

Draft

A-Z of class behaviour

Practical approaches for primary school staff
on 26 topics raised by teachers

Hugh Williams: Senior Educational Psychologist



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What this book is all about.....

Teachers and other school staff always have lots of questions about managing the behaviour of their pupils. Most they answer themselves, or through help from others in the school.

But there are some questions that come up time after time, and there are no easy answers.

In this book we have tried to give some answers to questions like these raised by teachers. There are some other topics that come up frequently in discussions about behaviour in class. While there are no 'magic wands' each section makes suggestions and gives advice on the best things to try- often with some information about the psychology involved.

Some of the sections are general – things to do all the time – and some are for specific problems

and how it can be used.

The book can be read from cover to cover – there is a sequence to the questions.

It's more likely that you'll want to look at the answer to particular issues. Each section can be used 'stand alone'- it should make sense without reading any other part. Where it is helpful though, a section may include references to other sections.

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A Keeping the purpose clear: teaching and learning

There are a lot of good ideas which can usefully be used by staff to improve behaviour around the school and in class. But there is always a danger that dealing with behaviour becomes such a big issue that the reason for being there- for pupils to learn – gets lost.

In times of calm it's easy to see that if the teaching and learning are not right, whatever you do, the pupils are not likely to maintain any established good behaviour.

So, first and foremost, make sure that the curriculum, activities and assessment are all appropriate to the pupils. When you start out with a new class make sure you either know or find out what they know and don't know. Be clear what language they will need to understand the work and check they know it. Adapt the work to include more explanation of terms if necessary.

Of course preparation, planning, pacing and clear transitions all go towards maximising your chances of getting good and enthusiastic pupil behaviour. It's also important to have curriculum, presentation and assessment which is differentiated to ensure that pupils are challenged- but within the range that they can gain success.

Pupils will recognise your effective and confident professional practice, in most cases with admiration. And if there are still those who don't behave, they won't be justified in claiming that it was because of bad lessons !

Experienced teachers will know all this, but they should not forget to monitor constantly their own curricular routines to ensure that they remain appropriate to the ever changing environment and relevant to the needs of the pupils.

B It's not my job

"I'm here to teach children, not to deal with behaviour problems !"

Of course. But what you do in your teaching will affect behaviour – for good or for bad. You can't opt out – not because the management say you can't, but because it's impossible. You will **contribute** to children's behaviour whatever you do.

There's a simple explanation for why this must be the case. Learning and behaviour are two expressions for the same thing. Learning is demonstrated by changes in the child's behaviour- that's what we measure when we test learning. Behaviour is largely a result of learning* – from parents, peers, teachers, other adults and the environment in general.

Therefore, you, like all teachers and non teaching staff in the school, share contribution to the behaviour of the pupils.

Contribution doesn't mean blame. Blame is the result of emotional reactions like anger, disappointment and disgust when people feel ill-used, let down or guilty. Based on strong emotion it is seldom 'fair' and never constructive. It brings those who blame no lasting satisfaction as the natural response to blaming is for the blamed to blame others. We must constantly guard against the use of blame. (See section Z on Avoiding Common Pitfalls)

By replacing blame with an understanding of contribution, staff can accept continuing joint responsibility with the pupils themselves for developing, maintaining and re-establishing good behaviour.

* "But surely some children's bad behaviour is genetic?" In practice, the answer to this is "No". Children probably inherit tendencies towards one or other end of behavioural spectrums- for example aggressive-submissive. But it is mainly what happens to them after they are born (the interaction between genes and environment) which determines real-life learning and behaviour. See Rose, S. (2005) "The 21st Century Brain" London:Vintage

C Teaching and learning the rights, responsibilities, rules and routines

There is no one set of rules and routines for all classrooms. What is important that the pupils know what's expected of them in each classroom they enter right from the start of the lesson.

Just look at these two "conversations":

T. "OK you can come in now..... "

Pupils enter the room, many pushing to get in, creating a jam in the doorway.

T. "Not all at once, one by one. Ian, stop pushing....."

Ian: "I'm not pushing Sir, it's Joel and Mushtaq behind me"

T. "All of you, stop pushing ! You're supposed to line up and come in one by one without pushing."

Signs of a little less pushing.

T. "Go back outside and line up outside the door"

Pupils at the front try to go out again. Those at the back possibly haven't heard. In any case they don't move back so a new jam is caused.

T. "Stop pushing, all of you. Go out one by one. Ian, what are you doing.....?"

Sabrina: "But Sir, you told us to go out – it's their fault, they won't let us out."

T. "I wasn't talking to you Sabrina."

And so on until peace returns....

T. "OK you can come in now....."

Pupils enter the room. Ian (and possible one or two others) is pushing to get in.

T. "Ian, you are pushing."

Ian stops pushing but looks aggrieved

Ian: "I wasn't."

T. Smiles. "Ian, you were pushing. What's the rule ?"

Ian: "No pushing...but I wasn't the only one...."

T. Smiles "OK, that's the rule, now everyone come in without pushing"

Class enter room.

In the first example it looked like the rules and routines had not been established with the class. The teacher was having to give detailed instructions rather than just remind the class of the rules.

In the second example, the teacher had established the rules, and had two advantages. Firstly, most of the class were likely to follow the rules, so there were fewer pupils to correct. Secondly, the conversation with the rule breaker could be to the point, reinforcing the rule through getting the pupil to restate it. (Of course, the conversation in the second example could have been extended in real-life, but the chances of real trouble were much reduced.)

You will need to establish your classroom's rules and routines with the pupils to be able to take full advantage of the other ideas and tactics listed here. This is best done with very new class, but can be done at any time.

Establishing the rules and routines is not just telling your class what you want. As with any other learning, it will work best with maximum involvement of the pupils, a clear view of the founding principles, and opportunities to practice. And, like other forms of learning, it takes time to get right and requires subsequent reminders and practice.

To start off with you will need to talk with your classes. For the purposes of these discussions you should lay down some initial rules such as:

- **Hands up to talk**
- **Talk one at a time**
- **Keep your talk at a normal volume**
- **If disagreeing with another's view, do it with respect**
- **Stop talking and look to teacher at the teacher's signal (you may want to specify what signal you will use)**

A checklist of class rules and procedures is given at the end of this book. The pupils will need to know about most of these in most classes. But before laying down the law, it's worth checking out with a class what they understand to be the principles of the school, and how they could best be summed up in a few (say 4) statements. Those statements can then become the guiding principles for your classroom, and the rules and procedures can follow from them. When being asked to follow rules and routines, pupils like to know why.

Examples of statements of principle could be:

- **Everyone in this classroom is an individual. They, and their property, should be treated with fairness and respect.**
- **We are here to learn together. The best way to do this is to get on with each other, be ready to share and help each other.**
- **We share rights and responsibilities. All pupils have a right to be able to learn and a responsibility to do their best. The teacher has a right to be able to teach, and a responsibility to do everything possible to help the pupils learn.**
- **We treat others, and their feelings, as we want to be treated by them.**

After the principles are established you should go through your rules and procedures. It's best to have most of your expectations clear in your mind, but over issues where you have no strong view you may wish to discuss what would be best for them.

You don't have to write down all the rules and routines, but it makes sense to write down the main ones and to give all pupils a copy. While it's tempting to put a copy on the wall we would advise that you don't- the evidence suggests

that this is counterproductive for those pupils most likely to be the source of difficulties.

In subsequent lessons you should reinforce the rules and routines, mainly by praising pupils when they demonstrably keep to them (see section on 'Use of praise as verbal cues').

If you find you have to introduce a new rule introduce it to the class by allocating a little time to discuss it before you have to use it (if you don't do this be prepared for the inevitable response: "But that's not one of the rules!").

D Checking understanding

Pupils are just like adults, they don't always understand everything! And when that lack of understanding leads to trouble they will be distressed and confused, and not infrequently resentful.

It's easy to believe that when a pupil confronted with their misdemeanour says "but you never told me!" they are employing a time-tested excuse to create a diversion from their guilt. Staff should avoid making this assumption unless the excuse is evidently completely unfounded.

Why? Because there is usually at least a measure of truth in what the pupil is saying. Think about times when **you** have used this reply. Most times you are really convinced that you haven't been told. But sometimes you will later guiltily remember that you had been told, but that you had forgotten. Whether you were told or not, it is unlikely that at the time you were aware that what you were saying was wrong.

So to that extent, it doesn't matter whether you were told or not – the effect of your forgetting was the same as if you had not been told.

If it is important that pupils should remember things the onus is on the adults to ensure that they are reminded and to check their understanding – just as they should in all teaching and learning situations.

So "but you never told me" should always be taken as a reminder of the responsibility to maintain and check on pupils' understanding of important information and rules over time. Much tension will be avoided by doing so.

E Signals- Quiet/listen to me/as response to behaviours/ I'm not discussing that/we'll talk later/remember the rule etc

There are times when you want to gain the pupils' attention whatever they are doing. You also want to know when you have their attention.

To get attention you have to signal to the class. If the class isn't quiet it's tempting to raise your voice until it's the loudest noise in the room. But actually it's more effective to speak with a slightly raised and firm tone. This will cut through the background best and plays to the basic human psychology of attention.

It's also helpful to use the same single word or very short phrase when you request attention. You can choose this yourself, but for best effect use a word or words you don't normally use in class – for example "Listen up!". This phrase then takes on extra meaning – it becomes a specific signal.

Of course signals are not always words. You could accompany the word with a tap on the desk, putting your hand up or turning a light off and on. Once again, for best effect, this action should be reserved for when you want attention in a busy situation.

You can ask the pupils to signal they are *giving* attention. For example, if you use putting your hand up as a visual signal to accompany the verbal request, you can ask the class to put their own hands up to show they are attending. Usually, you will ask for them to look towards you at the same time. The big benefit of this is that those in the class who haven't paid attention will be cued by the others with less chance you have to repeat yourself.

Of course if you use such a signal you will always wait for the whole class to give you attention before talking to them. The best way to undermine the use of the signal is to try to talk over continuing inattention and noise.....though periodic repetition of the specific signal may be used.

Pre-arranged signals are powerful tools in other situations. While you don't want too many of them- they will take longer to learn, there's more chance of confusion and increased chance of pupils forgetting- it's worthwhile establishing some for frequently occurring or particularly difficult situations.

Sometimes you will want a pupil (or group of pupils) to stop doing something immediately, perhaps because it's dangerous or harmful. Especially if you teach in a laboratory or workshop, it's worth pre-establishing a signal word and action for this (and even getting the class to practice their response). Once again, a 'special' word is indicated, for example "Freeze!". The associated action could be a loud clap of your hands- you need something that can be done wherever you are! The response required of the pupils would be to stop doing everything they are doing immediately and await your instruction. This type of signal should, of course, be uniquely reserved for extreme situations – any over use will make it ineffective very quickly.

When pupils are not following the rules of the classroom, you will often wish to indicate that they have been seen or heard (but not always- see section on vigilant ignoring). In most cases you won't want to disrupt the teaching and learning by discussing the behaviour. Signals can be the answer here too. For example, pupils can learn that if you hold up your hand like a policeman stopping traffic this means that you are not prepared to enter into a debating point they have raised:

T: "Aidan, you are chewing"

Aidan: "That's not fair, Myron and Laura were chewing as well. You always pick on me"

Teacher: *Holds up hand.* "Aidan you are chewing. Come to the front and put it in the bin." *Gives Aidan time to comply.*

Similarly (different) signals can be used for other frequent communications such as:

- "we'll talk later" (e.g. pointing to watch)
- "remember" (the rule, what we just discussed etc – signalled by tapping your head for example)

These signals will become familiar, and can be very re-assuring to pupils that you are consistent and in control, that you define the behavioural agenda.

F Spot the tantrum! Storming out; violent responses; muttering, tears and shouting; self wind-up

We all recognise the “terrible twos”, 2-year olds’ tantruming in the supermarket because mum has refused to give a sweet/buy a toy/go home (anything but shopping!) The wailing and shouting drowns out the tannoy system, packets are pulled off the shelf and scattered, the baby sister is hit and the mother is described as a “lump of poo”.

Or out on the high street the tired child throws himself on the ground crying piteously and all attempts by the parents to get him to regain use of his legs are fended off. And for some reason there’s always an audience of senior citizens that the parents are convinced are thinking “Children wouldn’t have behaved like that in *our* day”. (Actually they’re more likely to be thinking “Thank goodness I don’t have to go through all that again !”)

Staff in Primary schools will easily recognise classic tantrums amongst pupils although by this stage there might be mutterings of ‘anger management problems’ and the like. But there are many other reactive behaviours which are, to all intents and purposes, tantrums. They’re just harder to spot.

Scene- Year 4 Class - morning- writing task

T. Carrie, that the third time I’ve asked you to stop talking to Casey. Take your work and go and sit by Meera.

Carrie: That’s not fair!

T. (*calmly*) Get your things and move to Meera’s table.

Carrie: (*louder*) I don’t want to. It’s not fair!

T. (moves over to Carrie- still calm) Come along now, I’ve asked you to move nicely. There’ll be less trouble if you do it now.

Carrie: (*gets out of seat quickly and tips over chair knocking paper and pencil on the floor. Voice even louder*) I want to stay sitting with Casey!

T. (*trying to suppress the adrenaline!*) Pick up your things and please go and sit by Meera now.

Carrie: (*Serious - ‘can be heard in the next classroom’- shouting now*)

You’re always getting at me. I always have to move. (*Major tears, stomps out of room – calms down after about 30 minutes of weeping, muttering, self-justification, and (possibly by accident) knocking over the head’s spider plant. Mum called in for the fourth ‘serious chat’ of the half term*)

Yes, Carrie’s got emotional problems. That is, she gets very emotional if she doesn’t get her own way. And the problem with her life is that she can’t have her own way all the time.

Most children (and adults) learn to adapt to the fact that they can’t have their own way all the time. They learn that there is so far you can go in objecting, that there are ways of getting round people or persuading them to change their minds. And they learn that sometimes you just have to put up with not getting your own way (and some learn how to have a very enjoyable sulk when that happens). Much more positively, they may learn how rewarding social cooperation can be.

But Carrie's got a learning problem. She hasn't learned how to cope with not getting her own way. Rather she is stuck with one strategy - the two-year old's strategy of tantruming.

Why would this be the case? Well first of all, by definition, wanting to get our own way is entirely natural. It's linked to a need to be in control, to have what we want, to win.

When we are very young we try out all sorts of methods to make the world work for us until we find those that work. Then we repeat those methods – they become habits. We've all got dozens, and we're not even conscious we have them most of the time. Those habits which fit into the 'socially acceptable' we will retain.

In Carrie's case the most likely explanation for her retaining the tantruming habit is that it has worked for her in the past (and it might still be working in some way now). She hasn't learned and practised alternative acceptable approaches. But surely, you may be saying, that can't be the case. Carrie's tantruming behaviour leaves her very upset.

That's true. But the situation is probably more subtle than that. Tantruming is indeed a poor strategy for older children and adults (yes, they do it too). But if they haven't learned alternative thinking and strategies to cope with the frustration of not getting their own way, the fact that tantruming 'gets them out of the situation' may be enough to keep it going. And that's almost always the case- whatever the situation was that caused the tantrum is long forgotten in the melee of dealing with the tantruming behaviour. there may be revisiting later- but it's what happens immediately which has the most potent effect.

So that's a major difference – the two year old is tantruming because there is a chance that the parent will give way – give them the sweet, leave the boring old shop (in embarrassment perhaps) etc. At school the reinforcer (reward) is more likely to be avoidance of the frustrating situation.

So what do you do?

When you spot the tantrum you need to remember the rules – behaviours are most likely to be repeated if they are followed by reinforcement (e.g. a reward), and behaviours will reduce if they are followed by an absence of reinforcement (psychologists call this 'extinction' of the behaviour). So the main job is to ensure that the tantrum is not followed by any reinforcement/reward.

Easier said than done! The trouble is that pupils can be rewarded by all sorts of things, some of which don't look like rewards at all- including being rewarded by being told off. So almost any action that the teacher takes during and following a tantrum might be a reward and therefore making a repeat performance more likely.

So, and this may be strange to you, the most effective response is to do as little as you can. Of course you will need to manage the bad effects of the tantrum, and that may mean intervening to stop others being hurt or damage to property, removing the child from the room etc. But while this is being done, you should be trying to ensure the least possible attention to the tantruming child. And once the tantrum has receded the pupil should come back to the class with no discussion of the incident **at that time**.

That doesn't mean that it won't be discussed at all. The pupil has learned to get their own way through tantruming. Unless they can replace this behaviour with more socially acceptable behaviour, their frustration may lead to continuing tantrums or developing other unacceptable ways of exerting power (bullying for example).

This suggests the need for teaching about appropriate ways of putting a point of view or request, responding to not getting your own way and looking at both sides of an argument. This can be done really effectively in class sessions with pupils making suggestions and talking about their experiences. Such work may be supplemented by individual work with children who have most difficulty.

The big danger with tantrums is that adults (in particular) are pre-programmed to respond to shows of emotional distress in children. But by doing so, as we have seen, they can make the situation worse. So it's worth spotting the tantrums which are characterised by being repeating learned responses to being thwarted.

But don't confuse tantrums with emotional outbursts with more complex causes – they may look the same in a 'one-off' situation, but they will occur as responses to a variety of situations and are less likely to be a long term pattern. In these cases it is appropriate to talk to the student to try to find and remedy the cause.

G Children who like to say “No!”

T.: “Sit down Robbie and get on with your work”
Robbie shows no sign of having heard.
T.: (louder) “I said sit down Robbie and get on with your work”
Robbie (*who must have heard*) continues to wander round the room.
T.: “Robbie, for the last time I’ve asked you to sit down and get on with your work three times now.”
Robbie looks at teacher. Then he continues to wander.
T.: “Right that’s it. Robbie, stand outside the door.”
Robbie: “Why, I wasn’t doing anything?”
T.: “Are you going to sit down and do your work?”
Robbie: “No, I wasn’t doing anything.”
T.: “How many times must you be told that you have to do what you’re told.....?”
And so on.....

A familiar situation to many, especially in classes of older children. The teacher has done quite well- she’s stayed calm- on the outside at least!

When children say no to clear and direct instructions from teachers it seems that there’s no sensible way out. Confront them and the situation is almost bound to escalate- give in and the initiative and power is handed to them. So what is the way forward?

Firstly we’ll assume that certain things are in place- the child can hear the instruction, the child understands the instruction, the child is capable of carrying out the instruction and the instruction is reasonable. This is usually the case but it’s always worth doing a mental check.

Once we know that’s all checked what then? There are two main reasons for refusal- though they are interconnected and there might well be elements of both in any situation.

The first is that the refusal is a largely emotional reaction. The cause can be temporary (e.g. something that day has made the child angry/upset). Sometimes the emotional issue is of longer standing- e.g. reaction to serious difficulties with the family.

The second reason is that the child has developed a learned response (e.g. “No” or ignoring) to requests to do something he or she doesn’t want to do. This is not unusual- most people will be familiar with children who say “No” to adults as soon as they learn the word! What makes the difference is what they have learned about saying no- most children soon realise that there are difficult consequences to refusal and some nice consequences for complying. They may still try “No” from time to time- but it doesn’t become a habit.

The trouble is that it is hard in the heat of the ‘refusal situation’ to determine exactly what the cause is. But strangely that gives us a clue to the best initial response.

The first aim of responding should always be to remain in control- not to let the child rule the agenda. This means getting away from the idea that the only good result (in the short term) is that the pupil does what they've been told. If you do set this as the only outcome that you will accept, then the child can rule the situation by their refusal. You will have no flexibility and be forced into escalating your threats (or inducements) or repeating yourself to no effect. While it might not be obvious, because you feel you are being firm, you are handing control to them!

To remain in control you will need to have a wider range of short term acceptable outcomes to meet all likely reactions from the child. It's best to think about these in advance because it will be important that you remain calm and look as sure of yourself as possible.

The potential outcomes can be listed (in order of preference):

- The pupil complies
- The pupil is told that his or her non-compliance will be dealt with later and in the meantime he or she is left to 'stew' in the classroom (assuming that the pupil's behaviour is tolerable within the class)
- The pupil is told that his or her non-compliance will be dealt with later and in the meantime he or she is sent or taken to another appropriate place in the school

By having these outcomes in mind right from the start you will be more confident and you'll show it. In many cases the child will pick up on your confidence and will be more likely to comply. But if he or she doesn't, you already know what you will do. You are still in charge.

So what if the pupil still doesn't comply time after time despite you having covered the bases on initial reaction?

Firstly, it's important that whatever happens after the child has refused to comply doesn't appear rewarding to him or her. If he or she is sent out to another class or the deputy's room, for example, to 'stew' then it's vital that the experience there is as bland as possible. No doing tasks for the teacher, no discussion of why they were sent, no telling off, no colouring tasks, no pages of sums, no chatting to other children, no attention apart from the minimum. In summary as little of anything as possible.

This means that you need your colleagues who will receive the child to know what to do.

That's the negative side dealt with. It would be wrong to leave it there (for one thing your colleagues' patience may grow thin if the child doesn't improve!)

The next step is to establish compliance. This can't be forced. Children who say no will not learn to say yes through punishment (all anyone learns from punishment is to fight or avoidance strategies).

The clue to success comes from asking a new question. Not “why doesn’t Jonah do what he’s told?” but “why do the rest of the class (mostly) do what they’re told?”.

The reasons that they comply are complex and there will be individual differences- but they will be made up of a mix of some or all of the following:

- 1. Habit – they do it automatically because they always have**
- 2. Wanting to appear good – wanting the teacher’s approval**
- 3. To avoid trouble**
- 4. Because it helps them feel secure – the teacher is in charge and can keep them safe**
- 5. Because they think that they should- it’s the right thing to do – it helps them to learn**
- 6. Because they care what other children will think**

The first interesting thing about this list is that punishment will only cover number 3. All the rest are about development and learning. Much can be done to promote them through curricular work (5 and 6) and teacher responses (2 and 4). Hopefully the result is “habitual compliance” (number 1).

So, to give the best chance that the non-compliant child will learn to do what he or she is told:

- 1. Use Fair Pairs/ 3 part praise for children immediately doing what they are told (see the next section -Use of praise as verbal cues- ‘Fair Pairs’) This will address reasons 2 and 4.**
- 2. Devise some sessions on ‘why we do what we’re told’ and ‘what we think of the behaviour of others (good and bad)’. These could be through formal work (story writing, poetry, art etc) and through direct discussion (for example- using circle time). That will help with reasons 4 and 5.**
- 3. When better compliance is established continue to use focussed praise to maintain it. That will support reason 1.**

Because all these approaches ‘go with the flow’ amongst the children they are almost guaranteed to have a good effect on the class. If they are all complying with your requests, and they are happy and rewarded in doing so, you have maximised the chances that ‘the child who says “no”’ learns that saying “yes” is a much better choice!

H Use of praise as verbal cues- 'Fair Pairs'

We all are programmed to notice things that are going badly more than things that are going well- it's part of our built-in survival kit. Teachers are no different in this respect to any other people.

That's fine when you're walking in the Serengeti and a lion jumps out of the undergrowth in front of you, but not so useful in the classroom. Unless you override your instincts, your classroom will always appear to be a place full of problems. You will always notice the problems in behaviour but to get a balanced view you need to work on noticing the good behaviour- especially in children who are not always 'little angels'!

For one thing you will find out that most of your pupils are behaving correctly most of the time! Secondly, by noticing the good behaviour you can- and should- use this information to cue those who are slacking in their behaviour. You can use the others as models for how you want them to change.

Of course it's not recommended that you try something like: "Kyle, stop talking and get on with your work. Look how well Shahida is getting on with hers". The chances are that Shahida will not thank you, and we all need as many pupils on our side as possible! Worse still, Kyle is unlikely to comply as he snorts his derision in Shahida's direction.

You don't need to make the comparison. You don't need to mention the bad behaviour you are trying to change for praising good behaviour to have the desired effect. 99.9% of pupils will like to get praise so long as it's given in a sensitive way. And when you praise a number of pupils in succession for working well you'll be surprised how many others fall into line.

And when they do, you should 'catch them when they're good' by praising them for working hard, but without any reference to their earlier behaviour. This idea of dealing with unwanted behaviour by picking on an incompatible 'good' behaviour is sometimes called 'fair pairs'. The sequence goes like this:

Nathan is shouting out answers in a class question session

Two or three are putting up their hands to answer questions.

Teacher: “Gary, I like the way you’re remembering to put your hand up. What’s your answer?”

Gary answers. New question.

Teacher: “Great Sian. Your hand is up. What do you think?”

One or two others who don’t always put their hands up do so. Teacher asks them for answers praising them by name for putting their hands up. Robert still tries to call out but is met by ‘vigilant ignoring’. Finally he puts his hand up to answer a question.

Teacher: “You’ve got your hand up Nathan, that’s good. What can you tell us?”

Note the three key elements of the praise used:

- The pupil is named
- There is an indication of praise (Good, great, I like the way... etc)
- The behaviour is described (your hand up, working quietly... etc)

This praise is called ‘**three-part praise**’.

You may be saying at this point: “But I do this already”.

Many teachers use one or two elements in praising pupils but it’s highly unusual for all three to be used **at the same time**. Without any one of the three elements the effect is significantly reduced or disappears altogether!

Robert is most likely to be very pleased – he won’t see it as losing a battle. If the teacher remains consistent and even when all the class routinely put their hands up praises them for it from time to time the behaviour will be well established.

The finest side effect of doing all this is the effect it will have on the pupils who routinely behave- for some of them it will be the first time that this has been directly acknowledged! And for you, you will be spending more time working with the ‘good’ pupils than those misbehaving. Teachers have report that their general relationship with their classes improve using this technique.

Many assume that this will only work with younger pupils. Experience shows otherwise: sensitively done Fair Pairs/three-part praise works well with all ages – adults included!

I Children who deny misbehaviour-Statements of fact

T.: "Leonie, why are you talking?"
Leonie: "I wasn't".
T.: "Leonie, I saw you talking."
Leonie: "It was Sharona. She was asking me for a pen."
T.: "Well that was a very long conversation if it was just about asking for a pen."

A conversation like this occurs every second of the school day all around the world. It doesn't usually lead to dire consequences, though it can -see 'following the pupil's agenda' in the section on Common Pitfalls.

Whatever the outcome, it's not very satisfactory as a conversation: little is learned on either side and much is unresolved. It will probably have a slightly bad effect on the relationship between Leonie and the teacher and the unspoken agreement is that it's part of 'the game'. Over time, such incidents can allow all good will between the teacher and class members to drip away.

There is a simple alternative for use in situations where you wish to remind a pupil who is transgressing a rule (or principle) that you have established with the class. (This idea is put forward by Bill Rogers: he calls it 'Statement of the bleeding obvious!'). He suggests that instead of asking a pupil questions about their behaviour: "Why are you talking?" "How do you think everyone can work if you walk round the room?" "Who said that you could put your coat on?": that you simply state what they are doing, and follow this up with a request for them to remember the rule involved.

In the section on teaching the rules we saw an example about coming into the classroom. Another on the same lines from a year 6 class:

Teacher sees Jack flick a piece of paper across the room.

T.: "Jack, you flicked some paper." (*Statement of fact*)
Jack: "It wasn't me."
T.: "Jack, I saw you flick the paper. What's the rule?" (*Restatement of fact – Request for the rule*)
Jack: "But it wasn't me. You're always blaming me when the rest get away with everything."
T.: "What's the rule about flicking or throwing things?"
Jack: "We can't throw anything in the classroom. But it wasn't me."
T.: "Good, we don't throw things in the classroom" (*Restate the Rule*)
Jack: "I didn't flick anything."
T.: "O.K., I'm sure we'll all remember the rule. Now let's look at the next example in the book."

Now Jack could have kept up the denials for ever – we've all been there when the evidence of our own eyes is repeatedly denied. But the point of this conversation from the teacher's side is that there is no need to get Jack to agree to what he did. It is not necessary or really desirable to extract confessions. Given the nature of the rule breaking, trying to get an apology is liable to raise the stakes for no good reason. Instead, a Statement of Fact-

What's the Rule conversation asserts the important point, that throwing things in the class is not allowed. The conversation is minimised and in the control of the teacher with as little chance as possible that tempers will be lost.

A good rule (for teachers) therefore is:

'When you know something, state it. Do not ask pupils rhetorical questions about their behaviour'.

J Pupils who are aggressive / children who hit

In a study of reports of children who had been referred for behaviour difficulties the most frequent adjective used to describe them was 'aggressive'. ('Disruptive' came in second, all other adjectives were way behind.)

Children who are aggressive are a significant problem to other children, staff and, of course, in the end themselves. They can often appear to be the most set in their ways and thus least likely to change. Attempts to influence their behaviour frequently show little effect, even in the short term. It seems that the only way to be sure of preventing their behaviour is to remove them from the company of others. Given all that, it's no wonder aggression came top in the surveys.

Before going on to practical approaches to dealing with aggression, it's worth reminding ourselves of how children's aggression can affect us. Aggressive children often evoke an emotional reaction in adults (called 'arousal' by psychologists). Such children worry us. We can feel powerless to protect those that they hurt. We may worry that they have some kind of unchangeable internal problem that leads them to be aggressive. Aggression can make us feel that if children are like this that there's no hope for the future- everything is getting worse. Aggression offends against our senses of fairness – it's surely wrong that others should be exposed to it. We have to intervene and treat it very seriously each time it happens taking time away from teaching. It often makes us angry. It can make us feel aggressive back.....

For all these reasons aggression in children causes a deep sense of unease in adults. This leads to a need to look for explanations that will help to understand what's happening and allow us to feel more in control. What's not easy to see is how this search for explanations can add to the problem.

What we know is that the causes of aggression are very complex. Factors that are probably involved include: genetic predisposition, upbringing in the home situation, experiences with peers, previous experiences at school, the state of moral development of the child, the expectations of societies and cultural norms, the circumstances immediately preceding the aggression, the mood of the child, the history of responses to the child's aggression. What this means is that simple explanations are likely to be very limited and misleading, and that full explanations are impossible to know.

So if we can't find the cause, what can be done? There are two answers to this- one about what to do about individual incidents of aggression, and the other about longer-term strategies.

First responses

We'll assume that we are dealing with incidents which are not 'first offences' for the pupils involved, and are not so serious that they warrant formal investigation at school or even police level. We should look carefully at the circumstances surrounding aggression 'out of the blue' and treat them on their merits. For example such an event could be the result of a child

'snapping' under pressure of teasing or bullying , or as a by-product of a disturbing event in their out-of-school lives.

The first reaction to observed aggression or hitting should be calm and assertive. Use the Statement of Fact approach (see previous section):

T. Ross- you just hit Jared.

Ross: I didn't, I was just asking for a pen.

T. You hit Jared. What's the rule?

Ross: But it wasn't my fault.....

T. What's the rule about keeping our hands and feet to ourselves?

Ross: Jared was hitting me at break.

T. The rule is that we keep our hands and feet to ourselves. You tell me what the rule is.

Ross: (*maybe after a bit more argument*) We've got to keep our hands and feet to ourselves.

T. That's right. I'll see you at lunchtime

If you get repeated aggressive acts in the classroom, you may need to use 'time out' – removal from the situation for a short period of 'nothing' where the child waits with no social interaction or activity until a set time is up. But this should only be used in conjunction with a positive learning approach like Fair Pairs. (The full explanation of time out is outside the scope of this section- if in doubt ask for specialist/experienced advice.)

But what if the aggression is not observed by an adult, but reported by another pupil- the 'victim' or a bystander? The problem with this situation is you have less knowledge of what actually happened and why. The temptation is to start to investigate- but in most cases the results won't be clear enough to give confidence that any one child was the sole contributor to the problem. Any response to the 'aggressor' will be some time after the event and open to challenge. The chances of it being successful in preventing repetition are poor.

'What's the rule?' can be a first response in this situation too. It does not require that you have "enough evidence to convict" so it can be employed early. Long discussion of the incident is best avoided- too often it will obscure the clear message of the 'What's the Rule?' approach. If the situation occurs in the playground, the children involved might be required to 'cool off' rather than be allowed to return to the fray.

This, and a record of the incident in some cases, might be all that is required in the short term. If further investigation is needed it would be better to leave it until everyone is calmer and there is time to be thorough and fair.

Changing the behaviour in the longer term

This simple immediate response to repeated aggressive behaviour is unlikely to be enough to solve the problem. Because of the range of factors that might be involved it's not possible to say here what should be done with every individual pupil in the longer term. But there are some general suggestions that will help in most cases.

It's possible that there is just one aggressive individual in the school and that all the rest of the pupils are passive and pacifist in nature. But it isn't likely.

Most schools will have children with a range of characteristics and behaviours. While there may be one pupil causing most concern due to his or her aggression and violence, there are also likely to be others who show the same types of behaviour in less dramatic form.

Teaching all children the rules and about appropriate social interaction (through Circle Time, SEAL etc.) will always be worthwhile. Other children 'joining in', albeit to a lesser extent, will 'reinforce' (reward) the aggressive child's behaviour. The object should be that the pupil who is aggressive and hits is faced with a teacher/pupil consensus supporting 'the rule'. This will need children who keep to the rules and have a good understanding of the reasons behind them.

Pupils who have this understanding can also be taught how best to respond to aggression. The principles are pretty much the same for them as for adults, e.g:

- **try to remain as calm as possible**
- **if you need to speak to the aggressor, do it firmly without shouting***
- **tell the teacher**
- **don't retaliate**

These ideas might be practiced through group writing of stories or through drama.

There are two aims here. The first is to try to make the pupils as confident as possible about dealing with aggression- that will help them to remain calm. The second is to reduce any possible reward ('kick') that the aggressive child gets out of the situation.

The school might wish to work especially closely with its Year 6 classes. Development of understanding of good social interaction in this group can be reinforced by asking them to assist in teaching the younger pupils. At the simplest level this could involve asking them to model the good interactions they have learned in their own behaviour in the school. But it will be more effective if they feel more involved- perhaps by asking them to come up with a project to help the other children learn. An example of this could be groups of year 6 pupils devising presentations to give in other classes linked to SEAL materials. The power of this approach (apart from reinforcing good behaviour in the oldest pupils) will come from younger children seeing that the older pupils advocate the same thing as they've been told by their teachers.

Where there is an upsurge of group aggression, maybe based on aggressive play or aggressive teasing (including 'blazing') the first response might be to break up the group in some way. This sort of behaviour can often be disrupted by looking at the environment in which it occurs. In primary schools, much of it will occur in the less closely supervised situations – before and after school, break and lunchtimes. Schools might try changing the routines for these times, introducing new activities that will be more attractive, employing play leaders, restricting the extent of areas for play for each age group/phase, changing the supervision arrangements, staggering breaks, setting up calm areas, establishing areas only accessible through tokens for good playground behaviour etc. (Experience has shown that staff and pupils, when asked, come up with great ideas about what could be done to improve the out of class environment.)

Lastly, don't be tempted to 'let sleeping dogs lie'. If a pupil was previously aggressive but has improved and is adopting good social interactions, it is essential that this be acknowledged and reinforced with praise from time to time. More than this, you might offer 'reformed' pupils the chance to help other younger children learn how to resolve situations without aggression.

And if you've helped a previously aggressive child to improve like this, don't forget to praise yourself- you deserve it!

***It can be very effective to teach a group of children a standard response to hitting such as a sharp "No!" linked with a hand signal – a good hand signal is arms crossed in front of chest making a cutting motion.**



K Say sorry

Everyone gets things wrong sometimes. When you make a mistake with pupils, apologise. Do it with confidence that this is the right thing to do (after all we often ask children to apologise!). The vast majority of pupils won't think it weak, they will appreciate it.

And they'll be right. The best professionals constantly try to improve and particularly they learn from mistakes. But you can't learn from mistakes unless you acknowledge them. And once you acknowledge them to yourself you will find it easier to acknowledge them to your colleagues and pupils. And they'll think the better of you for it.

The fear is that others will take advantage. They might try, but you'll be in a stronger position than if you try to cover up. After all, in most cases the mistake will be apparent to others – in which case denial will leave you more vulnerable to justifiable criticism.

Incidentally, the same goes for admitting when you don't know something. In the long term it's the stronger response. Humans (including young humans!) are great natural psychologists and sooner or later they will find you out.

L The importance of names and personal pronouns

There are two important factors which have a marked effect on the relationship between teachers and pupils, especially when praising or correcting behaviour. Neither is that obvious.

Names

It's worth a reminder about the importance of using names. You'll know that it's important to learn the names of your class as soon as possible. If you don't remember names well, make a map of the class and write down the pupils' names as they tell you. An alternative is to give them a written exercise where they have to write their names – while they do so walk round the room and fill in your map.

In general you will use the pupil's first names. Before you know them well it's safest to use full names rather than nicknames or diminutives. You may sometimes use surnames with a title 'Mr or Miss' for effect, usually humorous (but *never* sarcastic !).

Using pupils' names makes communication more specific and more personal, and will therefore have more effect especially when praising, instructing or asserting a rule. But remember that it also makes things more personal when delivering a telling off- many times this might not be what you want.....

Getting beyond the personal-You or We?

Good teaching and learning is done as a partnership between teacher and learners. The use of personal pronouns is surprisingly important to encourage the idea that you wish to work in cooperation with your class, rather than that you see them as 'them', especially when you need to correct a pupil.

You will know that in many languages the polite and formal way to refer to another person is to use the second person plural : e.g. "vous" in French "sie" in German. The psychological reason for this is that we treat the singular form ("tu" and du" respectively) as very personal. Of course, in English we only have one word for both singular and plural "you", but the very personal connotation remains. There is a world of difference between saying "you ought not to do that" and (the rather archaic) "one ought not to do that".

All this means that you can move from a suggestion of personal criticism when correcting work or behaviour by using the word "we" rather than "you". It's not completely wrong to say "you must not throw things around the classroom", but it pays to change it to "we must not throw things round the classroom". The second form makes it clear that the **rule** is nothing personal- the rule applies to everyone and there is a strong reason for it. But the difference is that it while it makes the correction clear, it doesn't put the pupil on the spot and gives no cause for distracting self-justification or denial. This makes it stronger- there's more chance that the conversation will stay on your agenda (the importance of the rule) rather than the pupil's (e.g. the 'unfairness' of the accusation).

M Children who try to distract- Sticking to the knitting – refocusing

When you see something going on in the class that should not be happening – for example a pupil reading a comic when they should be writing, you will wish to take action.

This can be done through going to the pupil and asking (pleasantly) “what are you reading there Kieron ?”

He might answer or not, but almost whatever the answer it’s best to divert from the unwanted behaviour – you’ve shown you noticed- to get back on to the purpose of the lesson. This process has been called refocusing.

A typical line would be “O.K., but we’ve got some work to do. Do you know what you are supposed to be doing ?” The following conversation can then be about school work.

True, this is all pretty obvious, but the main point is important. While you are talking about work you are on home ground and reinforcing the reason for you and the pupils to be there. Long conversations about misdemeanours take you into problematic territory and waste valuable teaching time. It’s best not to go there unless you have to.

N I can't ignore that! - Vigilance and vigilant ignoring

Most teachers in training will have been introduced to the idea of scanning classes to check what they're doing. It's an essential part of the teaching process (and one of the first and most important indicators of effective management to come from classroom research) .

Scanning gives information about understanding of the work and progress through the task and cues the need to modify plans and strategies. It is good teaching behaviour to move around the room in order to get as comprehensive a view as possible

Good scanning will also pick up early when there's need to assert a rule (using names of course!). But there is a trap here. The more you scan, the more you'll see and you'll find you can't deal with absolutely everything.

A knowledge of basic psychology helps here. There are many behaviours which you don't want where the best approach is to (apparently) ignore it. Your attention often equals a reward for a child even when it's negative attention. If you give attention following a bad behaviour you may unintentionally increase the chance of it happening again.

In the section above on 'Use of praise as verbal cues- Fair Pairs' there was an example where the teacher ignored a pupil shouting out during a question and answer session- but this isn't the only situation where shouting out can happen. Sometimes pupils will shout out when no other pupil is asking for help – there is therefore no 'Fair pair' behaviour to praise. In such a situation the best response is to use 'vigilant ignoring' - you don't show that you've noticed and don't respond but you keep an eye on the situation.

There are lots of other behaviours which you may want to 'ignore vigilantly' to avoid rewarding them. These tend to be linked to 'manner' – things like tutting/sucking teeth, rolling eyes, sulking and all manner of 'dirty looks' – even crawling under desks!. It's unlikely you'll have specific class rules about all such behaviour and a good rule of thumb is to pay no obvious attention to minor unwanted behaviour that's not on the list – however irritating. However, all of these can be addressed through use of Fair pairs to praise pupils who respond in the ways that you want.

If your vigilance suggests that the ignoring is not enough (and you should give it some time for the penny to drop!) and you feel you have to intervene, remember that the rewarding nature of attention still applies. Therefore keep any intervention to the minimum - use Statement of Fact and refocusing to allow attention to be given for behaviour on your agenda as soon as possible.

O Visuals

A note on reminding of rules and routines. You may wish to put up lists of rules and routines on the walls of your classroom/workshop/changing areas etc. But don't put up too many – if you do they will lose any effect and also give an impression of unappealing rigidity.

Pictures (especially cartoon-type) which remind of the rules and routines may have the opposite effect: they can imply order in a friendly context. These could be produced by adults or even better by the pupils themselves. Once again, be cautious of having too many.....

P First and last*

Most people know how important first impressions are, and most teachers know how important the beginning of the lesson is. An ordered purposeful start is most likely to precede an ordered and purposeful lesson. Within this context you have the best chance of delivering an effective and enjoyable experience for the pupils.

What is less obvious is the importance of the end of the session. By that time, there is often a temptation to let the pupils go to play, lunch or home as soon as possible- sometimes without doing all the things you wish.

The end of the lesson is important because of the effect of 'recency and primacy'. This states that people remember best the first and last information of an experience, the 'stuff in the middle' is less well remembered. The last part of the lesson will be the most recent in pupil's memories, and it is likely to 'stick'. If the end of a lesson was well ordered with the teacher asserting the required routines, then the class is more likely to remember the whole lesson as an ordered affair. If the lesson ends in some disarray, even if the majority of it was good, the pupils may perceive the whole lesson as disordered.

(The recency and primacy effect works for observers too- important to remember when the dreaded OFSTED are around!)

Timing is important of course- leaving enough time for completion and clearing up- but also it's important not to overload the session with so much activity that everyone feels pressurised at the end. (Every teacher of older children knows the situation where the bell has gone and there's still a need to explain the homework, remind about the letter home, tell them about what to bring to school tomorrow etc. etc.!)

It's a good policy to have a regular set of requirements for all your classes at the end of a lesson which covers things like:

- **completion of work,**
- **tidying own materials,**
- **tidying workspace,**
- **arranging/storing furniture and equipment,**
- **litter**
- **showing readiness to leave (e.g. standing at desks)**

This sequence will work best if it is taught directly- put into your first few lesson plans with every new class you take.

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* Psychologists call this the 'Recency and primacy effect'

Q We have feelings too !

Most people experience strong emotions at some time.

Usually this will happen in response to obvious events; sudden exposure to danger, in response to a personal insult, in bereavement and so on. But along with these reactions that have clear causes, we can also experience strong emotions to events where the cause is much less obvious, and where we are not so conscious of our own feelings.

First of all, if you find yourself acting on strong negative emotions (particularly anger) which are apparently (to others) out of all proportion to the situation, give yourself a break. This is just part of the human condition for the majority of us.

A common real-world example is 'road rage'. No one doubts that driving can be stressful and that other drivers do silly or unpleasant things, but the reaction is often excessive and counter-productive. And yet road rage is experienced by a large number of drivers.

It makes sense to understand when some apparently minor things ring your emotional bells – perhaps how to avoid 'class rage'. You may, for example, have a particular aversion to pupils chewing in class which goes far beyond any damage that the behaviour causes. It may be that it causes tension and anger in you. While the causal behaviour may be against school rules, an over-reaction by you in class could lead to a situation where you feel unsupported. Others won't see that you had sufficient cause for your reaction.

Much better that you understand what 'gets your goat' and causes you distress in advance, so that you can check it out with others and have the chance of being more objective about it in class. In particular, ask yourself if the things that annoy you most might have their effect because they imply something about you that undermines your view of yourself. It may be that they make you angry when you see yourself as reasonable and easy-going. You may feel that the something happening in the classroom undermines your feeling of competence.

Almost everyone has a view of themselves which judges their own competence, 'rightness' and likeability. Anything which disrupts this view may lead to extreme emotional reactions. No one can stop this happening from time to time. Understanding when this is happening is the best defence against being caught by an emotional storm in the classroom.

And remember, all this can apply to pupils as well.....

R Pupils who tease teachers (for example the 'Catch me' game)

Teasing teachers can range from the light hearted expression of a good relationship to something much more worrying. When pupils start to do things that they know winds teachers up, the teasing is getting close to outright bullying.

It's easy for a person being teased in this way to believe that it's personal and that it's all consciously premeditated (psychologists call these views 'attributions'). Probably neither is the case.

Firstly, to tease someone like this the pupil is likely to consider the teacher(s) less as persons and more as objects to play with. Very often such pupils are not strongly empathic and will have a limited understanding of the effect their behaviour has on others. The only aspect they will understand is the teacher's outward response.

Secondly, while effective teasing accurately targets vulnerabilities, it is wrong to think it's the result of a conscious thinking process: very often it develops through a pupil noticing that when he or she does something it has an amusing (to them) effect. The effect becomes a reward to them, and so they do it again. And again and so on.

Very often, staff feel that they should be reacting to what the pupil is doing because that is policy or the rule. Policies and rules are generally good things in an ordered society, but often have unforeseen drawbacks. The main one is that they can effectively put the pupil in control of the situation. If a response to some action is automatic under the rules, the pupil has the choice of whether or not to perform the action, but the member of staff has no choice about their response. Effectively the pupil controls the member of staff.

Teasing often plays on this. One of the best examples is the 'catch me' game. (I call it a game, but it certainly doesn't feel like much of a game to the member of staff!) Pupils will do something they shouldn't (like be in an area they shouldn't be, or stay out of class when they should be in) and make sure that a teacher sees them. The teacher might call to them or walk towards them. They run away round the next corner and wait for the teacher to come. And so on. Finally, when they are caught they will show little remorse- from their point of view they haven't done anything particularly wrong. But the chasing teacher can feel wrecked from the clear lack of respect shown, and the overt undermining of their authority.

There is of course a strong feeling amongst staff that they cannot allow pupils to get away, they must make the attempt to catch them and ensure that they are under control. After all, for a myriad of reasons you cannot have pupils running round the school like this.

But this view needs to be weighed against the certainty that if the 'catch me' kids are chased they are more likely to repeat the behaviour time and time again. All the dangers of them running round the school will be repeated time and time again.

But if they are not followed the tease fails. There are of course risks in this, but the effective approach is not to chase. If staff do not respond there is no reward. They will stop doing it.

This doesn't mean that there are no consequences. A sensible approach is to ensure that all incidents are followed up later. Since the behaviour, however annoying, is not on the worst end of the spectrum of bad behaviour some sort of reparation response would be best – picking up litter, tidying a room etc.

Also, it makes sense to explain calmly to the pupils in advance why running around is not allowable- the dangers to themselves and others and their responsibility to be in lessons etc. They should also be told of the consequences and that they will not be chased at the time. It is important, of course, to explain this to parents and to get their agreement to the action taken.

S Pupils having the last word

T.: "Jordan, please get back to your work."
Jordan: "Do one...".
T.: "What did you say?"
Jordan: "I said do one, do your own work"
Class laugh
T.: "That's enough! You can't talk to teachers like that"
Jordan: "I'll talk what way I want, you can't tell me how to talk?"
T.: "I said that's enough, and you will be in big trouble if you use language like that."
Jordan: "P..s off"
T.: "What did you say?....."
And so on.....

Everyone knows somebody who always 'has to have the last word'. They argue about everything and go on and on until the other person has to walk away. And even then they are still calling out to their retreating opponent!

There are plenty of argumentative pupils of course, and a few won't give up despite the teacher's best efforts to move on. Sometimes this is accompanied by 'self wind-up' and an increase in real or feigned bad temper.

These situations are battles for control between the pupil and the teacher. In most cases they happen when there is an audience; in the classroom, on corridors, lunch queues etc. Without the audience the chances of the pupil trying to 'win' the argument is much less.

So what does the teacher do?

First of all, don't join in. Teachers don't need to have the last word to prove that they are in charge. In fact, trying to do so suggests insecurity. Once you have made your point clearly you do not need to repeat it. Instead, if the dispute is happening in your classroom move on with your lesson, even if the pupil has not stopped complaining/making their point. If it happens in other areas try to carry on with whatever you were doing before the interaction.

T.: "Jordan, please get back to your work."
Jordan: "Do one...".
T.: "Jordan, get back to work."
Jordan: "What if I don't?"
Class laugh
T.: "You've been told. If you don't we'll deal with it later. Now, is there anyone who needs help with their work?"
Jordan: "You can't do anything."
Teacher goes round room helping pupils ignoring Jordan who gradually subsides. Teacher and Deputy see Jordan later in the day to discuss his behaviour.

For minor disputes this is all that is necessary, but in some cases you may consider the original reason for your challenge to the pupil was too serious to

leave at that. Or, during the exchange, the pupil may have sworn at you, or said something that you feel needs further action.

If the event is more serious and needs follow-up, before you break off from the dispute, make it clear to the pupil that it will be followed up later. Don't discuss this, nor say what you will do (it's better that you decide what to do after a bit of cool reflection and possibly consultation with others!). But, if you've said you will follow it up you must do so – otherwise the next time you may find the pupil reminding you in public of your previous failure to act. Any follow-up should, of course, happen without any pupil audience.

If, despite your attempts to move on, the pupil's continuing behaviour makes it impossible to continue, issue a warning that you will have to take action. Make it clear that your action is necessary because of what the pupil is doing now, not because of the original cause of the dispute. If necessary, despite this warning, take action following the school's disciplinary policy guidance.

T Responding to bad language

Some swearing is simply conversational between pupils and some is for effect. In the worst cases it is used to enhance an aggressive approach.

When staff hear pupils using bad language they may feel very offended by it. This is natural, but can lead to some problems when:

- **the member of staff reacts angrily to the words used leading to a heightening of tension**
- **the member of staff tries to lecture the pupil on the use of bad language**

Neither of these reactions are recommended- the first may inflame the situation and the second is probably a waste of time. In general, the key responses at the time of the incident should be calm and do the minimum necessary.

Clearly there are words that are particularly offensive, for example due to their sexist, racist or homophobic nature. If they are used, the main response (after immediate caution for their use) should happen later with the perpetrator alone, and maybe followed up by wider education in the school on discriminatory behaviour and language.

Normally how staff respond to swearing will depend on its use rather than how bad particular words are perceived to be. For example, overhearing a pupil on a corridor in conversation with a friend saying "So I told him to f... off" would be reasonably met with: "That's not appropriate language to use in school".

Where the pupil is clearly 'showing off' by using the bad language it is important, once it has been calmly stated that the language is not acceptable, not to pay more attention to it than is absolutely necessary. The aim of the pupil is to get a response- the aim of the member of staff should be to minimise their reward by responding as little as possible. As with all incidents played out in front of a pupil audience, the object is to deal with it as quickly as possible and leave any necessary major action to later action- without the audience.

Where the swearing is used to enhance aggression, whether towards other pupils or towards staff, the object is to keep as cool as possible while making it clear that the behaviour is unacceptable. In this situation it's the aggression which is the main issue, the swearing is secondary. The object of intervention should be to reduce risk of harm to anyone, and the methods should be through calm firmness (with removing oneself and other pupils from the situation as a final option if necessary). Any concentration on the language used is liable to raise the temperature with no benefit to anyone. Once again, the issues raised in such a situation are best dealt with later in a cooler, more controlled situation.

U But it's the parents.....

Parents affect the behaviour of their children. If they reward bad behaviour it will be repeated. If they have a very clear set of good principles and keep to them, their children are likely to feel secure and be principled themselves. If they show no affection to their children, the children are likely to show signs of insecurity and attention seeking.

But this isn't the same as saying that the way that children behave at school is controlled by the quality of parenting they experience. People behave very differently in different situations and the behaviour of a child in school can be quite different to his or her home behaviour.

Children do come into school bringing 'behavioural baggage' but the baggage is made up of tendencies, not actual behaviours. What happens in school can make all the difference. If the child is insecure at home, a secure environment at school is likely to help him or her to be calm and well behaved. Even if the child has been rewarded for tantruming at home, 'timing out' tantrums in school will reduce the chances of them re-occurring.

There is an exception to this optimistic picture. Where the parents actively, openly and continually disagree with the policy of the school e.g:

"I don't care what those teachers say, if someone hits you you just hit them back harder....."

the effects on the child are likely to be hard to counteract. The job here is to come to an agreement with the parents around the need not to give different messages. Many headteachers will be familiar with such conversations!

Also, there are a few children whose home life is so catastrophic that the effects are unavoidable at school. But in most cases the school can make a difference whatever the home background.

There is a big danger in overemphasising the effects of poor parenting which is to do with 'self-fulfilling prophecy'. If staff believe that nothing will work then almost certainly nothing will work. Children are great natural psychologists. They can tell, unconsciously, when adults don't believe that what they are doing will be successful. And whatever the adults are doing will have less effect.

Keep in mind that you can make a difference to all pupils, but that you won't always get perfect behaviour from all of them. If you can improve their situation at home by working with the parents by all means do so. But if you can't, that doesn't mean that all is lost. Using the ideas in this booklet will still lead to improvements – maybe with the other children first. And the better behaviour in your class, the better the models for those you're most concerned about.

V Accept Respect and Change : A principle for all

A good principle to follow is called ARC. This stands for Acceptance Respect and Change and is applicable to all human interactions.

Acceptance: - This means that in trying to change something we start from where people are at, rather than where we think they should be. A practical example would be we believe that Callum should have learned the rules of the class. But if Callum hasn't learned the rules, we *accept* that, and work from that point. This might mean giving him some time on finding out where he is, giving him information and time to catch up.

Respect: - This means that we don't make any assumptions about the intentions of pupils whose behaviour has been bad. In general, people don't see their behaviour as bad, they have reasons for doing what they do. Respect demands that we assume that their intentions are not bad unless there is clear evidence otherwise. Pupils who recognise this measure of respect are more likely to go along with suggestions. *

Change:- While we accept where they are, and respect their motivations, we believe that change is always possible – no one is lost! In fact, by the acceptance and respect that we show, change is made more possible because plans will be more appropriate and the pupil will feel better disposed.

* You will recognise the importance of this in the psychologically researched phenomenon of 'fundamental attribution error'. Attributions are the reasons we think of that cause the behaviour of ourselves and others.

Research has shown that we all tend to attribute the bad behaviour of others to 'internal' causes (i.e. from within them). On the other hand, we tend to give external reasons for our own problem behaviour. In other words we think that the bad behaviour of others is their own fault, and that our own bad behaviour is justified by external factors!

This works for pupil too. They will often genuinely believe that their bad behaviour is largely determined by external causes.

For adults, nowhere is this more obvious than in drivers' bad behaviour.....

W Listening

To adopt ARC it is essential to learn how to listen. In fact, in many of the most difficult situations with pupils you will never get them to listen to you until you've really listened to them (this is true for all conversations).

Listening well is not easy, especially with pupils not accustomed to being invited to state their views and feelings.

You'll need to ask questions of course- but they need to be open questions – you need to be really enquiring and interested in their story:

Closed – statement

“Do you know how bad your behaviour has been?”

“When are you going to stop behaving badly?”

“Why do you take pleasure in hurting others?”

Open - enquiring

“How do you see what happened ?”

“What do you think gets in the way of your behaving well?”

“How do you feel when you see others have been hurt?”

You'll find there's nothing 'soft' about this for many pupils- often they would prefer that you stuck to the easy closed questions – they can just see that as part of the punishment.

When pupils express feelings, whether you believe that the feelings are appropriate, justified or neither, you should acknowledge them to show that you have heard: “You're telling me that you would feel like a wuss if you didn't hit back- is that right?”. But there's nothing to stop you saying that you don't agree with the sentiment if you wish- but own the statement by using the “I” (first person singular) form: “I don't agree with that reaction for a number of reasons... and let's go on to talk about how you see your classmates.”

X Pupils as assistants

There's always a feeling around that the behaviour of pupils is constantly getting worse. We are programmed to notice unwanted behaviour because our brain has safety mechanisms to override all other thinking if it perceives that there might be something dangerous in the environment. It's easy to feel that you are alone as the teacher in the class.

It is true that you have a special role, but most if not all of your pupils are potential allies in carrying it out. In general their expectation will be for order in the classroom. Pupils in misbehaving classes may appear to enjoy the mayhem, but this enjoyment is at best superficial and is probably better described as low-level hysteria. Usually there will still be a group of pupils who are pleading (unsuccessfully in most cases) with their peers to stop messing about.

The pupils will expect you to deliver order, and if you do a reasonable job they will go along with it. But it can go further than that: in the right environment they will assist you in encouraging order amongst the whole class.

How can you encourage such assistance? Well most of the advice given in this book points to ways that will prompt pupils to 'be on your side'; the fairness of your approach (for example using ARC), the clarity of your expectations, the respect that you show pupils, the sense of partnership from use of 'we' based language, your concentration on the quality of your central task – teaching and learning. The more secure they feel with all this, the more they will help to maintain it.

This will mean that the use of approaches like "Fair Pairs" will be even more effective. Pupils will like you pointing out when they are doing things right because they will know (and they're very perceptive about such things) that most of the rest of the class will also approve.

It will also help when you need to discuss changes in rules and procedures when there's a need- they are much more likely to join in and make good suggestions.

But getting the pupils' views can go much further than this. Some people think that if you want to know what a school is really like you only need ask the pupils. This is probably an overestimate of the objectivity of pupils, but there is no doubt that they know an awful lot, and some of it is only known to them.

The information that pupils have that comes from their experience as the 'customers' of the school can be uniquely valuable in helping to solve problems. And yet it is too often under-sought and under-used, usually on the basis that any information that is given is likely to be unreliable and based on immature judgements.

It is good practice to check with pupils as a matter of course within lessons, for example; to find out whether the teaching was clear, the curriculum level

was appropriate and whether the pupils understood the relevance of the tasks. Any question, in fact, that you might ask yourself as part of a self-review of your teaching.

There is a fear that pupils might see this as showing weakness or uncertainty. The fear is understandable, but experience shows it to be unfounded. Pupils liked to be asked, they see it as being inclusive and respectful.

You can take this approach further from time to time by offering pupils a chance to review a whole term's teaching, or to audit their own environment. There is experience of doing this using checklists. Talk to your Behaviour Coordinator for information.

All this will also lead to less obvious benefits. Classes which support their teachers will adapt their behaviour in subtle ways to give social signals to others that misbehaviour is not supported by the peer group. Many potential 'misbehavers' will pick up this message and adjust accordingly.

This will not happen in an "us and them" climate. To avoid that requires the compliance of both teacher and pupils. So if you act as if you're alone in the class, the chances are you will be!

Y The environment

In the first instance teachers will respond to behaviours causing concern by with the usual response guided by the school's disciplinary policy. If these behaviours start to become persistent the best policy is to look at the environment in which the behaviour occurs.

But you don't have to wait until something goes wrong in order to look at the environment in and around your classroom. There are many aspects which are relatively easy to change, for example; the rules, the displays, the seating arrangement, the storage, the extent to which you smile (!) and so on.

While we know that environment affects behaviour (surveys show that 90% of teachers think it's **very** important) we have few indications of particular effects of particular changes. For example, it's assumed that different colours affect behaviour but there is little hard evidence in support and even less scientific indication of which colours have what precise effect.

However, common sense and 'action research' comes to the rescue. If you think that a change in seating arrangements from rows to a "horseshoe" might make for more attentive pupils because it seems a reasonable assumption, you can try it. You can evaluate it by checking on the attention of pupils before you change and checking again once the pupils get used to the new system. You can ask them, after a while, what they think of the new arrangements.

Ideas that have been tried and tested include: distributing resources around the room so that children don't queue up in the same place; fitting blinds to prevent glare; having shorter sessions on some subjects but repeated more frequently to reduce 'subject fatigue'; changing routines for the beginning and end of lessons to help to re-establish order; asking the pupils to look at their environment to suggest improvements; using chairs rather than sitting on the floor to reduce jostling and wriggling; changing the playground arrangements to provide more constructive activities with better sight-lines for the duty staff.

There is a hidden message for your classes in this type of activity. It suggests that you care enough about the quality of what's being offered to the pupils to constantly be looking to improve things. The chances are that their appreciation will pay off in better relationships with them.

If your school has a behaviour coordinator they should be able to offer support in making environmental changes, especially where they involve whole school changes. More information can be gained from www.f4i.org.

Z Avoiding common pitfalls

Sarcasm /embarrassing /shaming

There's no gentle way of saying this: any behaviour by the teacher which demeans pupils is wrong. This is an ethical point, but it's also practical. Naturally the receiving pupil will dislike the shaming, but so will the rest of the class.

Sarcasm in particular comes top of most pupils' hate lists. When a sarcastic comment is made some of the rest of the class might laugh- but it's likely to have a large measure of embarrassment. The teacher will go down in the class's estimation and the pupils will be uncomfortable. They will blame the teacher for this even when they are also annoyed by the behaviour of the pupil in question.

Unconscious shaming and embarrassing of pupils may happen more often and requires a degree of thought to avoid. In general, the more personal (as opposed to educational) the interaction the more the danger. Children may be sensitive about all sorts of issues; e.g. physical appearance, clothes, quality of possessions, family, ability in lessons, social status, medical matters; and any area which touches on these should be broached with extreme caution. A classic error is any comparison with a sibling (whether favourable or not !)

Obviously, this is most true for whole class situations, but even in one to one discussion you will need to be alert to signs of distress.

Labelling

It has been said that dogs grow to look more like their masters (and presumably also mistresses). This may be a fallacy, but it is true to say that pupils grow to behave more like their labels ('stupid', 'disruptive' 'class clown' 'thug' etc.).

Because of the way our memory functions we have to use labels, both real and figurative. But when we use them to describe other people there are dangers. The reason why people behave in the way they do is complicated. Sometimes they are making choices, but in most cases any choices are heavily affected by external pressures. Many of our actions are (and have to be) 'semi-automatic'.

Other people's use of labels by affects the way we act through the social pressure it exerts. We tend to judge ourselves by what others say. That's why most people appreciate positive judgements by others so much.

If a pupil regularly hears himself described as a 'bad pupil' (or one of the many more extreme versions of this label) 99 times out of 100 he will see himself as a 'bad pupil' . But it goes further than that – it is likely that he will take on the role of a bad pupil. Behaviour will get worse and remediation will become more difficult. Calling him 'bad' will have made the situation worse – the labellers are part of the problem.

In moderation it is, of course, O.K. to label bad *behaviour*. But you'll find your life easier if you avoid labelling pupils at all. It is better to praise the behaviour you like and make it clear what you don't like by ignoring or the calm use of consequences. Labelling may give pupils no way back.

Blaming – including blaming yourself

Blame in behaviour in schools is as pointless as it is natural. The main function of blame is to express an emotion about what has been done rather than to seek a remedy, or to distance oneself from any suggestion of culpability.

Blame is a very personal thing. When people are blamed they are trapped into one of two emotionally based responses: fight (including blaming someone else) or acceptance. Neither are likely to lead to positive outcomes or any logical response. When blamed people fight the accusation the temperature is raised very quickly and the argument gets personal. When they accept it they tend to become withdrawn, helpless and even hopeless– after all they usually cannot change what has been done. But the most common response is to blame others, setting up a 'cycle of blame'.

So everyone blames something or someone for their misfortunes; the council for not filling the potholes, the government for reducing funding for schools. Whole systems appear to be based on what has become known as a 'blame culture'.

All this means that breaking out from blame is very difficult. But if you want peace and harmony in your classrooms you should try.

A good way of doing this is to replace the concept of blame with 'contribution'. Whenever anything goes wrong, there will be a number of contributory factors, some external, e.g.:

➤ **it was a windy day and they were all excited**

and some personal, e.g.;

- **I may not have explained myself as well as I might have done**
- **He didn't think about the consequences of kicking over the chair**

When moving to post-mortem on such occurrences, instead of listing the items of blame, talk to the pupil about what **contributed** to the situation and how that can be prevented in the future. And if that involves talking about your contributions as well you are much more likely to resolve the issue.

Acting too quickly

There can be emergencies in classrooms which require instant action. While such occasions tend (thankfully) to be rare there are other times when you may be tempted to act quickly when a pause for thought would be of advantage.

The most common reason for this happening is likely to be when the emotional climate of the classroom has been heightened (for example see 'Following the pupil's agenda' below) and you feel that surge of adrenalin which prompts the 'fight or flight' reflex. The other main reason for acting too hastily is when something takes you by surprise – once again the adrenalin will flow !

Adrenalin is a life saving substance which can protect people in danger by heightening their senses and making them physically alert (even to the extent of reversing anaphylactic shock or restarting heart activity), but it's not noted for improving thoughtfulness – thinking things through would take too long in an emergency.

So decision for instant action are often misguided. You can immunise yourself from these dangers of instant reaction by practising 'pausing' (often called 'take-up time'). This is very similar to the idea of counting to ten, a version of which is frequently part of anger management training.

In normal classroom interactions it is often right to pause – particularly to allow whatever you have said to be 'taken in' by the pupils. This is especially true in dealing with behaviour- if the pupil can't keep up with what you're saying or feels that they don't have time to think *they* are likely to experience raised adrenalin levels and their thoughtfulness will decrease. Exactly the opposite of what you want.

You can practice pausing simply without any special techniques, or you can use some kind of non-verbal 'filler' – something like the silent counting to ten – while you think through a reasonable reaction. The chances are that when you've gone through your pause routine you will act somewhat differently than if you had reacted immediately. And in most cases you will make a better decision.

Incidentally, all that has been said about teachers in this section applies equally to pupil behaviour. You may wish to prompt pupils to pause themselves in certain situations where immediate reaction might lead to conflict.

Taking all responsibility: Keeping it to yourself

All teachers have a general responsibility for the behaviour of their pupils in their classes as what they do and the environment they create will always have

some effect on behaviour. It is wrong, therefore, for staff to say that 'behaviour is not my responsibility'.

But that is not the same thing as saying that teachers have complete responsibility for all behaviour. For a start, pupils do bring in an impressive array of behavioural baggage to their classrooms- some good and some not. Most of the causes of these are outside the control of their teacher.

Secondly, there is no such thing as perfection in dealing with behaviour (otherwise behaviour wouldn't be an issue!). Everyone makes errors, has bad days and fails to live up to their ideal.

So when things don't go well the key is to accept that you have a part in the responsibility, and certainly a part in the solution, but remember that you are not alone and that the responsibility is shared. Talk to others. Don't keep it to yourself -the responsibility is not all yours!

Raising the voice

The raising of voices is very rare in day to day life. While there are some occasions where it's expected (markets, football crowds, warning of fire etc), in most cases hearing a raised voice in a public setting will cause surprise and the beginnings of anxiety- raised voices are associated in the mind with trouble, argument and conflict.

It is for this reason that some teachers use the raised voice- it gets attention. But the effect wears off very quickly through overuse- the raised voice becomes familiar to the pupils so it no longer gains their attention at all. They may even start talking in louder voices in order to hear each other. This can lead to a spiral of increasing volume of noise in the classroom.

Part of the answer to this can be found in the section above on signals (in 'Signals: quiet/listen to me - as response to behaviours: I'm not discussing that/we'll talk later/remember the rule etc').

The aim should be to use raised voices hardly ever, and then only when there is some need for instant action (see 'Acting too quickly'). If this is a big change from what you're doing at present, it may take some time -but the benefits will be well worth the effort.

Following the pupil's agenda

Among the many ways that pupils react to staff, one of the most difficult to handle is when, for no apparent cause, they appear to become more and more worked up about the situation. It seems that whatever the teacher says the pupil reacts with increasing anger and/or distress.

We're not talking of course about pupils who are suffering periods of stress or major emotional distress linked to known causes. Such pupil may often need some leeway to be shown within the discipline system.

But there are others who develop learned repertoires – or habits – of instant and extreme reaction which is out of proportion to the event. Bill Rogers calls such pupils ‘self-windup merchants’.

The natural human response to increased ‘arousal’ by others around you is an increase in your own state of arousal. Adrenalin flows, heart rates increase and you move towards the ‘fight or flight’ state. The trouble is, with these pupils neither fight nor flight is the best tactic.

So though it takes an effort of will on your part, you should not follow the pupil’s agenda of raising the temperature. If anything, you should counter it with an even more cool than natural response.

The best approach will involve a calm restatement of what is expected of the pupil repeated as necessary- with perhaps some temporary partial agreement with the pupil if appropriate and allowing time to comply. An example will demonstrate.

Reece has been talking to Waseem all through the lesson and has been asked to get on with his own work several times.

Teacher: Reece, you are talking. You know the rule but you’ve carried on. Come and sit up the front.

Reece: (*loud*) That’s not fair, you never make anyone else move. Leanne and Sara were talking as well. I’m not moving.

Teacher: (*calm – softer !*) I’ll deal with others when needed. Now you have to move to the front.

Reece: (*louder*) I wasn’t talking. It’s not fair that I’ve got to move. You’re just getting at me.

Teacher: (*still calm*) We can talk about that later. You must move to the front.

Reece: (*definitely shouting now..*) But it’s not fair. I hate this lesson. You just pick on me. I’m not f__ing moving!

Teacher: (*remarkably calm!*) You must move. Refusing and using bad language will make things worse for you. I’ll give you a minute to think that over. (*Continues with lesson*)

Of course this approach will not always lead to Reece calming down and moving, though it has much more chance than by joining in with him in loud argument. But, over time, assuming that you follow up any unresolved matters with the pupil (for example, at breaktime), it is much less likely that the pupil will maintain the self-windup response with you.

This is because the self-windup has a *purpose* for the pupil. Maybe the behaviour has been learned because it has previously led to teachers backing down. More likely, it’s because it diverts attention from the original behaviour. In other words, the child is attempting to change and control the agenda.

By staying calm while sticking to your guns you are blocking off these outcomes for the pupil. In the end, the self-wind up becomes less worth it from their point of view. And there's more chance they'll stop doing it.

Class rules, routines and procedures checklist

(The list is included as a reminder of possible areas to help thinking through what is needed in the classroom- they don't all require separate detailed descriptions of what should happen in every case!)

- Principles for interacting with all others
- Principles for interacting with Teacher
- Specific rules for the room e.g. health and safety
- Roles of teacher and learning assistants
- Routines for lining up
- Routine if teacher is delayed in arrival
- Routines for entering and leaving class
- Routines for late arrivals
- Routines for initial settling
- Teacher Cues to attend to teacher
- Behaviour when attending to teacher
- Teacher Cues for discussion
- Behaviour (ground rules) in:
 - Teacher-led whole class sessions
 - Class discussion
 - Group work
 - Individual work in their seats
- Teacher Cues/ signals for transitions
- Procedures for transitions
- Movement in class during tasks
- Routines/organisation for access to resources/equipment
- Routines/pupil cues for gaining help
- Routines for self monitoring/paired monitoring work
- Routines for tidying up / for completing work
- Rules/ expectations about homework
- Routines for end of lesson
- Class tasks assigned to pupils (monitors etc)
- Agreements about noise/loud talking etc
- Procedures for asking to go to toilet
- Classroom rules/agreements about:
 - chewing, eating, drinking, mobile phones, slouching, rocking on chairs etc
- Consequences in this class for keeping to rules/not keeping to rules