

Behaviour management

[Profession](#), [Teacher](#)



We know that to effectively deliver sanctions the message needs to be simple, clear and non-negotiable; in practice it is easy to get caught up in a lengthy argument or confrontation. Focus on moving in, delivering your sanction as discreetly as possible and then moving out quickly. Choose a phrase that you will withdraw on 'I need to see you working as well as you were in yesterday's written task, thank you for listening' or 'I will come back and give you feedback on your work in five minutes'. Avoid waiting around for the student to change their behaviour immediately; they may need some time and space to make a better choice. Engage another student in a positive conversation or move across the room to answer a question and only check back once the dust has settled. No one likes receiving sanctions and the longer the interaction the more chance of a defensive reaction or escalation. Get in, deliver the message and get out with dignity; quickly, efficiently and without lingering.

Behaviour management tip 2 Countdown A good technique for getting the attention of the whole class is to use a 'countdown' from 5 or 10 to allow students the time to finish their conversations (or work) and listen to the next instruction. Explain to the class that you are using countdown to give them fair warning that they need to listen and that it is far more polite than calling for immediate silence. Embellish your countdown with clear instructions so that students know what is expected and be prepared to modify it for different groups: 'Five, you should be finishing the sentence that you are writing Three, excellent Marcus, a merit for being the first to give me your full attention Two, quickly back to your places One, all pens and pencils down now Half, all looking this way Zero, thank you.' Some students may join in the countdown with you at

first, some will not be quiet by the time you get to zero at first but persevere, use praise and rewards to reinforce its importance and it can become an extremely efficient tool for those times when you need everyone's attention. You may already have a technique for getting everyone's attention, e. g. hands up. The countdown technique is more effective as it is time related and does not rely on students seeing you. Behaviour management tip 3

Closed requests Prefacing requests with 'Thank you' has a marked effect on how the request is received. 'Thank you for putting your bag on the hook' or 'Thank you for dropping your gum in the bin'. The trust in the student that this statement implies, combined with the clarity of the expectation, often results in immediate action without protest. It is almost a closed request which leaves no 'hook' to hold onto and argue with. A similar technique can be applied to requests for students to make deadlines or attend meetings that they would rather ignore, salesmen would call it an 'assumed close'. 'When you come to see me today get as close to 3. 30 as you can so we can resolve this quickly and both get home in good time'. As opposed to, 'Meet me at my room at the end of school'. 'When you hand in your coursework next Monday, meet me by the staff room so that I can store it securely'. As opposed to, 'I want your coursework in on Monday'. You are assuming and encouraging a positive response; making it awkward for the student to respond negatively. Behaviour management tip 4 Get out and about Perhaps your greatest contribution to managing behaviour around the school site is your presence. If you have your coffee in the playground, your lunch with the students (what % of your students eat at a table with an adult every day?) and are ever-present in the corridor outside your classroom students will see

consistency in your expectations for behaviour both in and out of class. They will grow used to your interventions in social areas and your presence will slowly have an impact on their behaviour. The relationships you forge will be strengthened, with opportunities for less formal conversation presenting themselves daily. In more challenging institutions there can be a tendency to avoid social areas or stray too far away from teaching areas. For a while it may seem that life is easier that way but by taking the long way round to the staff room to avoid potential problem areas and you risk being effective only within the confines of your classroom.

Behaviour management tip 5 Jobs for the boys and girls

At primary level students' mutual trust is encouraged through sharing and delegating jobs in the classroom. A well organised year 5 teacher will have students handing out resources, clearing and cleaning the room, preparing areas for different activities, drawing blinds etc. The students learn how to share responsibility with others and accept responsibility for themselves. It is often said that primary schools teach students to be independent and secondary schools teach them not to be. Year 7 students in their new schools are often surprised when their responsibility for the classroom is removed, 'Right I am counting out the scissors and I will come round and hand them out, don't touch them until I say', and their freedom of movement restricted, 'Do not get out of your seat without written permission!' etc. The tasks and responsibilities that you are able to share may seem mundane and trivial but by doing this an ethos of shared responsibility can be given a secure foundation.

Behaviour management tip 6 Proactively developing relationships with students

It's not about trying to get down with the kids. Get the image of the teacher in a

baseball cap skipping up to a group of gnarled year 11s with a 'Yo mothers wahgwan, dis new Phil Collins is safe man', out of your head. It is certainly not what I am suggesting, although it would be fun to watch. Chose your opportunities to build a relationship with a student carefully. Open up casual conversation when the student appears relaxed and unguarded. Try asking for help or advice, giving the student something you know they are interested in (a newspaper cutting, web reference, loan copy of a book) or simply say hello and pass the time of day. You may choose to wait until you find a situation that is not pressured or time limited. Aim for little and often rather than launching into a lengthy and involved conversation. Remember, your intervention may be unwelcome at first. Your aim is to gently persuade the student that you are committed to building trust. Be prepared for your approaches to be rejected. The student may be testing you to see how committed to developing the relationship you really are. He may not welcome any informal conversation with you because it is easier for him to deal with a conflict than a relationship of trust. Or quite simply, he may have decided that all teachers need to be given a wide berth. Give your time freely and expect nothing in return; in time and with persistence your reward can be a positive relationship that others will be amazed at... " How do you get him to behave like that? In my lessons he has made a home under the table and is refusing visitors." Behaviour management tip 7 " Chase me":

What to do with secondary behaviours Secondary behaviours are those that occur during your intervention or as you leave a conversation with a student. They are 'chase me' behaviours designed to push your buttons and gain a furious response. When you have exhausted all of your positive

reinforcement, redirection techniques, warnings and sanctions and need Darren to leave the room, the secondary behaviours are the chair being thrown back, or door being slammed, or the infuriating smile that slowly cracks across his face. He may want to divert the conversation away from the original behaviour or encourage an adrenalin fuelled confrontation in the corridor. Don't allow him to take control of your behaviour. Resist the temptation to address the secondary behaviours in the moment. Instead record them and deal with them later on. The fact that Darren has left the room means that he has followed your instructions; the dramatic trail of disruption that he has left in his wake can be dealt with when he is calm. Your calm and considered response will be closely observed by the rest of the class and they will be impressed by your confidence even in those emotionally fuelled moments. Darren may slowly begin to realise that his usual pattern of behaviour will not work with you. Behaviour management tip 8 Don't just get down, get way down! It is often said that getting down to students' eye level is important when delivering praise or sanctions to students. This can often be interpreted as leaning over a student rather than standing above them or sitting down next to them. I often observe teachers who think they are at the student's eye level but are actually still demanding that the student looks up at them. I prefer the student to be looking down at me; teachers who do this know that crouching down lower than eye level is not weak but assertive and confident physical language. When you are delivering sanctions there is less chance of a defensive/aggressive reaction, and when praising, you create a more private space in the room. If you are teaching in an open space or would prefer to speak to students standing at

the side of the room, double the personal space that you allow the student or stand side by side with him (or her) and it will have a similar effect.

Behaviour management tip 9 Duty at the school gates Duty at the school gates is not a popular pastime for many teachers. The complications of unwanted visitors mixing with students as they arrive or leave is compounded by the confusion of where the teacher's jurisdiction lies. Yet just as you can nurture a positive atmosphere in the classroom by standing at the door welcoming students or reinforcing positive behaviour at the end of the lesson so you can have an impact at the school gates. Your physical and verbal language is read by students as they pass; if you are calm, confident, positive, smiling, softly spoken and can reinforce students who are following the rules, it will set the right tone. Patrol like a cartoon policeman and you will attract negative responses and aggression. It is your behaviour that has the greatest single impact on how safe students feel. It may not be wise to try and challenge every incident of inappropriate behaviour immediately and in such a public arena so arrive at the gate prepared; a pen and paper to record when you choose not to intervene and a walkie talkie as back up for when you do.

Behaviour management tip 10 Classroom makeover With the growth of the interactive whiteboard and use of computer screens for teaching, many classrooms are reverting to students in rows with the teacher's desk at the front and in the corner. Thirty years ago the classroom was arranged for students to see the blackboard, now technology has replaced chalk but the difficulties of inflexible classroom configurations remain. When designing the layout of your room you also need to consider the management of behaviour. With students in rows and

the teacher sitting behind their desk there are many hiding places for students to escape to. If you cannot get to students quickly and easily then the classroom becomes an arena where conversations about behaviour are broadcast for everyone to hear. Confrontations become more frequent, delivery of praise less subtle and as the teacher retreats behind the desk the physical divide can easily develop into a psychological one. As a reaction to the overuse of the blackboard much work was done to encourage teachers to use more dynamic classroom configurations. Desks in rows with the teacher's desk at the front makes the management of behaviour harder, stifles gentle human interaction and forces most conversations to be broadcast publicly. They may be able to see the screen but are they engaging with it or with you?