

# Stick with it

Now you've initiated a change for the better, make sure everyone stays the course. Paul Dix concludes his series on SEALing consistent policy and practice in one year...

Paul Dix is a leading voice in Behaviour Management in the UK and Internationally. As Managing Director of Pivotal Education he



leads a team of ten Behaviour Management specialists in training and intervention projects. Pivotal have an exceptional reputation for designing and delivering training that promotes real change. You can sign up for their free tips service on [www.pivotaleducation.com](http://www.pivotaleducation.com)

There is an advertising campaign in Australia showing parents smoking, arguing with other drivers, dropping litter and behaving badly as their children follow them doing exactly the same thing. The message is simple: children see, children do. Policy makers spend a great deal of time arguing what the best teaching methods are and how children learn in different ways. 'Children see, children do' is an unavoidable truth.

Things are really no different in the staff room. You can spend hours devising and developing new policy to improve behaviour and create a calm, socially and emotionally literate school but the practice has to match. The behaviour of the senior managers is critical and any deviation from agreed practice will be seized upon by some to excuse their own 'adjustments'. When you have a bad meal in a restaurant you tell people about it. When you see your deputy head walking past and ignoring children kicking the doors you tell lots of people. Some colleagues will quickly excuse themselves as they take their ball and go and play a different game.

## Keep up the momentum

As the excitement of the initial training, consultation and planning wanes there are dangers lurking; unexploded behaviour bombs that need careful diffusing. 'You aren't doing what we all agreed', 'This isn't working', 'I told you that it wouldn't work', 'It was better before', 'Trevor is still breaking wind to order' etc.

As with all new policy and practice there will be some fire fighting to be done with colleagues who have, shall we say, less sticking power. Resist the temptation to whack them repeatedly with the extinguisher screaming, 'But you were there when we agreed to this! You didn't say anything when you had the chance!'. You can make

lasting, sustainable improvements in behaviour with 80% of your colleagues on board. There are more effective ways to encourage appropriate behaviour from your colleagues. Less immediately satisfying I grant you, but effective nonetheless.

## Offer continued encouragement

While you chase the sheep who are trying to escape, make sure you remember the flock. Plan to persistently drip feed encouraging messages about what is going well. Positive reinforcement works for your colleagues as it does for your pupils. Imagine the new teacher who, keen to impress, arrives at work early and leaves late every day. For a month she gives her time freely yet no one says a word to her. Sometime into the second month she begins to wonder if her efforts are being appreciated. Still no one has reinforced her enthusiasm. By the end of term she is arriving after and leaving before everyone else and, by the spring, the jobs pages are being scouted with more vigour.

Now imagine the same scenario but this time, after a week, the new teacher's mentor mentions how impressed she is with the amount of hours being put in. After a few weeks the head pulls her aside and, at the end of the first half term, puts a 'thank you' card in her tray. Each time her efforts are reinforced, the commitment of the new teacher is renewed. She continues to give her time freely and knows that her efforts are appreciated. Satisfied with her work she reads the jobs section with a comfortable detachment. While you focus efforts on catching students doing the right thing, don't overlook your staff.

## Reinforce and highlight success

Make your behaviour display in the staff room one with impact, keep it updated and show everyone the progress that is being made. Keep the agreed

goals in sight. Use data to prove that more proportionate responses to inappropriate behaviour work. Use it to prove to the doubters that the evidence is more than anecdotal. Some days of the school year are hot spots for incidents and exclusions (internal and external). Track behaviour over the year and make sure you know when the hot spots occur. Share this information with your colleagues and parents and use it to take proactive steps. For instance, if you know that in the second week of December last year there were 15 serious incidents then the challenge in the staff meeting at the beginning of the week is obvious. Use student testimonials to reflect how the new practice is being received, and perhaps a focus group of students to look at how the consistency between adults could be further improved.

## Ask for constructive feedback

Some colleagues will be lobbying from behind mugs of tea for a review of what has been agreed after a few weeks, hours sometimes! Agree to a formal review of policy and practice at the end of the year and invite written submissions that identify the problem and suggest practical ways to improve practice. Re-run selected sections of the original staff/student/parents survey to gauge changes in skills, attitudes, knowledge and support. Celebrate what has been learned about behaviour and conduct, reflect on how far everyone has come and watch the expectations of parents change as you distribute rewards and awards.

You can change the behaviour of your students, parents and staff. You can mould a school that shines even in the greyest communities. Your staff, well trained, motivated and consistent is your strongest asset. It is not the system that you choose but the quality and determination of your teachers that is, ultimately, pivotal.

*"It is not the system that you choose but the quality and determination of your teachers that is, ultimately, pivotal"*

Let children see you struggle

### TIME TO SHIFT THE FOCUS TO LEARNING AND OUTSTANDING TEACHING....

We already appreciate that our behaviour has a direct effect on the way those around us behave. Perhaps it is time to transfer the same idea to learning?

The teacher's most effective model is one that's rarely demonstrated; the role of the learner. Teachers are successful learners who have come through a huge range of tests, exams and assessments to gain their position in front of the class. Teachers know how to succeed when what they are being asked to do is outside of their comfort zone. Yet how many of us learn something new in front of or with the class?

When do we demonstrate our skills as autonomous learners? How do we show our use of goal setting and reflective self assessment? How often do we have open and honest discussions about the process of learning?

If your students only ever see you being successful, getting it right, knowing the answer then the model for the learner is unrealistic and the expectations unclear. I like students to see me struggle to learn something, to experience frustration with a task, to help me map what I have learned and reflect on the next steps. It marks me out as a learner, creates a sense of equality and demystifies the skills and steps in learning and higher order thinking.

Paul Dix begins a series of articles on the skills of outstanding teachers in the next issue of Teach Primary.



JAN

*Choose one issue; one behaviour that you wish to change.*

MAR



MAY



JUL

*Addressing the way that adults talk to pupils is at the heart of successful practice.*

SEP



NOV

FEB



APR

JUN

*Changes can and will take place with 80% of staff on board.*

AUG



OCT

*Two positive referrals trigger a phone call home*

DEC

*Look for answers, not for blame.*