

please be good

Time for some honesty. Many teachers struggle to manage behaviour in their first year of teaching. I certainly did. It's not something that experienced teachers will readily admit, but look around the staffroom and know that the confident faces hide years of frustrating trial and error. Fortunately, I remember the pain vividly and can save you some of the stress and angst.

Behaviour management is a campaign, not a battle, but what's critical is that you lay the right foundations in your first term. Prioritise this above all else – the paperwork and 'exciting professional development opportunities' can wait.

To start, decide on the rules for your class. Later in the year you might choose to negotiate these, but for now, take the lead. Display them prominently (A1 posters on each wall of the classroom), refer to them incessantly and focus on these behaviours above all others. Here are three that will cover many of the behaviours that you will be addressing early on:

1. Follow instructions fast
2. Speak kindly
3. Stay on task

Teach the children these rules by catching those who follow them immediately and giving them your first attention.

When children decide to break the rules don't be surprised or think that it's personal. Expect it, plan for it and enjoy dealing with it with flair. Differentiate between those who need a simple warning or rule reminder and those children who are trying to test you. Children who deliberately cross the boundaries expect you to respond with

Free behaviour training!

Paul Dix's award-winning Behaviour Training is now available as an online behaviour management course. A free sample is available for all Teach Primary readers who call 020 7000 1735 or email ellie@pivotaleducation.com with code 'OCTP'. Pivotal Education is also offering a special rate of £49.95 for the first 20 readers to call and sign up to the full online course.

the full force of your emotion. Don't give it to them; they don't deserve it. Instead, give them your briefest attention in the moment. Get in, deliver the message and get out. Step your consequences. Try:

1. Rule reminder
2. Warning
3. One minute of break/lunch
4. 10 minute reparation.

Now address your own behaviour and planned responses to poor choices. Don't reward bad behaviour by giving it your first attention or by challenging it in public. Give its perpetrators a neutral response. The emotionless connection between their behaviour and the consequence must be continually underlined, now and throughout your career – that way you can save your emotional energy for when it's most needed: when children behave appropriately.

Remember, you can't force change with punishment (detentions, lines, isolation etc.) alone. Consequences work best when applied immediately, imposed by the class teacher, related to the work and focused on the behaviour, not the child. Fear techniques (shouting, delegating to others, threatening bigger punishment etc.) should be avoided, as they shift focus onto the sanction.

Children learn that adults are in control of their behaviour, but I want my children to know that they're in control of their own behaviour too. Sit down and talk it through, monitor the agreement from that point on, protect the relationship while tackling the behaviour. When pupils behave appropriately, give them your smile, thanks, sincere verbal praise, positive notes and, if welcome, public recognition. Keep in mind that positive reinforcement, praise and appropriate reward change behaviour in the long term, not sanctions.

Of course, most of the pupils in your class will want to stay within your boundaries. Don't forget them. They deserve your attention and have earned your praise, acknowledgement and positive reinforcement, and their parents need to know this. Moments of crisis will tempt you into dwelling on those children who have not learned how to behave appropriately, but try to keep your attention on the majority who are excellent learners.



If the thought of the first term back is

giving you nightmares, **Paul Dix's** behaviour tips will help you sleep more soundly...

Be professional

In most staffrooms, the behaviour conversation is mature. In some it's far from it. Watch out for conversations about behaviour that quickly deteriorate into hammering of expectations and labelling children, and avoid it. Some colleagues will offer support, but don't allow them to take over. Seeking support is essential, but delegating to others or pushing children up the chain of command stores up problems for later on. Behaviour cannot be controlled remotely by others. Seek advice, ideas and temporary respite, but remember it's your class and ultimately your responsibility.

On these foundations you'll build the rapport and relationships that will positively affect your pupils for a lifetime. Keep it simple and be consistent. Get it right 8/10 times and don't beat yourself up when you get it wrong. Talk to all of your pupils with utter respect, even in the face of utter disrespect. Really – beat them with your kindness and emotional restraint. Above all, remember a child's behaviour is not their identity.

Five mantras to keep you sane

- 1 **It's not what you give, it's the way that you give it**
- 2 **A child's behaviour is not their identity (attack the behaviour, not the child)**
- 3 **When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change (sustaining high expectations raises achievement and changes lives)**
- 4 **Parent on the shoulder (when you're dealing with poor behaviour imagine the parent of the child overhearing the conversation and you won't go far wrong)**
- 5 **Children see, children do (your own behaviour is important, your obvious modelling critical)**

10 top tips

AN NQT'S POTTED GUIDE TO MANAGING CLASSROOM BEHAVIOUR...

■ Severely limit the amount of time that you demand the attention of the whole class. Organise your teaching so that you can deliver instructions to small groups and individuals. Too much 'teacher talk time' promotes low-level disruption. Time how much you demand the attention of the whole class in one lesson to check yourself.

■ Recognise effort and commitment, and give your students rewards that last. Use stickers, stamps, notes, certificates, positive referrals, display. Stay away from over rewarding, insincere praise and bribery. It may work for a while, but the effect soon wears off.

■ Give your energy and emotion to students doing the right thing. Create a positive climate from the outset, and make sure students know that they get the best response by following the agreed routines.

■ Talk to all students with respect, even when it's not reciprocated.

■ Build links with home. Send positive notes home for students who are behaving and working well.

■ Be aware of your own teaching performance. Be patient, resist shouting or revealing your full range of emotion and disguise your fear by performing a more confident character.

■ Get to know your students. Talk to them, spend time with them, design 'getting to know you' questionnaires. Find out as much as possible to shape your approach to teaching them.

■ Establish your routines for the classroom early and teach them relentlessly by reinforcing those students who follow them.

■ Stay away from staffroom banter that labels or puts down individual students. Wise professionals know that their behaviour is judged in the staffroom as well as in the classroom.

Don't listen to the moaners, the cynics and the mutterers. They'll try to drag you in and smother your optimism. Stay well away.

■ Seek out those teachers who can manage behaviour with care and dignity. Ask to see them teach, learn from them, invite their support. Stick close to them and they'll help you to gain the respect that they've built up over time.

