively and interesting – ‘what’s the point?’" (Roffey 2004:p.40)

I feel that some experienced teachers, need refresher courses on dealing with behaviour, and assistance in adapting some lessons to the needs of the different students - from experience of speaking with people of this position, I discovered that they themselves felt uncomfortable with dealing with behaviour, and many felt that the need for differentiation strategies were not of use either. This, as an ITT student astounded me, in that; if current teachers aren't supporting the students in a way that students can learn, and tailoring lessons to their learning styles - then students will inevitably get frustrated, leading to inappropriate behaviour.

The Learning Behaviour Report (October 2005) also recommended that “all schools should assess staff’s needs and build into their in-service training programmes specific opportunities to discuss and learn about behaviour” (2005:p.16). I believe that whatever the result of the training, it should be adhered to by all, and driven through the school culture - but also monitored to ensure that the standards are kept as high as possible, in all lessons and student contact.

Sir Elton wrote of this in the report (1989:p.12), when he wrote that "the most effective schools seem to be those that have created a positive atmosphere based on a sense of community and shared values" - "shared" being the operative word, as it is vital that the school stands for something, and that the staff and students of that school believe and live up to whatever the principle may be. This I feel is primarily the responsibility of the leadership team within schools, effective leadership in schools is central when creating a climate of good order that supports pupils in managing their behaviour and maximising their learning. Steer writes that the leadership team should "lead from the front" and states that "positive behaviour must be shared across the whole staff, including senior and subject leaders, pastoral staff, classroom teachers and support staff" (2005:p.17); parents, of course would have to support this, and work with the school to ensure that their children are meeting the expectations of the school to ensure that they are making the most of their right to learning, and that teachers can carry out their role in assisting in this.
"We cannot assume that children already have the skills they need in order to meet our expectations about their behaviour. We need to take steps to develop children’s social, emotional and behavioural skills." (Quote is taken from the underlying principles of a training session from the DfES on "Effective teaching and behaviour for learning" - Primary National Strategy 2005).

On my recent teaching placement, the above extract has become increasingly obvious. I aid in the teaching of many students with English as an additional language - mainly pupils from families seeking asylum in the UK. In this particular school, it is these children that seem to cause the most delinquency and distraction in lessons, as well as throughout the whole school. My belief is that these students are not socially prepared for the situations and culture that they are introduced to at our schools. Surely there should be a system whereby these particular students are able to experience and develop these skills without jeopardising other students' right to learning?

Of course, I am not suggesting that the blame for inappropriate classroom behaviour falls entirely on the shoulders of these children and their cultural backgrounds, I am fully aware that social and cultural attitudes within our own nation have changed dramatically over the years.

Lee Canter (2001:p.4) wrote, that with the rise in societal developments, i.e. an increase in graphic sexuality, drugs and violence issues, and changing roles of parents, i.e. increase unemployment and single parents increasingly with less time; "often children must negotiate their way to adulthood without guidance". I also agree with him when he writes that we must "invest in time and effort to teach [your] students the behaviour and academic skills necessary for success at school" (2001:p.4). Equally, my concern with this is - surely these academic skills and behavioural practice should be delivered at nursery and primary schools in the first place?

In the same way as the Elton group wrote, "[parents should] provide firm bud affectionate guidance in the home, which is most likely to produce the attitudes on which good behaviour in school can be based" (1989:p.34), I do appreciate that these skills are initially be the role of the parent - but surely with the increase of the change in roles that Canter spoke of, no obvious support in the home, the child will surely have no enthusiasm to learn or behave appropriately - if they are not accustomed to follow and abide by rules, they will not be comfortable with conflicts regarding anti-social and aggressive behaviour - This is the stage where the child is mainly at risk of exclusion from lessons, which then lead to more serious consequences.

"Schools must ensure an appropriate curriculum is offered, which must be accessible to pupils of all abilities and aptitudes. Schools should develop a Learning and Teaching policy that identifies the teaching and classroom management strategies to be followed by all staff." (Steer 2005:p.18)

Similarly, the Elton report established connections with the curriculum and overall classroom management and organisation. Further to this, it suggested that everybody involved in the planning, delivery and evaluation of the curriculum should recognise that the quality of teaching and learning had a significant impact on pupils' behaviour. The Elton Report took into consideration the links between content and methods of delivery of the school curriculum and the motivation and behaviour of pupils - "stimulating and suitably differentiated programmes of study for the full ability range, and that the national assessment system is supportive and not threatening" (1989:p.13).
Differentiation is key - as I believe that some behaviour is down to the frustration caused by students in not being able to do the work, or finding the work undemanding. By identifying lower and higher achievers, setting them activities and work accordingly, will surely lower the likelihood of unsuitable behaviour; all students will be on task, and working to a level that they are happy with, but most importantly - a level that they work most effectively at.

Setting appropriate differentiation work is the responsibility of the school, teachers must be conscious of what they are doing, or it might prove to be disadvantageous to the pupil, teacher and school. Although the process of producing the work is seen as time consuming, teachers must ensure that the work is done, to gain the best possible outcome - good behaviour, high quality work, obedient students and respectable exam/coursework grades - eventually leading to enhanced value-added and league table scores.

It ultimately comes down to attitude and the motivation of all involved within the school, but an optimistic approach to setting an appropriate curriculum would undoubtedly benefit everybody, financially, academically and professionally. The DfES seem to be providing adequate support to schools, students, and parents to achieve this, by publishing various White Papers like the 14-19 Education and Skills Paper, and initiatives such as Every Child Matters - Local authorities should be taking full advantage of these and pushing them through schools, where senior management should be ensuring that schemes like the ones mentioned are used as a foundation to the running of an effective and prosperous school.

"Poor behaviour cannot be tolerated as it is a denial of the right of pupils to learn and teachers to teach. To enable learning to take place preventative action is most effective, but where this fails, schools must have clear, firm and intelligent strategies in place to help pupils manage their behaviour" (Steer 2005:p.2).

Again, Steer writes of similar subjects of those that Elton wrote of in 1989, in the recommendations of his report, Elton stated that Head teachers, LEA's and governing bodies should ensure that there is a "healthy balance between rewards and punishments" that "rules are applied consistently by all members of staff" but they should "avoid punishments which humiliate pupils" (1989:p.26). Elton also states that parents should also play a role in this - "Headteachers should ensure that their schools' behaviour policies are communicated fully and clearly to the parents, who should be reminded of them regularly and informed of any major changes to them throughout their child's school career" (1989:p.34).

Personally I feel that these are both reasonable, and in some sense commonsensical statements, as with any organisation, there are rules and policies that must be followed, these are made aware to all stakeholders - this should be the case in all schools, and consequences must be carried through if any rules are broken. This is the only way that a business can run effectively; therefore schools must also adopt this approach to ensure an efficient operation.

I do believe that in the same sense that employees are given incentives such as promotion and bonuses, students at school should also be given something to encourage them to progress. I don't mean monetary incentives like the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) given to post-16 students; I propose encouragement through things like responsibility, recognition and appreciation. Systems such as Merits and Certificates of Achievement are used successfully in some schools, but mainly at Key Stage 3 level (and only usually to those that excel at their work or effort), EMA and School Council Duties are given to some post-16 students, which again works well with those who
are eligible, but what about Key Stage 4 and those other students that don't necessarily find Merits an achievement, or might not be motivated to produce a high standard of work?

In the recommendations made by Elton, the group suggested that head teachers and teachers should give pupils "every opportunity to take responsibilities and to make a full contribution to improving behaviour in schools", the group also mentioned that "active participation of pupils in shaping and reviewing the school's behaviour policy" would also help battle against poor behaviour as the students would feel more of a responsibility to commit to policies made by themselves. What I am fundamentally suggesting is that schools and all it's members, as an organisation, should work as a team to build the desired environment, and work efficiently to take care in driving the culture throughout - which would then show as a result in classroom behaviour.

"Catch 'em doing something right". (http://education.guardian.co.uk/pupilbehaviour/story/0,1680036,00.html; Thursday, January5th 2006)

In more recent reports, teachers were being advised that by praising pupils for good behaviour as well as good work, disruptive classes will be transformed - according to BBC News and the Guardian. Both Elton and Steer wrote this in their reports, but it is obvious that there is still a need to execute this course of action.

Sue Roffey wrote "Give attention to what you want, not to what you don't want. Comment positively on students who are doing as you have requested" (2004:p.42). Some teachers may look at this and feel that this isn't appropriate, especially if there is bad behaviour in other parts of the classroom, this is understandable to some extent, but my view on this is that the misbehaving students are often subconsciously aiming to attract attention, therefore teachers should do what Canter (1976) called “proximity praise”, giving the students that are working hard, and behaving appropriately some attention, before commenting on the bad behaviour, the "attention-seeking" students would soon change their ways, even if it's just simply to get some more attention!

"The vast majority of students are OK. They may be noisy, lively, cheeky and a bit challenging but with the right approach you will get along together and they will not make your life a misery." (Roffey, 2004:p.39)

This quote from Sue Roffey's book is very important, in the sense that it highlights that not all students behave inappropriately; therefore everyone should not be punished all of the time. Teachers must approach their working day with enthusiasm, and the motivation that they would want in return from their students - most importantly a teacher should enjoy teaching or students will read negative body language and won't even prepare to learn.

Strategies should be in place to tackle bad behaviour as and when it happens, it should be quick and to the point, not taking away any focus from what the students are at school to do - learn. Praise and encouragement are tools that should be in constant use to promote good behaviour within the classroom and whole-school, i.e. assembly and letters home.

"Many students come into school expecting to be told what to do all the time. Changing the culture of the classroom is not an easy task. It may take time but do not believe the cynics who tell you that students are not capable of making good decisions for themselves. It is likely to be only true of those who have never had the chance." (Roffey, 2004:p.54)
It is essential that the school culture is predetermined and focused on every day of the week, consideration should be given to students on an individual basis, teachers and senior management should supportive of all students, encouraging responsibility and team work. Teachers need to be prepared, in the sense that they have activities and resources for all abilities, that their knowledge of the curriculum is clear, and that they can present the information in a way that helps the students to learn.

Finally, I believe that in order for a teacher to teach effectively, and a student to learn successfully, the most important thing is being able to work and communicate well together, with senior management, parents, LEA and governors. An example should be set at the top, and worked equally through the staff who should deliver it with enthusiasm and meaning to the students. The process is not one that will solve all the issues over night; it is something that schools should concentrate working on as soon as possible to ensure a brighter future for all.