

We're all in this together

'Because I said so' has never been a convincing argument. Develop a peer-led approach to behaviour management and children will learn to respect the group, not just your authority, says Paul Dix...

The control model of behaviour management leaves the child deferring responsibility for his behaviour to the teacher: 'Miss said I was good today'; 'I hate her. She is always picking on me,' etc. It does not teach personal discipline; it teaches power and authority. And whilst this might be useful preparation for military life, it does not prepare children for secondary school or the outside world.

Peer-led learning models drive achievement and encourage self-directed learning. Structured well, it leaves the teacher with some time to observe, reflect and prioritise interventions.

Peer-led behaviour management, introduced slowly, affords the same benefits.

Individual rewards for individual actions divide the class. You can seed selfishness in the class community and inadvertently create hierarchies of 'goodness'. Before long, the children are set against each other. Individual behaviour reporting removes the context and misses the important bit: our behaviour affects others. We do not behave in isolation, although we are often isolated when we don't behave!

Unite the class

Begin emphasising a team approach with a simple tally chart or praise board. Agree a realistic daily or weekly tally target with the class and match it with rewards that reinforce behaviour: a note home; visit from the headteacher; mention in assembly; a photograph of the class on a display in the reception, etc. Some children will enjoy their efforts being highlighted, their contribution advertised. Others will want to make the effort but do not want public praise, so it's best to be subtle: 'I have had two questions today that really stumped me. You know who you are and you have just earned two tallies for the class'.

Fairly quickly, the atmosphere in the classroom becomes 'we' and not 'me'. The children are united in pursuit of their common goal and will remind you when you forget to catch them doing the right thing. They will keep your mindset positive and stop you slipping into negative

cul-de-sacs. As they start to encourage one another to show personal discipline and attention to the task, you are no longer a lone voice in promoting good behaviour.

Deal with the consequences for poor behaviour without interfering with the tally chart. Don't be tempted to mix the two, or children will start to 'game', to manipulate the system rather than focus on their own behaviour. For example, 'You took two tallies off when I jumped in the coat rack. Why did Clare only get one?' You can create a perverse competition and animosity that is unhelpful: 'If you lose us any more points, I am going to batter you at break time' etc. Similarly, whole class sanctions are inevitably laced with unfairness and will work against a positive team effort, so keep sanctions and negative consequences individual and private.

Improve specific behaviours

When you have established a simple whole class reward system and made sure that it operates brilliantly in its simplest forms, you can manipulate the tally chart to suit. The final target might need to be raised and/or extended so that it spans weeks rather than days. You might want to highlight certain behaviours that earn double tallies each week. For example, 'I caught

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'.

Callum speaking beautifully and encouragingly to his group. Callum has just earned a double tally for the group.' (This can be accompanied by rapturous applause or a sudden and dramatic sound effect.)

Perhaps some behaviours deserve golden tallies that relate to whole class privileges which can be earned each half term. There may be times when you want to really drill down into the skills for effective group work or teach three very specific behaviours. The simplicity of the tally means that you (or the children) can ask to shift the direction or narrow the focus.

As children start to encourage one another to show personal discipline and attention to the task, you are no longer a lone voice in promoting good behaviour

Sit back and watch. In just a few weeks of the class striving for a common goal the behaviour norms will have shifted. Indeed, your own behaviour will have shifted to constantly giving the well-behaved children your first attention and reinforcement.

Peer-led behaviour in action

At Heathlands Primary School in Bournemouth, they have a long established and successful peer-led behaviour system that holds the UN Convention on Human Rights as central to its philosophy and practice. Whole class rewards systems are coupled with strong support for individuals who are struggling. Each class has a charter that the children create; displays are linked to the Convention; children who are worried in class are counselled by Rights Leaders; and whole class rewards have a higher purpose, such as being taken out to lunch.

From Y2 upwards, two children from each class are elected as Rights Leaders. These children have a mission to catch others doing the right thing and report it whilst reminding those who wobble of their responsibilities. Visiting the school, a colleague commented that he was shown around by the head girl and boy and by a Rights Leader. Stopping another child running in the corridor, the Rights Leader said, 'You are forgetting your responsibility to keep other children safe'. It is not just a lovely turn of phrase but the right tone to set amongst the children. The headteacher, Sarah Dunn, is committed to peer-led behaviour management. Her school is in the top 5% of most deprived areas but they are rich in relationships. I spoke to Alex, a Y6 Rights Leader. He was enthusiastic about the scheme and told me, 'Rights



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul Dix is lead trainer at Pivotal Education and author of *Taking Care of Behaviour*. For free tips and resources, go to www.pivotaleducation.com



leaders have a pen and Post-it notes. When we catch children doing the right thing, we write it down and post it on the Rights Leaders' blog'. It is fantastic practice and you can read the blog here (heathlandrightsleaders.edublogs.org).

The power of peer-led

behaviour management lies not just in the goals that are common but the values that are shared. It is less about the children trying to emulate the values of the teacher and more about a shared understanding of how we behave towards each other.

Let the children lead

Eight practical ways to develop peer-led behaviour...

- 1 Use whole class rewards: tally charts; praise boards; sticker counters; marbles in the jar; tokens in the tombola, etc.
- 2 Redirect your positive reinforcement from the individual to the team.
- 3 Make catching someone else doing something fantastic a regular feature of the day, perhaps during circle time, dismissal, or coming in from break-time.
- 4 Train a group of children from each class to lead peer interventions.
- 5 Invite pupils to share how they are going to contribute to the team effort at the beginning of the day.
- 6 Shift the parameters of whole class rewards to focus on specific behaviours, golden behaviours, beautiful attitudes, etc.
- 7 Use careful peer mentoring from older children who have struggled with their own behaviour to help younger children who are facing similar challenges.
- 8 Refocus senior leaders' learning walks so they can catch classes and groups who are behaving brilliantly.