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Promoting Positive Behaviour in the Classroom

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Aims of today’s session

• To reflect on your future role in the classroom in terms of creating a positive learning environment
• To discuss some practical strategies for dealing with classroom misbehaviour

A couple of questions to begin with....

What kind of teacher will I be?
Will I be a teacher or a social worker?

The reality is that we cannot separate what happens in the classroom from wider society.

The School Context

Societal Context

Values
Structures
Classroom Relationships

Learning
Behaviour Management
Teaching

Pastoral Care

Parental Support
Leadership

Family Unit
Alcohol/Drugs
Technology
Attitudes towards authority
Peer Influences


So what kinds of behaviours are we going to meet?

Some Misbehaviours Identified by School Matters 2006
- Non-stop talking
- Coming late for class
- Ongoing failure to bring relevant class materials
- Constantly challenging teacher authority
- Ignoring the presence of the teacher in the classroom
- Blatant refusal to follow instructions
- Throwing paper aeroplanes/pens/missiles when the teacher turns his/her back to the class
- Walking aimlessly around the classroom
- Using inappropriate language
- Making noises/humming
- Rummaging in bags
- Taunting and pushing
- Shouting each other down
- Eating, and chewing gum
- Using mobile telephones in inappropriate ways

We have no control over the state in which students arrive at our lesson!

We have total control over our response…

(Mike Hughes, Strategies for closing the Learning Gap)

Positive Discipline
Describes a way to reduce undesirable behaviour, and increase desirable behaviour, by rewarding the positive rather than punishing the negative.

Describes an action that is introduced after a desirable behaviour so that the behaviour will be repeated in the future. Positive Discipline is based on the premise that behaviour that is rewarded is behaviour that will be repeated.

Positive Discipline is a four-step process that recognizes and rewards appropriate behaviour:
1. The appropriate behaviour is described
2. Clear rationales are provided
3. Acknowledgment is requested
4. The behaviour is rewarded
Keep in mind a 4:1 ratio. Catch children doing something correctly four times for every time you find them doing something incorrectly.

Be consistent in its use

**Assertive Discipline**

Assertive discipline is a structured, systematic approach designed to assist educators in running an organized, teacher-in-charge classroom environment.

- Teachers have basic rights as educators
- Students have basic rights as learners
- These needs must be met by a discipline system

**How to use Assertive discipline**

1. Decide on classroom rules that students must follow at all times (about 5)
2. Determine positive consequences for appropriate behaviour
3. Determine negative consequences for non-compliance (progressive)
4. Coach students in understanding the rules

- Always bring your books and equipment to class
- Raise Your Hand Before Speaking
- Respect Your Classmates And Your Teacher
- Try your best

**Strategies that help minimise misbehaviour**

- Student Teacher Relationship
- Classroom Environment
- Use of rewards
- Routines
- Plan for good behaviour
The majority of students are well behaved and motivated to learn. It is important that we keep these students on our side.

Building Relationships...

Students value the following qualities in their teachers

- Fairness
- Consistency
- Listens
- Good control

Creating a positive climate

- Greet students
- Acknowledge success
- Reward system
- Illness - welcome back
- Awareness of problems outside of class
- Support for class at events outside class
- Leadership opportunities for students
- Always report good news – parents, school etc.

Strategies that help minimize misbehaviour

- "Withitness"
- Overlapping
- Smoothness
- Momentum
- Accountability
- Variety

Dealing with low level misbehaviour

1. Tactically ignore the behaviour
2. Focus on the primary behaviours
3. Use non verbal cues
4. Whisper
5. Assertive communication
6. Use the "broken record" technique
7. Use positive cueing
8. Use proximity control
9. Use the language of choice

Dealing with low level misbehaviour

9. Blame the curriculum – not the child
10. The Sandwich Approach
11. Separate the behaviour from the child
12. Follow up and follow through
13. Listen
14. Clarify expectations
15. Encourage
16. Try to give students a way out
17. Humour
Dealing with more serious behaviour

- Consider a Staged approach
- State the class rule
- Ask student to work elsewhere in the room.
- Give student cool off time
- Ask student to stay back and work out a solution with their teacher
- Ask student to leave the room and go to another room
- Involve parents

Some final thoughts...

- You will make mistakes – never be afraid to apologise
- Learn from your mistakes
- Practice staying calm
- A little compassion goes along way
- Learn from others if you can
- Never forget that tomorrow is a new day
- Keep a reflective diary

Reflect regularly on your classroom approach

- What happened today that concerned me?
- What did I do about it at the time?
- Did it work? Why?
- What might I try differently the next time?

Some Reading...

- National Behaviour Support Service [www.nbss.ie](http://www.nbss.ie)
- Any books by Bill Rogers
- Teacher Pocket Book Series – books on Behaviour Management