

Improving behaviour in schools guidance report

Introduction and background

Although there is often a perception that pupil behaviour has worsened over time, teacher voice surveys show that the proportion of teachers saying that the behaviour at their school is good or better has remained at around 70-76 per cent over the last 10 years. Ofsted data also provides some useful insights. The 2014 report *Below the Radar* listed the aspects of behaviour most commonly cited in inspection reports as in need of improvement. Consistency was by far the most common, followed by systems for monitoring behaviour and improving pupil engagement. This new guidance report from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) aims to help senior leaders in primary and secondary schools to make better-informed decisions about their behaviour management strategies. Six key recommendations are made in the report. They focus on 3 areas: strategies to prevent misbehaviour from happening; strategies to deal with bad behaviour when it happens; and the need for consistency and clarity when embedding a new behaviour management policy. For maximum impact, this report should be read in conjunction with other EEF guidance, including *Putting evidence to work: a school's guide to implementation*.

Key points

Know and understand your pupils and their influences

- Schools should consider the things which might influence pupil behaviour and consider what can be done to address these. By becoming aware of events and contexts which have had, or might have, a negative effect on behaviour, there is more chance of mitigating the situation.
- For example, pupil B in year 10 has been disrupting lessons and walking out of class. While investigating this behaviour, the staff team becomes aware that B has not made friends since moving to the school in the previous term. Alongside implementing sanctions, the school looks at ways of improving her behaviour. A chat with her tutor reveals that she is a keen musician. She is encouraged to join the school band where she makes friends and she is also encouraged to have regular conversations with an in-school mentor. As she becomes more aware of her own behaviours and is influenced by new friends, her behaviour improves.
- One way of building positive relationships with pupils is via the EMR (establish, maintain, restore) method which involves focussing for no more than 30 minutes a week on those pupils with whom it is difficult to connect. The establish phase involves practices to cultivate a positive relationship with each child (e.g. enquiring about the student's interests). The maintain phase follows; it may involve strategies such as greeting students at the door or sending positive notes home. In the restore phase, there is an effort to repair harm after a negative interaction, for example, by letting go of the previous incident and starting afresh.

Teach learning behaviours alongside managing misbehaviour

- There is a strong body of evidence (see full report for studies) which suggests that pupils who are aware of their own behaviour, who can self-regulate and deploy coping skills, will be less likely to misbehave in school. It is therefore important for teachers to teach learning behaviours.
- There are 3 key categories of learning behaviour which should be considered. The first is emotional behaviours which includes such things as dealing with setbacks, self-esteem and self-worth. The second is social behaviours, including pupils' relationships with teachers and peers, and collaborative learning. The third is cognitive behaviours which includes the elements of motivation, growth mindset, cognitive lead and communication.
- Extrinsic motivation—in the form of external influences such as gaining rewards and praise—is useful to address some minor misbehaviours or to encourage positive behaviour. However, it is extrinsic or self-motivation which is key to improving resilience and achieving goals. Children who are intrinsically motivated are less likely to misbehave.
- One of the best-known approaches for building intrinsic motivation is based on growth mindset, i.e. the theory that intelligence is not fixed but can be increased through effort. Research by Carol Dweck suggests that teaching children to have this mindset can encourage them not only to improve academically, but also to behave better. However, Dweck herself points out the difficulties in implementing a



growth mindset in a school and underlines the need for consistency and modelling.

Use classroom management strategies to support good classroom behaviour

- Classroom management tends to be more of a problem for early career teachers. The 2013 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) revealed that there is a substantial improvement in classroom climate associated with being in the profession for longer than 5 years.
- Putting in place clear reward systems can improve pupil behaviour in the classroom when used as part of a broader teacher classroom management strategy. However, evidence on interventions which focus exclusively on rewards, such as the *Good Behaviour Game* is inconclusive.
- A review of the literature identified 31 studies of classroom-based strategies to manage behaviour aimed at the whole class, most of which took place in primary schools. Consistently positive effects (small to medium) were seen for schools which train teachers in classroom management approaches. Of programmes available in the U.K., the *Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management programme* is the 'off-the-shelf' programme with the largest evidence base. This programme aims to provide teachers of 3-8-year-olds with the skills to effectively manage their classrooms. The focus is on strengthening teachers' classroom management strategies, promoting children's prosocial behaviour, and reducing classroom aggression and non-cooperation with peers and teachers.

Using simple approaches as part of your regular routine

- There are a number of effective simple strategies (outlined below) which are effective without requiring any pedagogical change.
- The EEF 'Magic Breakfast' research showed that pupil behaviour and attainment improved for schools that ran a breakfast club; while only around 25 per cent of children attended the clubs, schools which offered a club saw an improvement in attainment across the class.
- Recent research conducted with 11-14 year-olds suggests that greeting students positively at the classroom door has a significant impact in terms of improving pupil behaviour. Misbehaviour often occurs in schools around the start and end of lessons and when moving around the school building. By intentionally promoting and practising successful transitions into the classroom, teachers are empowered to help their students to be ready to learn.
- In another study, teachers in disruptive classes of pupils aged between 9 and 14 years old were trained over 2 45-minute sessions to increase their use of behaviour-specific praise. Teachers were given reminders at intervals to praise students, alongside training focused on the 'magic 5:1 ratio' of positive-to-negative interactions. Over the 2-month study, pupils increased their on-task behaviour by an average of 12 minutes per hour while pupils in similar comparison classes did not change their behaviour.
- The concept of simple effective approaches is linked to the checklists developed by behaviour expert Charlie Taylor, who conducted research with heads of outstanding schools in deprived areas. He found that their approach was to do simple things with consistency. After reading a book by a surgeon who had implemented simple checklists in hospital to be read aloud prior to surgery to avoid infections, he decided the same could be done for improving behaviour. He refers to the lists as a 'menu' to choose from (see appendix of full report).

Use targeted approaches to meet the needs of individuals in your school

- Universal behaviour management systems are unlikely to meet the needs of all students. A tailored approach to support an individual's behaviour should complement the school's behaviour policy. It should not, however, lower expectations of any pupil's behaviour. Furthermore, children and particularly adolescents have a heightened awareness of fairness: they are unlikely to respond well to differential treatment.
- In terms of additional programmes which can be put in place for pupils who are struggling with behaviour, particularly large effects were seen for functional behaviour assessment and daily report cards.
- Functional behaviour assessment involves shared decision-making between in-school staff and external bodies such as a social worker. Observations of the child are carried out to discover triggers for the behaviour and decide how it can best be addressed.
- Daily report cards are usually completed once or twice daily by the class teacher in a primary school, or carried to each class and completed by all class teachers in secondary. The teacher reports against key behaviour targets set in relation to the individual child's improvement needs.

Consistency is key

- School leaders need to ask themselves a number of questions in developing a consistent approach. Is there a sense of shared responsibility among staff and students or is this new policy going to feel 'done to' the school community by leadership? Are those in the wider school community (beyond the SLT and teachers) involved? Are all staff trained, including teaching assistants, receptionists, lunchtime staff, and everyone else who interacts with children? What impact will you see in school if this strategy is successful? How do you plan to measure this?
- Since there are gaps in the evidence (e.g. regarding the impact of isolation rooms), school leaders need to assess the effectiveness of programmes against the intended outcomes. They also need to look at unintended consequences.
- Ofsted's above-mentioned report *Below the Radar* revealed that only a quarter of secondary and half of primary teachers agreed that the behaviour policy in their school was applied consistently by all staff. Only a third of all teachers said the headteacher provided support in managing behaviour. School leaders can support their teachers and middle leaders to achieve better consistency between the classrooms in their school, and any new strategies should aim towards this.
- The implementation process of any new policy is essential for promoting consistency. Even relatively simple changes, such as a mobile phone ban, needs careful implementation, wide consultation and adaptation following feedback.

The full document can be downloaded from:

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/guidance-reports/improving-behaviour-in-schools>