



Department
for Education

Guidance

The trainee teacher behavioural toolkit: a summary

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Applies to England

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In 2016, in response to the Carter Review of Initial Teacher Training, a review of the behaviour management component of teacher induction was commissioned by the then Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan. Subsequently, another report was commissioned to locate the features of successful school cultures and classrooms. This document is a summary of both of these projects, reframed to support providers of Initial Teacher Training who are designing their curricula to meet the specification of the new ITT Core Content.

Tom Bennett, Lead Behaviour Adviser, Department of Education

Introduction

Pupil behaviour is key to the success of most classroom outcomes. What we call behaviour is actually the sum of an enormous number of habits and attitudes and skills that adults frequently take for granted. None of these factors are innate, and they must be imparted or taught in some way. Pupils vary enormously in these capacities due to their histories and circumstances. Teachers that assume all pupils are equally capable of behaving successfully, soon discover they are not.

Behaviour must be taught. The habits and skills that comprise successful class behaviour should be taught to all pupils. It is entirely possible to do for most pupils.

The two main approaches that new teachers should focus on are proactive behaviour management and reactive behaviour management.

Proactive behaviour management

Behaviour management should be seen as a process, not of merely reacting to misbehaviour when it occurs, but more importantly of actively supporting pupils by proactively teaching them clearly what behaviour is expected of them, and how it will help them to succeed.

This involves the following elements:

- introducing the pupils to the rules and expectations of the classroom as soon as possible, preferably on the first encounter
- not allowing pupils to work out what good conduct looks like; this penalises the less able pupil. Instead, be precise, and carefully communicate what behaviour will help pupils to succeed, what is

prohibited, and what the consequences of both will be, emphasising the benefits of engaging with the processes

- being clear in one's mind what good behaviour looks like
- avoiding ambiguity, grey areas or interpretation. Be concrete. What behaviour do you need in a line-up? When you are speaking? When they are working in pairs? When they are stuck? Late?

Once this has been clarified, communicate it clearly to pupils. Be clear, use examples, and check for misunderstanding. Teach, rather than tell, the pupils what you expect of them. Behaviour should be seen as a curriculum, and it should be assessed, revised and refreshed constantly.

Norms

Pupils frequently look to one another for social cues about what is acceptable behaviour, or desired/popular behaviour. This is driven by, among other things, a desire to fit in, not stand out, and to gain the approval of peer groups. It is entirely to be expected that pupils will compete for status and attention amongst one another. But if misbehaviour is normal, pupils often drift behaviourally towards that norm. The teacher must assert what the norms of the room should be, even if they fall short. Pupils must see and hear them promoted and required constantly.

Use normative language to encourage pupils to grasp norms: 'In this classroom we...' for example. Respond whenever norms are broken. Demonstrate that they are important and be consistent with them over time.

Routines

Another form of norm that significantly affects behaviour is the use of routines - specific sequences of behaviour that pupils are required to perform practically all of the time without significant deviation.

Examples include:

- entry routines
- class dismissal
- corridor conduct
- transitions between activities
- assemblies
- obtaining silence

Pupils do not intuitively grasp these without direction, nor are they equally capable of performing them without systematic instruction.

Routines take time to develop into habits, but the effort invested in their creation and adoption is enormously useful to the pupil and the class. Like all norms, they should be carefully and clearly taught at the beginning of the teaching relationship, reinforced consistently over time, and periodically refreshed.

Consequences

No matter how clearly rules, norms and routines are taught, pupils will still test all boundaries. When these are broken, it is necessary for pupils to experience consequences that are aimed at reminding the individual, and the class, that classroom norms must be respected. These can take the form of sanctions.

Sanctions

Mild sanctions attempt to deter future misbehaviour by attaching negative consequences to undesired behaviour. They are not universally effective, but no one strategy is. Their certainty is far more important than their severity, as the deterrent effect of a sanction is maximised in high trust environments- that is, when pupils are reasonably certain that the consequences will inevitably follow the misbehaviour. They remain an essential part of any behaviour management system, and teachers should not hesitate to use them when necessary, when they are fair, and when rules have been broken.

Rewards

Teachers should use a combination of:

- extrinsic rewards (merits or symbolic prizes, for example) to encourage good behaviour
- intrinsic rewards (targeted praise, and encouraging pupils to value good behaviour and learning for itself, not because of some other outcome. This is scaffolded by consistent class norms focussing on explicitly positive learning and social behaviours).

Other features of effective behaviour management for trainee teachers:

- know the school behaviour policy in detail and use its consequences systems in a reliable and consistent manner
- ask for support whenever necessary
- rules, sanctions and norms can have exceptions, but they should be exceptional, logical and consistent
- mentally prepare for the most common behaviour problems; focus clearly on what they are, and exactly how you will behave, and what you will say. Scripting like this can provide inspiration when decisions have to be made quickly
- proactively contact parents before it is necessary to do so, as much as possible. This will develop positive relationships which will be useful when seeking help and support
- revisit norms, routines and consequences systems explicitly through termly reboots, both to remind the class and yourself about what has been agreed
- if pupils display patterns of misbehaviour that are resistant to routines, discussion, and consequences, ask for assistance, and escalate using the school behaviour system
- persistence and consistency are key to developing relationships of trust with pupils, especially vulnerable or highly challenging ones
- always treat pupils with dignity and expect that they treat others - including yourself - with the same