

A question of values

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Paul Dix is touring the UK with his practical and theatrical INSET. To book Paul, call Ellie on 020 7000 1735 or go to pivotal.education.com

If staff do not share a set of core beliefs about behaviour then even the most detailed strategies will quickly crumble under pressure in the classroom, says Paul Dix...

The idea that behaviour management is simply about learning a set of techniques that emerge from a teacher's 'toolkit' is a dangerous one. Outstanding management of behaviour and relationships is simply not skills led. Neither is it imported with 'magic' behaviour systems, bought with data tracking software or instantly achieved by calling a school an academy. In behaviour management, culture eats strategy for breakfast. Getting the culture right is pivotal. With the right culture, the strategies that are used become less complicated and less critical to success.

Thrashing out yet another new policy in late night, coffee-fuelled evenings will not create the culture that you want, even if the words seem right. Shaping the culture means that the most important discussion concerns values and takes place between all staff. Shared values between the adults emerge from honesty, negotiation and

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The greater good

Although teachers share many values, those that relate to behaviour can be tricky. They are wrapped up in the type of schools each teacher has worked in, their experience of school as a child, their experience of parenting and their political beliefs. These are values that many people hold dear. You need to give them a reason to compromise, an appeal to the greater good. Resurrect the idea that we are stronger and more consistent when we stand together, everyone compromising a little. Make the messages utterly clear for the children: all staff pursuing common values for the good of everyone.

Some teachers will need to adjust their own preferences for the good of the team. Others will need to be helped to shave the edges off their practice. True

at the entrance and reception area of the school. Does it scream shared values, high expectations and outstanding behaviour? Are there displays showing the success of past pupils as well as the work of current ones? What are the messages related to behaviour, personal discipline and conduct? Is it peeling paint and a few old leaflets or does it shine with pride and scream 'outstanding'? Some schools I visit have signs that tell waiting parents 'not to worry if you hear screaming'. Others make it clear that there is a consistent approach, 'All visitors are expected to treat the children with unconditional respect'. Everyone who visits your school walks through the same entrance point. The messages it sends form a first impression that is quickly set and hard to change. What simple messages do you want to remind children and parents of every day? How creatively can you present this so that it is a daily talking point and not just another set of words on the wall?

For some children the values that are held at home conflict with those they meet at school. They need your entrance hall to be a reality checkpoint, a gateway to a different set of expectations. Children can manage two sets of values with practice. They struggle, however, when each adult they meet holds a different set. Of course

A positive reception

The values and culture of a school must echo through every classroom and, critically, in the public spaces. Take a fresh look

ONLINE RESOURCES

FOR MORE ADVICE ON DEALING WITH INSTANCES OF EXTREME BEHAVIOUR IN THE CLASSROOM, VISIT THE RESOURCES SECTION OF OUR WEBSITE (TEACHPRIMARY.COM) AND SEARCH FOR 'PAUL DIX'.

creating an entrance that makes the point to the children also reminds the parents about the values and behaviours that you insist upon. This will allow many to echo them at home, and others pause for thought.

List five consistencies

Shared values in behaviour mean that you can simplify your strategy and declutter the messages that you send to the children. With the culture right you can drill down to practical agreements. Ask everyone to list five consistencies in staff behaviour that would have a positive effect on the children: five ways that you can change your behaviour to change theirs. What would you choose? Removing emotion from castigations? Always offering three choices? Repeating the

What do you believe?

Post this up in your staffroom and see where your values are consistent and where they need some work.

- ▶ Poor behaviour is more nurture than nature
- ▶ It is the parents' job to teach their children how to behave
- ▶ Punishment changes behaviour for the better
- ▶ Shouting in anger is never acceptable behaviour
- ▶ How I feel each day affects the way I deal with children
- ▶ Students over the age of seven know how to behave
- ▶ We should not be worried about excluding a few to benefit the rest
- ▶ Human beings are mainly motivated by material reward
- ▶ Children should get what they need, not always what they deserve
- ▶ Children were better behaved 100 years ago
- ▶ Adults have a right to be spoken to with respect
- ▶ Boys are generally more disruptive than girls

TRUE FALSE

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'You own your behaviour' mantra? Stepping through consequences slowly?

Anchoring good behaviour with positive notes home?

Using 'praise boards' to reinforce good conduct?

Always giving children who are doing the right thing your first attention?

Quickly you see the values translating into a plan and colleagues see that it is tweaks to their practice that are needed, not wholesale changes.

Replicating values does not work. The Miracle Primary Academy is a PR mirage. Your values cannot be borrowed from other schools, imposed by politicians or bought in with new signage. Your values need to reflect the nuances of your community, the ambitions of the children and the expectations of the adults. As the government tries to pull teachers apart and the economy puts strains on every home, we need to be work harder to stick together so our values ripple through the development of every child.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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