

Behaviour management

Supporting inexperienced teachers

AIMS

This leaflet is designed to support subject mentors, as they in turn support trainee teachers in a difficult area: behaviour management. It's a complex area that is often a development target for novice teachers. This leaflet identifies some general areas that may be a focus for discussion, investigation and development.

THE PROBLEM

Help colleagues to understand the nature of the problem. A sympathetic phrase - 'it's a bad class', 'it's last lesson on Thursday', 'everyone has problems with that class' - may give some short-lived comfort, but it won't deal with the issue, if the work was too difficult, the instructions were unclear, the teacher was not prepared. Help the teacher see the main problem(s) and therefore where the solution lies.

If there are a number of issues, help them assess the importance of the problem by establishing a simple ladder of priorities:

(1 is the highest priority)

1. safety
2. behaviour that is insulting or offensive
3. behaviour that affects the learning of the majority
4. behaviour that affects small groups/individuals

If there are many issues with the management of a lesson, help the teacher to prioritise, drawing out key issues to start with.

THE KNOWLEDGE

Inexperienced teachers look for a 'magic key' to behaviour management - a word, a technique, a look - that will give them instant control. Of course, it doesn't exist. The good management they see in successfully managed classrooms is down to a number of factors such as careful lesson planning, established routines and time invested in building relationships.

There is some basic knowledge they can acquire, however, relating to the school's and the department's policy and protocols. All schools operate differently, so provide them with the policy and then talk through what individual aspects will look like in practice. They should know what to do if a pupil swears, for example, or what to do if a pupil leaves the classroom without permission. They should also be clear on the sanctions available or not available in school. Is acceptable to send a pupil outside the door? for example. Share strategies that are generally in use in the department. Stress the need not to overuse strategies.

THE CONFIDENCE

Reinforce that as a teacher you adopt a persona - this doesn't not need to be an all-singing, all-dancing individual, but it does mean approaching the lesson with a positive, confident attitude. Developing this persona, helps teachers to cope with the knocks of the classroom - and stops things being personal. It is also key in developing the confidence to manage the classroom - effective classroom management is very much about confidence. Aim to develop the confidence of the trainee teacher. Always leave conversations about behaviour management on a positive, constructive note.



THE PLANNING

Planning for effective behaviour management is essential. Key elements include:

- ensuring that pupils are engaged throughout the lesson
- planning what both the teacher and the pupils are doing, for each stage of the lesson
- avoid prolonged teacher-led episodes
- rehearsing different ways of giving instructions and explaining things
- planning to encourage and support the good behaviour of individuals
- anticipating potential problems, like transitions from one section of the lesson to the next, and planning for them
- observing other colleagues with key classes and individuals, to learn from their approaches

*“Catch them being good”
– expect good behaviour,
look for it, praise it,
reward it.*

THE RELATIONSHIP

The old adage ‘Don’t smile till Christmas’ is not helpful. It’s probably intended to forestall a naively over-friendly approach, but establishing a positive relationship, which will probably include smiling, is very important. Factors to help build that good positive relationships include:

- learning pupil names - fast - and using them
- focusing on positive behaviour
- catching them being good - “24 of you are being really good - just waiting for 2 more...”
- using reward systems (aim for more rewards than sanctions)
- use reward systems fairly and consistently
- getting down to pupil level when talking to them
- aiming to have some sort of dialogue with each pupil every lesson
- really listening to their contributions, and responding genuinely
- avoid harbouring grudges - it only perpetuates bad relations



THE ROUTINE

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Routines help establish order, consistency, speed, independence and security. They are an essential part of class management and the same routines established across different classes have the ability to establish a teacher’s distinctive identity within a school. Explicit consideration of the routines might cover areas such as:

- pupils entering (and leaving) the classroom
- seating plans
- pupils moving about the classroom
- teacher moving about the classroom
- learning objectives
- asking questions
- use of the whiteboard (e.g. dates, objectives, outcomes, etc)
- giving out resources
- giving deadlines and reminders
- giving notice of what’s to come “In one minute, I’ll ask you to put your pens down...”
- giving rewards

THE TEACHER'S ORBIT

Teachers need to be aware of the space around the classroom, how they use it and what they use it for. From where do they instruct? question? encourage? reward? admonish? Do they have (and use) access to every student? Do they meet and greet students? Do they move freely in class? Do they work collaboratively with support staff to extend their area of influence?

An observation, using a classroom plan, charting the teacher's movement (perhaps including talk and questioning patterns) can be very helpful.

THE TALK

A teacher's control of voice, talk and dialogue is crucial for classroom management. Whether giving instructions, asking questions, or offering praise, it's important to maintain clarity, as well as a controlled and positive approach. Good advice might be:

- sound interested, even excited, in the subject
- reinforce instructions (visual as well as verbal)
- use positive phrasing ("put your pen down and listen" rather than "stop calling out")
- use a consciously controlled voice (avoid shouting)
- aim not to 'lecture' for long periods
- watch out for 'class discussions' which in reality are a talk by the teacher punctuated by pupil contributions
- wait for complete quiet before giving instructions/information
- give genuine praise
- criticise the behaviour, not the person ("name calling is unpleasant" rather than "you're being nasty")
- avoid open confrontation in front of other pupils ("we'll discuss this at the end of the lesson")
- offer choices ("This work needs completing, so is it now or at break?")



THE DECISIONS

Class management may require thinking on your feet, but this should be supported thoughtful preparation. Decisions should be informed by strategy, for example:

- decide, precisely, on what you want to modify - talking out of turn, getting out of seat - and make that a clear target for the pupil(s)
- identify the primary or major issues that need to be addressed and tackle them one-by-one
- tactically ignore minor issues if the major issues are being dealt with (e.g. ignore the sulky sighs, as a pupil returns to his/her desk as requested)
- avoid being sidelined onto a pupil's agenda (e.g. ignore irrelevant questions)
- only threaten what you intend to carry out (letting them off, lets them play the system)
- recognise that pupils (especially when angry) may need time and space to cool off
- recognise when you need help and advice, know where to get it.

*No 'earning back' time –
this encourages pupils to
play the system*

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Common behaviour management issues for new teachers

Undemanding work:

lack of challenge leads to chatter and lax approach

Unclear instructions:

unsure of a task, pupils will not settle and tend to chat

Too much teacher talk:

pupils lose interest and minds wander

Too much teacher-led activity, and not enough pupil activity

Pupils call shots:

through interruptions, calling out, questions, etc.

Shouting: as the noise level rises the teacher shouts, either to be heard or out of frustration

Crumbling transitions:

behaviour deteriorates as the lesson shifts focus without firm guidance

Loses sight of class:

the teacher helps individuals without keeping eye on the whole class

Inaudible voice: e.g. through talking too quietly or too quickly

Free resources

Useful resources, freely available on the Internet:

Behaviour4Learning - materials to support positive approaches, including a set of 26 videos
<http://www.behaviour4learning.ac.uk/>

Supportive Behaviour Management, site by behaviour management consultant, Mike Temple.
<http://behaviourmanagement.org/default.aspx>

Teachers TV - the section on secondary contains an excellent before and after session on dealing with attention seekers
<http://www.teachers.tv/behaviour>

Welsh Assembly Government - *Practical Approaches to Behaviour Management in the Classroom* (2006) - a very useful, accessible handbook.
<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/090515practicalapproachesen.pdf>

Union advice and resources

ATL - Managing Classroom Behaviour

<http://www.atl.org.uk/Images/Managing%20classroom%20behaviour%202008.pdf>

NASUWT - information and resources to download, including their Behaviour Management Pack.

<http://www.nasuwat.org.uk/InformationandAdvice/Professionalissues/Behaviour/index.htm>

NUT - Pupil Behaviour: advice, guidance and protection

<http://www.teachers.org.uk/files/active/0/Pupil-Behaviour-5427.pdf>