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The Positive Management of Behaviour

From my consultancy work on these issues in many Primary and Secondary schools I would suggest the following as being my top tips for motivational and behavioural management tactics generally.

Use the sequence predict-prevent-minimalize-counter. We frequently seek to intervene or counter too early in Interventions and inhibit children learning to modify their own behaviour or resolve conflicts themselves.

Private rather than public reprimand that addresses the behaviour and separates it from the child themselves is preferable to telling off in front of the whole class. The latter can violate a young person's emotional needs and, with more challenging children, frequently provokes worsening behaviour, especially from boys. Go down to the child's level, speak quietly, address the behaviour and separate the child from the mistake: 'N. stop that, it's silly... you are a bright child you can do this properly.' Or (using a traffic light system)....' N. stop that, thank you. You are letting yourself get into amber.... how can you get yourself back on green?'

When a child complies with your instruction or improves their behaviour then catch them doing it and thank them for it, making it personal: 'Thank you N., you are behaving much better now. Well done.' - 'Thank you, N. you are co-operating with me much better now.'

Anticipate compliance when you instruct a child to stop doing something: 'N. stop that, thank you!' is much better than 'Stop that, please' which gives the decision to the child.

Incidents of sexism, racism, bullying and unkindness should, however, be addressed publicly-calmly and assertively by stopping the curriculum. These are issues of behaviour that affect ethos and attitudes and are important to everyone.

Public interventions for important issues

1. Pause the Curriculum
2. Tell off and consolidate rule/ethos: X, stop that/do not say that: **it is** racist/sexist/bullying/disrespectful/**It** is unkind. We treat everyone with respect and kindly in this school.
3. Empower the victim: Y, if s/he says that again you should tell them assertively to stop doing it. If s/he doesn't stop, you must tell me.
4. Empower the perpetrator: X, if I don't treat you with respect, you should tell me.
5. Discuss issue: (Empowering) Y, have I done enough about his for the moment? That's kind of you. O.K. let's discuss why this issue is so important to us all. X, what are your thoughts?

THIS AND OTHER TECHNIQUES ARE VERY USEFULLY PRACTISED THROUGH STAFF ROLE PLAY SESSIONS.

Pro-activity

1. Define what good behaviour looks like and how you can maintain it through ethos and reward. Classroom/school rules should be few in number, phrased positively, displayed and be used to *teach* good behaviour. A good rule can readily be used to praise children.

Define for yourself what worsening behaviour in an individual child or group of children looks like and define tactics to mitigate it for that child or in that group. Define what bad behaviour in an

1. individual child looks like and tailor responses to the needs of that child *rather than follow a prescriptive system of sanctions. Many whole-school policies don't afford enough differentiation and turn out cold and unresponsive to individual needs. Policies should be for guidance only and empower autonomous action to individual teachers.*
2. **Engage the class** in establishing criteria for good behaviour together. We can contain bad behaviour through sanction, but we modify behaviour *only* through praise.
3. **Communicate clear expectations of good behaviour** and praise it, e.g. 'Thanks, everyone, you really worked hard this lesson!'

4. **The four most important things to reward** are good behaviour, improvements in behaviour, good effort and improvements in effort- *rather than attainment. Think how much less effort some children must make to do good work and how much more effort some children must put in!* Reward good behaviour and effort frequently and consistently through your systems, e.g. every half term send a letter home to affirm good behaviour and/or effort. Then you can use this as an opportunity to target improvements in individuals: N. should not be getting a letter home at the end of week so you target improvements with them during this week so they can do so.
5. **Traffic light systems** are useful when used on a one-to-one level. Display your traffic lights with explanation and guidance where all can see it. Refer to it quietly and privately with individual children. When a child is beginning to show behavioural problems come and sit quietly by their side and have a whispered conversation with them. Ask them what light they are on. Ask them what they can do to move themselves into green.
6. **Teach assertion skills** to your class and train them in using them. You can say to a class, for example, if someone is stopping you working you should say, 'Please stop that, I am trying to work' and support the children in saying it themselves when they need to do so.

Managing Challenging Behaviour

With an individual child with difficult or challenging behaviour, work on the relationship first and *not* the problem. Affirm good behaviour by 'catching' it frequently during and afterwards: 'Cindy you had a really good morning today.' Remind of previous good behaviour... 'That's the second day in a row; well done!' Apply challenge... 'Do you think you will be able to have a good afternoon as well?' Affirm personally... 'I think you will be able to'. Apply reward... 'If you do you will get more merit stickers for your collection' / 'really be good at...' etc.

It's amazing how just giving a little more one-to-one time with a child can have a very positive effect...

If a child has challenging behaviour, find a little time to do something together with them, such as play a game or ask them to help you with something. Don't address any problems during this time, just praise and affirm their effort. Then give them quality time later to address their needs. Here, try to engage in discussion about why they misbehave at times: is it when they are feeling frustrated, angry, sad etc? Very often, of course, it is something outside of your classroom so be sensitive to this. You can't know how the child feels but you can help them to understand it themselves. Always seek to empower the child to self-regulate-work out a plan with them- what can they do when feeling angry or upset to contain their behaviour and turn it into a more positive reaction. Give them a tick sheet to monitor their achievements in these actions and encourage them to show you it when they do so. Stickers in a small special notebook work well.

With a boy especially, engage him early and initially just in passing. As he comes in the room ask him if he's OK today. If you think he isn't then ask him if he is *really* OK today quietly and privately. Express empathy: try to talk through feelings but, if difficult to engage, then affirm: 'I understand you might find it difficult to express your feelings- that's Ok -but if you ever need to speak to me, just ask, won't you?' Boys respond well to playing games and sport with their teacher. Males tend to bond with others through activities rather than discussion.

With a girl especially-talk to her about how she feels when angry/sad etc. and discuss how she might help to make herself feel better. Sometimes it is very useful to be anecdotal- describing a time you felt as she did and how you dealt with it. It is especially important with a girl to **AVOID CRITICISM**. When criticising a girls' work (or a woman's work for that matter!) she is far more likely to take it personally than a boy. She tends to invest much more of her emotional self into her schoolwork (think about the care she takes in getting things right and in her neatness of presentation). Criticise her work and you are criticising her; criticise him- he's cool, it's just his work that's rubbish!' See the section on Gender for more insights!

Should you need to sanction a child try to make it restorative. If you punish by staying behind, then make it boring! Do not confuse punishment by tasking with schoolwork since it confuses messages by linking the schoolwork with punishment. Again, this is especially important for boys.

Developing Self-Regulation

Use 'plan-do-review' across the curriculum, teach it as a skill and apply it to improvements in behaviour. Always seek to teach children good behaviours to replace their negative ones.

Remove unnecessary restrictions on children's behaviour. If they need to ask to borrow a pen or pencil from another child, they can do so without asking you.

Buddy-Book-Boss works well: if they need help, they can be encouraged to ask another learner first then find out or try it out themselves before asking you.

Ensure that several tasks per week are given planning time where criteria for success are examined and presented before the task and then are self-assessed afterwards.

Consequences

Sanction only as a last resort and do when you need to *not* when the child wants you to! Children will deliberately provoke retaliation especially if they get it a lot outside of school.

Explain the consequences of poor and bad behaviour.

Always use consequence assertion before sanction: 'If you don't stop doing this... I will have to...'

Sanctions

Withdrawal of privileges is the key to minor sanctions. Not withdrawal of rights! Never sit a child in a public position where others can see they are in trouble or being punished.

Boredom is the key to punishment and, again, should never be confused by giving schoolwork which should be fun and enjoyable to do *or with counselling*. Sit a child in your presence during break, for example, doing nothing for five minutes and time it.

Sanctions should also be restorative wherever possible: e.g. a child who offends another child is required to apologise and then ask the other child if s/he can accept the apology or whether anything else is needed.



When two children are in conflict give them time out, a resolution sheet and a timer. They both sign in. Timer starts. One speaks and explains their problem to the other without interruption. Timer stops and the other repeats the process. Timer on for a third time and together they agree a resolution. Finally, they write and sign their agreement in the resolution book. You might try this yourself with a child as well.