# Top Strategies for Non-Confrontational Behaviour Management

Steven Baker and Mick Simpson share their top tips for a calm and conflict-free classroom from A School Without Sanctions

# Use praise effectively

Praise is a very powerful tool, when timely and explicitly linked to the observed behaviour. Avoid praise when it is undeserved or for its own sake. Ensure that students are encouraged to make an effort and take risks by praising effort rather than outcome or ability.

'Thanks for passing that pen and helping John to get started. I'm sure he's really grateful.'

#### Give a rule reminder

Use'maybe... and ... '

Remind students of the classroom or school rules that relate to the behaviour that you are seeing. The emphasis should be that the rule is an expectation of everyone in the setting.

'Our school rule is that we all put up our hands and wait to be asked before speaking, thank you.'

### **Expect compliance**

You are much more likely to gain compliance with an instruction if you act with complete confidence that your students will do as you ask them. Look confident, even if you do not always feel it. Use thank you rather than please to end instructions, which sends an implicit message that your request will be met with cooperation.

'It's lovely to see you guys. Quiet, straight line, thanks'.

Using 'maybe... and...' can help avoid confrontations when the student is making remarks that, if engaged with, will divert from the lesson. You will give the appearance of agreement, which is a very effective way of defusing a situation, followed immediately by assertively redirecting the student.

'Maybe you weren't talking, and I'd like to get on with the activity, thanks.'

# Use choice scripts

When faced with negative and sometimes extremely challenging behaviour in our school, choice scripts are usually a first recourse. In this way, we pass responsibility for the situation back to the student. Instead of delivering an instruction, we are giving choices.

'You are in control of this situation; the things that happen next will depend on the choices you make.'

#### Avoid 'but' and 'why'

Experience will tell students that the word 'but' is often immediately followed by a criticism and they will be primed to be defensive. Another word to consider using carefully when discussing behavioural choices is 'why': 'why did you do... can make a student think you have a judgemental approach.

'What happened?' is more likely to be successful than asking 'But why did you do it?'

# Offer consequential choices

Giving a consequential choice is a good way to hand responsibility for the outcome of a situation firmly back to the student. It's more difficult for most students to initiate a confrontation with somebody when they have clearly chosen the consequence themselves.

'I'd like you to choose to stay in your seat. If you choose to move around the classroom without permission then you'll be choosing to speak to me at break.'

# Show you care by acknowledging an issue then redirecting

One way to prevent escalation happening is to simply state that you recognise the importance of the matter to the student. By acknowledging the problem, you have shown that you care, and then you can redirect them onto your activity.

1 know homework is important and you can ask about it as we pack away; right now, I need you to get back on task, thanks.'

# Switch off the spotlight

When being asked questions or for a response in front of their peers, some students may feel as if a 'spotlight' has been turned on. Some strategies you can use to alleviate this are allowing take up time for students to comply with your instructions, pausing after giving instructions, or refocusing with guestions that redirect the conversation, before coming back to the task.

# Look out for your own response

Try to keep tabs on your own threat response and the feelings and behaviours that accompany it. We all have a variety of stressors that can influence our behaviour, and raise our own threat response.

If you're struggling with your response, consider talking to somebody whose judgement you trust and give them permission to be honest with you, meaning that you have an objective viewpoint to turn to when you are feeling heightened emotions.

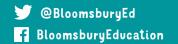
More information on these strategies and others can be found in A School Without Sanctions, Chapter 3

'I believe this book will change the conversation in schools on children's behaviour.'

Dr Luna C Muñoz Centifanti, Senior Lecturer in Clinical Psychology, @lunacentifanti

'This is the most relatable, readable book I have read in years. I will be passing this book around my schools, family and friends - I could not put it down. Superb.'

Dame Nicola Stephenson DBE, CEO of Valour Multi Academy Trust



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