

CONNECTING CLASSROOMS

The challenge of challenging
children : how can we
embed good practice into
our systems
Marie Delaney





Questions

- Whole school ethos and attitudes to behaviour : do we share the same beliefs?
- Whole school behaviour policies : how do we develop them and how do we create consistency of approach?
- Behaviour vs learning : have we got the balance right?
- Relevance of the curriculum and teaching styles
- Staff support : how can we work together and support each other?
- Good practice : what is it and how do we recognise it?



Who or what has to change?





- **What kind of behavioural programme does this child need to help them become more socially integrated?**
- **What support and training can we provide for parents and professionals to work with the child on their behaviour?**

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Issues



Understanding the problem

• “It must be recognized that ***the area of pupil behavior is highly sensitive***. It ***challenges teachers’ sense of their own professional competence*** and both teachers’ and parents’ self-esteem. ***Emotions often get in the way of constructive planning***”

• Peter Gray and Sue Panter, Support for Learning, Vol 15, No 1.





Understanding the problem

- A child's current behaviour often reflects an essentially sane response to an untenable set of life circumstances.'
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- Bray 1997 (Quoted in Visser, J and Rayner, S (1999) Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties : A Reader. QEd.)

I behave badly when.....

I cannot hear

I cannot remember

I cannot understand what to do

I cannot focus

I cannot make myself understood

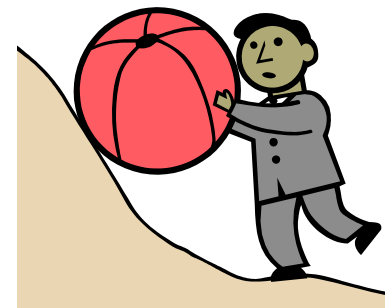
I cannot write as well as I speak

I cannot see properly

I do not feel safe

I do not know what is expected of me

It is the only way of behaving that I know



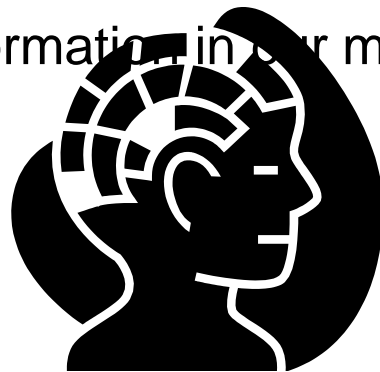


The Brain Stuff

•Executive Functioning

- the part of the brain which we use to think and solve problems.
- the internal voice, the voice we use to self-regulate.
- difficulty with motivation

Working memory – holding information in our minds long enough to act on it.





Whole school questions

- Have you got a whole school behaviour policy?
- How was it developed? Who was involved? How?
- What are the underlying values?
- Does it involve rewards and sanctions?
- How is it shared with stakeholders?
- How is it monitored and reviewed?



Involving all stakeholders

- Rights and responsibilities
- Shared responsibility : learning involves more than one person
- Creating a positive learning climate ; the learning zone not the battlezone
- Trial and error approach : what's working, do more of it
- The pupils will.....
- The teacher will.....
- The parents/carers will.....
- The group will.....



Pupil voice

- Buddy systems
- Peer mentors/educators
- School council
- Assessment for learning
- Creating learning states
- Celebrating strengths – what is working
- Letting them in on the ‘secret’
- Rewards and sanctions



What can the teacher notice and record?

Is the problem across all classes and all times of day? Is the problem in certain class groupings? Where is the child sitting? Can they hear and see properly?

Who is the child sitting with ? Does this make a difference? What kinds of tasks can the child do? When the child is engaged, what engages them?

Is the work too easy or too difficult? How do you know? Does the work involve a lot of writing? Sitting still? Copying from the board?

Does the child have a different learning style?

Is the child only noticed for negative things?

What are the child's strengths?

Does the child have trouble following instructions? Does the child have trouble with remembering



Rules

- We respect each other and school property
- We always do our best
- We are kind to ourselves and each other
- We listen to each other
- We celebrate diversity
- We use our words to discuss problems
- We give people extra time if they need it..



Mind your language

- **Don't think of a blue tree.**
- **Before you open your books, look at the board**
- **Why did you do such a silly thing?**
- **This table is the worst behaved. You must all stay behind and clear up this mess.**
- **Get on with this work or you will not be allowed to play in the football match.**
- **The first part is okay but the last part needs more work**
- **It's not unfair, everybody has to follow the rules, you are not different.**



Some tips

- Tell students what you WANT them to do
- Separate descriptions of behaviour from your interpretation of behaviour
- Acknowledge objections and feelings, it is not the same as agreeing with them
- Replace 'but' with 'and'
- Use open-ended questions to discuss a problem, avoid 'why'
- Avoid sequencers in instructions, give action words in the order you want them done



Teach the skills in your lesson

- Examples of games where focus and concentration is needed eg. Kim's game
- Find parallel experiences e.g able to focus in football for a penalty
- How long is a minute?- measures time
- I'll answer for you – empathy
- Guess what other people in the class did at the weekend – empathy
- Listen to questions for 1 minute, not answering, then answer – listening
- Put together cut up sentence – listening, working together



Some tips

- Plan and pre-empt
- Involve students in rules and revisit
- Have visual reminders and non-verbal routines
- Remain calm, manage yourself, be aware of your state
- Use positive language
- Be clear and don't make idle threats
- Have VAK activities and variety eg learning centres
- Have brain break activities – stir or settle
- Grabs and stunning starts to lessons



A final thought.....

- **We cannot solve the problems of today with the same level of thinking that created them.”**
- **- Albert Einstein**



Want to know more....?

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- www.thelearningharbour.ie
- Teaching the Unteachable, October 2008, Worth Publishing,UK
- What can I do with the kid who....2010. Worth publishing,UK
- Forthcoming publication OUP Into the Classroom : Special Educational Needs
- www.worthpublishing.com
- www.teachingenglish.org.uk – webinars and course