Promoting and Managing Positive Pupil Behaviour
'Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and you help them to become what they are capable of being.'

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe  
German Philosopher and Author  
1749-1832

The theory of initial teacher education may have exposed you to many ideas on classroom management, some of which you may have tried out to good effect during teaching practice, while others may have fallen short leaving you with hard lessons to learn. Of course, strategies, like rules, are not always hard and fast – what works well with one group of pupils, may fail miserably with another.

The first year on the job brings with it the further realisation – when the going gets tough there is no longer any 'real' teacher to hand the pupils back to while you get going! From here on in, it’s you and them – for the duration! While personality and subject knowledge are vital ingredients of a good teacher, successful pupil learning depends as much on effective classroom management skills. While these can be developed and refined with experience and through continuing professional development activities, the following tried and tested strategies are worth considering from the outset of your teaching career:

- **Research your Pupils.** Find out as much as possible about the pupils you are going to teach – talk to other teachers, read any available reports;

- **Know your Pupils.** Try to learn the names of your pupils as quickly as possible – your classroom management will be far more effective if you are able to direct questions to named pupils and discipline by name if necessary;

- **Plan and Prepare Well.** Make sure you know what you are expected to teach and what books and other resources you will use. Pupils respond better to confident, knowledgeable teachers who care enough about them to prepare good, interesting lessons, who give regular, positive and constructive feedback and who are able to use humour to good effect;

- **Make the best use of your Classroom** (for those who are lucky enough to have their own permanent base!). Classroom layout can vary depending on the size of the room, your preferred teaching style(s), the classes you teach and the nature of the learning activity. However, as the learning environment
can have an immense impact on positive behaviour management, here are a few pointers on how to get the best out of your classroom:

- Position your desk strategically to enable you to see and be seen by all pupils. It doesn’t always have to be in the centre – off-centre can be equally good. Set a good example – keep it as tidy as possible;
- Arrange desks to facilitate your teaching methods while also taking account of the recommended interactive learning and teaching strategies of the Revised Northern Ireland Curriculum. A layout which alternately allows individual, pair and group work but which might also sometimes require some moving of furniture between modes is probably best. However, remember to keep your layout as practical as possible to facilitate ease of movement between desks (for teacher and pupils) and quick and easy evacuation of the room during fire drills or the rare emergency;
- Promote a tidy and welcoming learning environment. A well-kept, bright, attractive, litter-free classroom will help to promote more responsible behaviour from your pupils. You might wish to draw up classroom litter/tidy rota for your pupils to help promote a sense of environmental friendliness and pride within them for their classroom;
- Maintain tidy, up-to-date and colourful displays which are relevant to current themes and topics and which include examples of pupils’ work. Remember that displays are as important to the post-primary classroom as they are to the primary classroom. Enlist the support of pupils to mount the displays and to help promote a sense of pride and co-ownership;
- Clearly label materials and resources for the use of pupils;
- Provide easy access to essential equipment and resources e.g. computers, science and technology apparatus etc.

- **‘Gen up’ on School Behaviour Procedures.** Become familiar as soon as you can with your school’s Behaviour Management Policy and the role of key members of staff in disseminating and helping to implement the policy. If problems occur, refer to the policy for information and guidance on sanctions and rewards. In cases which you cannot handle yourself, follow outlined procedures in terms of appropriate lines of referral - HOD, Year Head etc. Don’t forget your Teacher Tutor who is also there to provide ongoing professional (as well as pastoral) guidance vis-à-vis behaviour management, school policies and procedures as well as lesson planning and action planning;

- **Act Confident.** Be as confident as possible in classroom management! While some pupils may astutely spot and overlook any initial slip-ups in terms of minor procedure others will be quick to take advantage of any hesitation or indecision on your part of other more serious matters;

- **Be firm, fair and consistent.** Make your expectations clear and in a manner which is not challenging but which conveys the message that you don’t expect any transgression. Should any pupil(s) seek to test you, then you
should remind them of the consequences of any repetition and, if necessary, follow through on the sanction. Keep reprimands specific to the misdemeanour – criticise the action, not the character of the pupil(s). It is worth remembering that a gesture or firm stare, as opposed to a verbal rebuke, is often enough to influence a misbehaving pupil thus avoiding the danger of drawing the class’ attention to the inappropriate behaviour and provoking a possible confrontation;

- **Pre-empt Difficult Situations.** Think out some possible strategies and stock responses to fall back on during challenging behaviour management situations. This will help you deal with problem situations in a more confident, calm and considered way, with less risk of ‘losing it’ and making the situation worse. Well-prepared is fore-armed;

- **Give Regular Praise and Constructive Feedback.** Praise and encouragement are powerful motivators. Give it regularly to individual pupils for good/improved behaviour and/or performance as well as to the whole class, e.g. at the end of a lesson during which a lot has been achieved. However, it is often better to give unobtrusive praise to difficult pupils to avoid threatening their tough public persona and making them feel they have to save face with a retaliatory comment or action;

- **Embrace Positive Reinforcement Techniques.** Include a range of positive behaviour management strategies in your repertoire such as those promoted by Bill Rogers, Lee Canter and Jenny Mosley, as illustrated at the BELB’s Positive Behaviour Management course. Seek to accentuate the positive in pupil behaviour as opposed to always emphasising the negative!

- **Widen your Positive Reinforcement Knowledge - Do your research, hone your practice!**

You may find the following online information and guidance on Positive Behaviour Management of interest and use:
1. Teaching Expertise Website  
   [website](www.teachingexpertise.com/area/behaviour-management)  
   An excellent site which contains a wealth of information, strategies and tips on many Behaviour Management issues including ‘Monitoring and Tracking Behaviour, How to React to Disruptive Pupils, Managing Boys’ Behaviour, How to Avoid Arguments, Using the 3 Reminder Rule to Encourage Compliance’ etc. It also includes a ‘Starter Kit of Positive Behaviour Management Strategies’ & activity and observation sheets for use with pupils.

2. The Highland Council  
   - [website](www.highland.gov.uk/learninghere/psychologica尔斯ervi-ce/information-parents/behaviourmanagement.htm)  
   A useful checklist of Positive Behaviour Management strategies.
   - [website](www.highlandschools-virtualib.org.uk/ltt/inclusive_enjoyable/behaviour_m.htm)  
   Learning and Teaching should be Inclusive and Enjoyable – Behaviour Management

3. The National Strategies Website:  
   [website](http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/86968)  
   Contains excellent downloadable course materials on the theme of “Behaviour in the Classroom: A Course for Newly Qualified Teachers” for the use of teacher tutors and teacher mentors with their beginning teachers. The course is divided into 5 sessions under the themes of:
   - Creating a Positive Classroom Context
   - Setting Expectations
   - Teaching Positive Behaviour and Responding to Inappropriate Behaviour
   - Learning Behaviours and Lesson Structures
   - Building Positive Relationships
   Each session focuses on solution focused practical strategies for use in the classroom designed to develop teachers’ confidence and assertiveness in the classroom and for creating a positive learning environment. The materials also include a PowerPoint which can be reproduced free of charge. Definitely worth a look!
4. Behaviour for Learning
www.behaviour4learning.ac.uk/index.aspx
Links to many excellent resources including 20 scenarios for teachers and teacher tutors which address major talking points regarding the practicalities of promoting effective behaviour and learning including ‘Gaining Attention in a Noisy Class,’ ‘Dealing with Unacceptable Language’ etc.

5. Teachernet Behaviour Management Module
Although aimed at teaching assistants in secondary schools, this Induction training module contains excellent information which would be equally beneficial to Beginning Teachers. The module:
➢ Introduces the key principles of positive behaviour management
➢ Raises awareness of the personal skills required to implement these principles
➢ Establishes the importance of the quality of adult/pupil relationships in the development of a positive learning climate
➢ Examines the skills, qualities and approaches needed to support pupils in managing their behaviour.

6. Behaviour Management and Discipline, Bill Rogers
www.antibullying.net/documents/behaviour.gt.pdf

Angus Council Guidelines for Schools

8. Behaviour Management Tips for Probationer Teachers
www.probationerteacherscotland.org.uk/your_experiences/behaviour_management_tips.aspx
www.stdominics.pkc.sch.uk/My_Homepage_Files/Download/Behaviour%20Policy.pdf
An example of a school’s Positive Behaviour Management Policy with some good practical approaches.

10. The Classroom is not an Arena, and the teacher is not a ringmaster.  
www.creativelearningagency.org.uk/metadot/index.pl?id=25854&is=DBRow&op=show
An article on how good organisation of teaching space and teacher behaviour can help to create positive behaviour patterns in the classroom.

Making a Difference

Tim Brighouse advised each teacher in a school to pick one vulnerable child, and to make a positive personal comment, even just “hello” and the child’s name, each time they saw them. The rate of suspensions fell dramatically.
POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT EXPERTS

**Tim Brighouse**  

Professor Tim Brighouse is one of the UK’s most respected educationalists having developed a wealth of experience in teaching and education over a 45 year period to date. Years of classroom practice have been followed by a wide range of roles including Professor of Education at Keele University, Chief Education Officer in Oxfordshire and Birmingham Local Authorities, Chief Adviser to London Schools and Visiting Professor for the Institute of Education. Tim is a renowned expert in school improvement and positive behaviour management and has published a number of key works including ‘Essential Pieces, the Jigsaw of a Successful School.’

**Bill Rogers**  
[www.billrogers.co.uk](http://www.billrogers.co.uk)

A teacher by profession, Bill Rogers lectures widely on discipline and behaviour management issues. He has written a dozen books on such topics as Discipline, Behaviour Leadership, Teacher Stress, Cracking the Hard Class, Working with Challenging Children, Colleague Support and Teacher Welfare, and Whole-School Behaviour Management.

In 1988 Bill was awarded a travelling scholarship to the United Kingdom to research teacher stress and has returned to the UK on 26 occasions to lecture at the major universities. He has received numerous awards in his native Australia, the most recent being the Hedley Beare Educator of the Year Award in 1998. He has been adjunct professor (Education) at Griffith University (Australia) since 2000.

**Lee Canter**  
[http://maxweber.hunter.cuny.edu/pub/eres/EDSPC715_MCINTYRE/Assertive Discipline.html](http://maxweber.hunter.cuny.edu/pub/eres/EDSPC715_MCINTYRE/Assertive Discipline.html)

Lee Canter is a world renowned expert on classroom management. His acclaimed Assertive Discipline programme has achieved wide acclaim since it was first published in 1976.

Known as one of the most dynamic speakers and trainers in education today, he has given numerous keynote speeches at conferences and has been a frequent guest on noted television programmes including Oprah Winfrey. He is a prolific writer having authored over 40 best selling books for educators including the ‘Assertive Discipline and Succeeding with Difficult Students.’ His latest work focuses on ‘Classroom Management for Academic Success.’