

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT 2020

Getting it right from the start: positive behaviour strategies

Are you an NQT, returning from leave or in a new school? Follow these tips from behaviour specialist **Adele Bates** for a positive start with your pupils.

Number 7 in the Teachers' standards requires us to 'manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe learning environment'.

But how do you actually establish good behaviour? Here are my tried and tested tips and starting points.

1. Begin with yourself

First permission slip: you are allowed to be nervous. Just like many experienced teachers, we're human and that's what makes us good at our jobs.

Second permission slip: you are not expected to get it 'right' immediately. In any relationship it takes some toing and froing as we get to know one another's expectations – and for many of us that relationship is with up to 35 young cherubs per class (could be nearly 300 for some secondary school mainstream teachers!).

First must do: gather your support team. Know who is available at school: mentors, managers fellow trainees, or the cover supervisor who reminds you of your Auntie Sue. You will be surrounded by experienced people who 'get it' – find the people you resonate with.

Find support outside of school – the friend who will talk to you about anything *except* school is particularly useful.



Second must do: make self-care a priority. When things get challenging keep your self-care going: meditation, netball, wrestling, knitting or yoga – do NOT let go of this, as it will keep you sane.

Third must do: practice. If you're not accustomed to speaking in front of groups, then practice. Here are some starter tips.

- Put two feet flat on the floor. This establishes a stable posture and communicates through body language that you are grounded – unlikely to be easily tipped over.
- Breathe! When nervous, we tend to use shallow breathing. Practice in advance, just before a class enters, and even in the room – take five breaths that reach down to your belly.
- Voice: practice speaking in large spaces (empty classrooms) and keeping your tone friendly and assertive.

2. Establish your environment

Get to know your space.

- Is there a blind spot (where the pupils most likely to get distracted will most definitely gravitate towards)?
- Can everyone see the board and access all spaces?
- Where is the best spot for you to speak to the class, where students don't need to twist or have their backs to you?
- Is there a strange echo/humming equipment that would make listening difficult?
- Can you keep the blinds up without pupils having the sun in their eyes?
- Where are the pens kept? Is there enough paper etc. for everyone?

This investigation gets you thinking ahead: is there anything that could be an excuse for distraction and disruption that you can avoid?



Make it your own.

If you can, set up your own seating arrangement that is the most comfortable for you and your subject or class.

If you can't – don't despair! Create your own seating plan. Know this before pupils enter your first lesson – and **STICK TO IT.**

You may hear:

But Miss, last year I was told I shouldn't sit next to Moh,

or

I have to sit next to Devi, she helps me because I have difficulties in X.

Unless another member of staff has told you otherwise, then stay firm.

A neutral, helpful response is:

Thanks for telling me that, I haven't had that information from that teacher. This is the seating arrangement for this lesson, we will review it in a few weeks.

They may moan and groan. Stay firm: they are testing your boundaries.

3. Build relationships

Welcome pupils into your room. And do this every lesson. When students are regularly welcomed with a positive, smiling face – even a handshake – you are setting the tone.

Use the register. Rather than 'Yes Miss' 35 times use this as an opportunity to gauge your pupils. For example, they answer with one word that describes their day so far, or what mood they're in.



This is a great litmus test. You will build up patterns and be able to easily spot changes. If Tamas is always happy, then one week repeatedly describes his day as 'stupid' – there is another conversation you can start privately with him.

Get to know them! Depending on your subject, there are many ways you can incorporate 'getting to know you' activities within the curriculum. As an English teacher, my favourite one is free writing. It is important, especially for vulnerable students, that they feel welcomed and cared for.

Do your homework. For pupils with specific or additional needs, 'normal' classroom practice may be very difficult. Alongside meeting them for who they are and developing a relationship with them, do your homework: find out about them, speak to colleagues and find out what you can do to help them focus on their learning. (See the resource list further below for more.)

4. Set up routines – and stick to them!

Go bit by bit. Choose three to five things that are your non-negotiables. A huge list of rules (and a whole lesson to explain them all) is a sure way to make pupils bored in your first lesson.

Practice them, praise them when they get them right, repeat them when there needs to be improvement. Where possible, link them to the learning.

Here are some suggested non-negotiables.

- Enter the room in an orderly fashion (explain what you mean by this).
- No shouting out.
- 10 mins silent reading or freewriting at the start of each lesson.
- Title, date and starter completed by the end of the register/10mins in.
- Phones out will be confiscated.
- Answer a question on the lesson's objective before leaving.



If they don't do it...they are testing you! Repeat actions until they get it right. With a tricky class this may take a whole lesson (or even a couple). Do not move on until they have got it – it will save you a lot of time trying to re-establish something that you've let them get away with previously.

5. Notice positive behaviour

At every turn notice positive learning, effort and behaviour – and realise that the bar will be different for each child.

Smiley faces: a version of smiley face on a board and names that add up throughout a lesson can be a great visual for students of all ages to know they're on track. Challenge yourself – can you catch a quieter student doing something good this lesson – or the usually more disruptive one?

Use positive language.

I'm really impressed by Ben at the moment, who has thought to use a dictionary instead of distracting someone else's learning.

I can see you've made a positive start Shoomi, what are you planning to do next?

It may be that Ben was about to hit Sandra, and Shoomi has only written the title – but by narrating in a positive way, you show the students that you have eyes on them – and that your expectation of them is a positive, learning focused one.

Positive postcards and phone calls home are also useful.



6. Investigate disruptive behaviour

When disruptive behaviour occurs investigate first, then sanction when necessary. Early on I learned the hard way: I sanctioned a pupil for not joining in with the 1950s jive dance class I was teaching – only to find out later he had actually broken his leg!!

Be clear. Have a clearly communicated system with warnings that aligns with your school's behaviour/relationship policy. When a pupil needs to be given a sanction explain why this has occurred.

Be consistent. Your behaviour expectations need to be consistent, otherwise your pupils will receive mixed messages and will try to push your boundaries once they see you're flexible.

Check your own bias. We all have unconscious bias. How is yours playing out in your classroom? Regularly check: which groups of students get to speak the most in your classroom? Who gets sanctioned the most? Who gets praised the most? What are your own behavioural expectations based on? (See the resources list for more on this.)

7. Go back to the beginning

Things going awry? Go back to step 1: begin with yourself.

Resources

- Free video series: [How to manage challenging behaviour in the classroom](#)
- [First Encounters: Getting to know your new pupils with behaviour challenges](#)
- [SEND Inclusive Teaching Programme](#)
- [Some principles of effective pupil premium teaching](#)
- [Building your presence in the classroom](#)
- [Open the window](#)
- [Stop ignoring good behaviour!](#)



- What Mark can teach us about building relationships
- A five point plan for teacher wellbeing
- Telephone support and counselling
- 'You are Biased'. Accept that.

Adele Bates is a teacher, speaker, writer and educator for students with emotional and behavioural difficulties. With over 17 years' experience, Adele teaches pupils in a variety of educational settings, trains others to do so – in schools, universities and conferences, and advises on whole school approaches to supporting these students.