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INTRODUCTION

BEHAVIOUR IN PERSPECTIVE

Behaviour in schools receives a good deal of public attention, much of it negative. The Steer Report (DfES, 2005b) puts this into perspective:

Our experience as teachers, supported by evidence from Ofsted, is that the great majority of pupils work hard and behave well, and that most schools successfully manage behaviour to create an environment in which learners feel valued, cared for and safe. It is often the case that for pupils, school is a calm place in a disorderly world (p. 6).

The report goes on to say that most of the behaviours that teachers struggle with are minor disruptions and that major incidents are rare and perpetrated by a small number of students. There is evidence that in general pupil behaviour is improving. This suggests that teachers arrive in classrooms with predominantly positive expectations.

Any unacceptable behaviour, however, whether low level or extreme, can be very challenging as it both damages teacher confidence and undermines learning. Poor behaviour can be a trigger for teachers to leave the profession and can often restrict the life chances of pupils (NUT, 2005). Sharing, developing and actually *doing* what works is therefore essential for the current and future wellbeing of all involved.

The knowledge and skills of staff are the single most important factor in promoting good behaviour (Steer Report, p. 83).

WHAT THIS BOOK AIMS TO DO

- To go beyond behaviour management to develop more positive pupil behaviour
- To foster the relationships that will help keep vulnerable and challenging students connected with school and learning
- To promote the wellbeing of all, including teachers
- To share research evidence and effective practice.

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Although much of what is included here will help in responding effectively to challenges, the aim is to go beyond behaviour management – to explore what schools and teachers can do to change pupil behaviour over the longer term.

Behaviour management often comprises the strategies employed when behaviour threatens to disrupt teaching. These primarily aim to meet the needs of teachers and the rest of the class. Management can also include how to pre-empt difficulties by paying attention to how the curriculum is delivered, the physical layout of the classroom, your teaching style and what Kounin (1977) calls ‘with-it-ness’. Although these are essential skills for an educator and will be addressed throughout the book, when behaviour management becomes an end in itself, there is little consideration about what this behaviour means for the student and how we can support behavioural change.

Some teachers believe fear is an effective management strategy and that if students are intimidated this will take care of any discipline problems. Although this might work in the short term – for that teacher – the longer-term costs of this approach are considerable.

When distress is not heard, a focus on sanctions alone can make things worse. Although it is vital to maintain high expectations for behaviour, when we say: ‘that will teach them!’ we need to think carefully about the lessons we really do want students to learn. How can we help children and young people choose to be considerate and cooperative? How can we motivate them to stay engaged with learning? How can we help them see school as a refuge and resource that helps them maintain a positive sense of self and learn to deal with adversity elsewhere in their lives? This is not being soft on difficult students; it is using both intelligence and research evidence to break a negative cycle.

Our challenging pupils are those most quickly marginalised by the system and most likely to be suspended and excluded from school. If you go into any prison you will find many inmates who had a negative and disconnected school experience. The same is true for others who are socially excluded. The research evidence is that a sense of belonging promotes pro-social behaviour, resilience and improved learning outcomes (Benard, 2004; Blum & Libbey, 2004). The second aim is therefore to help schools do everything they possibly can to keep children and young people connected. Promoting positive relationships and positive school experiences can intervene in a negative cycle of disadvantage.

Teacher wellbeing is symbiotic with student wellbeing. Keyes and Haidt (2005) say that many adults in society are ‘languishing’ rather than ‘flourishing’ – and some of these adults are in the classroom. The third aim is therefore to promote wellbeing and relational quality throughout the school and clarify what that means. Small consistent differences in the way people interact can lead to great changes over time. When teachers use emotional literacy and develop their own resilience they have a more satisfactory and effective working life. When teachers work together to build social capital in schools they feel supported, even under stress. This not only promotes wellbeing for teachers new to the profession, it can also revitalise experienced practitioners who have become jaded and cynical. Everyone benefits from a focus on wellbeing.

There is a discourse on ‘discipline’ in education that does not always help schools move towards more effective practice in improving behaviour. The word discipline has connotations of doing as you are told and conforming to rules laid down by those in

authority. This element of external control can lead to students doing what they can get away with out of the sight of authority figures. The internalisation of pro-social values means changing behaviour from the inside out.



Questions for reflection and discussion

What are your aims as a teacher?

What are your aims for your students?

LEARNING TO BE: LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER

The report to the United Nations on education in the 21st century (Delors, 1996) identified four pillars of education:

- Learning to know
- Learning to do
- Learning to be
- Learning to live together.

Much of the focus of education in the 20th century has been on the first two pillars – knowledge and skills. There is now increasing evidence that the last two are not only just as important, but also underpin effectiveness for the first two (Zins et al., 2004).

Learning to be and learning to live together are the foundations for changing behaviour. This incorporates how we think and feel about ourselves, and our perceptions of the world and those with whom we share it. This is a very different approach from providing rewards for conforming to the rules, and consequences for breaking them.

The social and emotional dimensions of learning (SEL) are beginning to be acknowledged across the world. The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is an influential body of researchers and educators promoting the value of SEL in the United States. CASEL defines SEL as *'a process for helping children and even adults develop the fundamental skills for life effectiveness. SEL teaches the skills we all need to handle ourselves, our relationships, and our work, effectively and ethically'* (CASEL, 2007). Payton et al. (2008) analysed three large-scale reviews of research on the impact of social and emotional learning (SEL) programmes on elementary and middle school students from Kindergarten to Grade 8. These were divided into studies of SEL for all children (universal), those for targeted groups (early intervention) and after-school programmes. Collectively the three reviews included 317 studies and involved 324,303 children.

Their findings were:

- Universal, targeted and after school SEL programmes raised achievement test scores an average of 11, 17, and 16 percentile points, respectively.



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- Universal and targeted programmes increased social-emotional skills in test situations.
- All three types of programmes improved social behaviour such as getting along and cooperating with others and decreased behavioural problems such as aggression and disruptiveness.
- All three types of programmes led to more positive feelings about self, others and school.
- Universal and targeted programmes reduced levels of emotional distress such as anxiety and depression.
- Positive outcomes were enhanced when classroom teachers delivered programmes rather than researchers and where attention was given to the quality of implementation.

In the UK the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme was introduced to primary schools in 2005 and secondary schools in 2007 (DfES, 2005a). It is estimated that the majority of primary schools and a significant proportion of secondary schools are now using the programme. Evaluation of SEAL in 84 primary schools in Sheffield between 2005 and 2007 indicated high levels of success (Pullinger, 2008), including improvements in behaviour and the way children were able to express feelings. Some pupils had learnt to sort out low-level conflict on their own and incidents of bullying were reduced.

Taking account of the social and emotional aspects of learning acknowledges the importance of teaching the whole child and maximising their potential in all domains of development. Where education systems emphasise individual success in academic outcomes they are not fully congruent with this approach. Although personalised learning is receiving greater attention, educational testing and government directives on academic targets risk undermining the work of many teachers who are concerned their students also learn the skills that will facilitate their lives. Academic achievements alone do not guarantee a fulfilling life. If you have not learnt to manage yourself well, or developed the personal qualities to overcome adversity, nor learnt how to establish and maintain supportive relationships you are unlikely to flourish and sustain wellbeing.



Case study

Mark was a straight 'A' student and is now doing very well in his career, earning a high salary and the status that comes with this. He is a good-looking young man and a keen tennis player, married to an intelligent and caring woman who has given him two young sons. You would have thought he had everything it takes to be happy and fulfilled, but Mark has not learnt to consider the needs of anyone but himself and in some ways has the maturity of a toddler. When things do not go exactly as he wants he explodes into uncontrollable rage and can be verbally abusive to anyone who gets in his way. His family life is now at risk as he has done this once too often at home and work colleagues are beginning to avoid him. Unless Mark can learn 'how to be' and 'how to live together' more effectively, he may lose much of what he has worked so hard to achieve.





Questions for reflection and discussion

What did you learn at school that has helped you with your work and personal life?
What else would have been valuable?

VULNERABLE AND CHALLENGING

Vulnerable children and young people often struggle with these important social and emotional elements of learning and development. They may not have had positive role models, experiences or guidance to help them learn to cope with difficulties or connect with others. Often they are overwhelmed by chronic or acute challenges and put their energies into trying to protect themselves from further threat and harm – perceived as well as real.

The behaviour of these students can be very difficult to manage in the classroom. This may lead teachers to give up a career in education and go off to find something less stressful. Teaching, however, can be an immensely rewarding career, despite – and sometimes because of – the challenges it presents. Teachers need to build both their confidence and resilience so they are not overwhelmed when the going gets tough.

The way we think about children and young people impacts on how we feel about them and also about ourselves. These thoughts and emotions determine the actions we take in relation to behaviour. It can be hard to appreciate in the stress of the moment that there are choices, some of which give everyone a better time in the classroom. It would seem sensible to choose what is effective and seek support to stick with it. This is not always the easiest option and can be personally challenging at times.

FOCUSING ON WHAT WORKS

This book tells you what works, not what people think works. Each chapter shows what has been proved to be effective over the longer term – avoiding the lurch from one challenging experience to the next, from one crisis to another.

The views expressed here are evidence-based. Although studies are not cited at every turn, very little appears here which is not rooted in scientific enquiry. The reference list at the end of each chapter is there to follow up if you wish. Also included are resources to extend your knowledge and skills and suggestions for materials that may be directly useful in the classroom.

This book goes beyond management techniques to what you might do to change behaviour in the longer term. There is neither a simple nor quick fix but consistently good practice will make a significant difference to positive outcomes – for your students, their achievement and their futures. It will also make a positive difference to the quality of your life every day at work.

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Much of what you will read here may seem obvious. Unfortunately, common sense is not so commonly practiced. It is harder to do what is sensible, ethical, thoughtful and effective when you are under stress and the ethos of the environment in which you are working is not supportive.

A teacher in training recently let me know he was having a miserable time on his school placement. The students, in his view, were just horrible, they didn't want to work and several did everything they could to disrupt his well-prepared lessons. The class teacher did nothing to support him. I sympathised with his predicament and asked him what he was doing about getting to know the students. His response was depressing but also not untypical: *'I teach science in a high school. I'm not there to have relationships'*.

Another young teacher, however, came up to me after a presentation on teacher-student relationships and said:

I'm in my second year of teaching. When I was in training my supervisor said it would be better if I kept my distance and let students know who's boss. I didn't feel comfortable with that and I have been doing what you have been suggesting in this workshop to make connections. I now know from my own experience that this works. Even the students that others struggle with, sometimes even experienced teachers, are mostly OK in my class. I love my students and I love my job.

Relationships and emotions exist all day every day in school. What you do and say, and the expectations that students develop of you, will impact on the way they respond to you. It makes sense to promote the positive wherever you can. This does not mean condoning what is unacceptable and 'letting kids get away with it' – what matters is the way that you deliver consequences.

Case study

Erin Pizzey, founder of the domestic violence charity, Refuge, grew up in a high status but dysfunctional household. Her mother was cold and distant and her father, who was a diplomat, could be a violent bully. Erin says that she had many behaviour difficulties at the convent school she attended, including violence and outright defiance. She particularly remembers one Sister who was always calm, warm and accepting but maintained high standards of behaviour. Whenever Erin misbehaved she had to help out in the kitchen. One day she was caught stealing. The Sister simply looked at her and quietly said: 'Well, that is going to be a lot of washing up'. Erin says that her respect for this Sister helped in coping with a very difficult time of her life.

THE THEORETICAL BASE

This book is based in and builds on the following theories – ways of thinking about the world.

Positive psychology

Instead of identifying problems and deficits and finding ways to treat pathology, positive psychology explores strengths, solutions and factors that maximise wellbeing to enable people to flourish.

Personal construct theory

This says that we all try to fit new experiences into our understanding of the way the world works. We therefore interpret new events on the basis of what we have already experienced. It is hard to change beliefs by giving information alone. This challenges us to consider the experiences we are providing for students and how these may be mediated.

Social constructionism

This approach sees behaviour as shaped by social context and social processes. We interpret student behaviour in the light of the dominant discourses around us. If a silent classroom is seen as a good thing in a school a student who asks many questions may be considered out of order. If noisy discussion is perceived as an indication of high engagement with learning then questions will be welcomed.

Systems and ecological approaches

This way of thinking also moves beyond the individual to their local context and the way the system in which they are embedded can promote or undermine change. Everything is interconnected and interactive. Changing or even tweaking one part of the system will have an impact on others. A focus on teacher wellbeing for instance may relieve stress, which in turn increases positive student–teacher relationships, and so on.

THE EVIDENCE BASE

Throughout the book you will find references to studies in the following areas:

- Mental health and resilience
- Effective education
- Social and emotional learning
- Multiple intelligences
- The determinants of student and school wellbeing
- Behavioural issues in school
- The promotion and learning of pro-social behaviour
- Values education
- Neuropsychology and the way the brain works
- Restorative approaches

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- School culture and leadership
- Reducing cycles of violence
- Relationship research.

Three specific qualitative studies provide supportive evidence for the approaches suggested and also many of the quotes found in the text. These are described briefly here. More information can be found in the publications cited in the references.

The views and constructs of parents on the home-school interface for behaviour

Nineteen families whose children had been identified with challenging behaviours were interviewed about their experiences in schools. They were asked what had been supportive and helpful and what had not (Roffey, 2002).

The development of emotional literacy in Australian schools

This study took place in six schools focused on establishing emotional literacy and relational quality across the learning environment. Interviews took place with students, teaching staff, school counsellors and principals. Some schools were building from a strong values base, others starting where there was little respect, care or community spirit. It took these schools many years to 'turn around' but they did so with remarkable outcomes (Roffey, 2008).

Circle Solutions: creating caring school communities

Eighteen undergraduate students supported the implementation of Circle Solutions in eight schools. Circle Solutions is a framework for group interaction based in the principles of democracy, inclusion, respect and safety. This study is an analysis of student experiences, observations and reflections (McCarthy, 2009).

RE-VISITING THEMES

As you go through the book you will find that similar themes come up time and again. The same things are said in different ways and in varying contexts.

There are references to **relationships, relational values, belonging and connectedness** and ways of promoting this. Your own **emotional literacy** will be revisited both in terms of expressing emotions in confident and helpful ways, responding to difficult situations and staying resilient. Another major theme is maximising a **strengths and solution focus** to ensure your interactions are positive experiences for everyone. Paying attention to the **words** you use is important. **Discourse** is an important theme – the way we think and talk about behaviour, students and families influences the lens through which we interpret different realities. **Pedagogy** is included – what teaching approaches

are most successful in getting and keeping pupils engaged. Student **agency and participation** means handing responsibility back to students and giving them both the skills and opportunities to make considered decisions about their behaviour and how they want to 'be' and 'live together'.

Reading this book may affect the way you see your job and the students you teach. It gives ideas and concrete strategies to build student confidence as successful learners and worthwhile people, promote the positive and respond effectively to challenges. What you do and say will impact on how pupils think of themselves and their school experiences, what they feel about being in your classroom and the behaviour they choose to engage in while they are there.

You will still come across students who are very difficult and damaged – particularly in high school. Whatever you do will not change their behaviour much. But, by keeping to the principles recommended here, you will be giving them an alternative experience – a way of understanding that there are different ways of being – which may impact on their future. You might never know the difference you make. Keeping to these principles will also give you a sense of professional accomplishment and boost your own resilience. It is a relief to know that you do not have to win every battle to be a good teacher.

CHAPTER CONTENT

There are four sections, each divided further into chapters. The first section addresses effective teaching. Chapter 2 includes what students perceive as a 'good teacher' and then details recent research on effective practice.

What does it mean to become and be an emotionally literate teacher and what difference does this make to the promotion of positive behaviour and effective responses in the face of challenges? These questions are addressed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 is about students themselves, making the important link between vulnerability and challenging behaviour. We look at the risk factors that may exist in a young person's life and the protective factors that help them be resilient in the face of adversity. Schools can make a significant difference.

The second section focuses on learning and choosing pro-social behaviour. Chapter 5 explores various ways you might conceptualise students and their behaviour. How you think about something makes a difference to how you feel and what you do. Chapter 6 details what is involved in establishing a pro-social classroom, ensuring that students feel valued and accepted and have a sense of their own strengths and achievements. Chapter 7 is closely aligned to this, and covers aspects of positive relationships, including what teachers might do to establish connection with their most challenging pupils. Chapter 8 highlights the importance of student agency and participation in decision-making.

Section Three addresses behaviour that is challenging. Chapter 9 aims to help teachers discriminate between different behaviours, the contexts in which they appear and developmentally appropriate responses. Chapter 10 explores the interactions between feeling, thinking and actions and what might be possible to change. This chapter covers behaviours you are likely to come across in your everyday work.



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Responding professionally to a continuum of challenges is the focus of Chapter 11. Within this we demonstrate how restorative approaches enable students to stay connected with their school community whilst also taking responsibility for their behaviour. This chapter also addresses teacher wellbeing. Teachers who are burnt out are unlikely to respond calmly and professionally in challenging situations.

Section Four is on whole school issues. Chapter 12 explores ways in which a focus on student and school wellbeing might be addressed at every level in an ecological spiral of positive practice. The culture of a school is critical to how behaviour is conceptualised, what happens for vulnerable and challenging students and how teachers are supported in their efforts to establish and maintain positive relationships and maximise engagement with learning.

READING, REFLECTING AND TAKING ACTION

In each chapter you are invited to interact with what you have been reading in the following ways.

Questions for reflection and discussion are placed below sections of text to encourage you to think about the meaning for you. Sometimes you may just want to take a moment or two to remember your own experiences and how these apply to your current situation. You may then wish to discuss this with a colleague.

Throughout each chapter are suggestions for intervention to both promote positive behaviours and respond effectively to challenges. These strategies are summarised for you in bullet points at the end.

Each chapter provides professional development activities to enhance your knowledge and skills, together with Circle Solutions activities for students. Both include paired discussion, small group activities and discussions of hypothetical situations.

CIRCLE SOLUTIONS

Circle Solutions activities are included to engage your students on some of the issues discussed. Some of these are suitable for younger pupils, others for older students – many can be amended to suit all ages, including adults.

I first came across Circles in New Jersey in the early 1990s. The principal of an elementary school I was visiting told me that ‘Magic Circles’ happened every day in every class after recess and made all the difference to the running of his school. It was not long afterwards that others, notably Murray White, Barbara Maines, Theresa Bliss, George Robinson and, in particular, Jenny Mosley, developed Circle Time in the UK. Circle Solutions is built upon the work of these pioneers within positive psychology and social constructionist paradigms, emphasising strengths and solutions, student agency for defining solutions to classroom issues, developing a sense of belonging and changing whole class conversations.

Circle Solutions is a framework for group interaction based in the principles of democracy, inclusion, respect and safety. Everyone sits in a Circle with the teacher as participant



facilitator. The aim is for students to find out about themselves and others, learn about what is involved in positive relationships and make decisions for their own class group:

- Circles begin with a statement of the principles and a check-in or greeting.
- Participants are then mixed up so they interact outside their usual social groups – this helps to break down barriers between people.
- Following activities can be paired, small group or involve the whole Circle – the content is chosen by the facilitator according to the age and needs of the class: students can lead these activities when they are familiar with the framework.
- All Circles end with a closing, calming activity such as relaxation, visualisation or reflection.

Circle sessions take about 20 minutes with young children, longer with older students. They need to happen regularly to have a sustainable impact, daily is optimal and once a week the minimum.

Many activities are presented as collaborative games. Playing games is engaging to young people, rarely threatening if not individually competitive and involves social and emotional learning as part of the process. The playfulness and laughter in games reduces stress and bonds people together in shared enjoyment. Games that do not depend on academic skills for participation promote the inclusion of many students who may otherwise struggle (Hromek & Roffey, 2009).

Issues in Circle Solutions are often addressed in an indirect way, using stories, the third person or hypothetical situations. These are primarily solution focused – what we want rather than what we want to get rid of. For example, rather than deconstructing a problem such as spreading rumours, pupils explore what trust is about and the difference it makes to how people feel about themselves and each other. What it means to be trustworthy and why you need others to be reliable so we can all function as a supportive community.

Expectations in Circle Solutions are that everyone gets a turn to speak if they wish, but they do not have to say anything if they choose not to. They are already participating by watching and listening. Respect is shown to each other by listening to what each person has to say, only naming individuals in a positive way and not putting anyone down.

Circle Solutions focus on the positive:

- To ensure the Circle is a safe place for both students and teachers
- To emphasise direction and goals rather than eliminating problems
- To promote positive feelings and a sense of belonging
- To have fun together in a safe and respectful way
- To aim for the future rather than bemoaning the past
- To foster optimism, hopefulness and resilience.

The way Circles are facilitated makes all the difference to their usefulness in the classroom and beyond. Facilitators need to run Circles in line with the principles of respect, inclusion, safety and democracy (McCarthy, 2009) and make connections between the activities and the learning that is taking place.

Each chapter concludes with references, suggestions for further reading and useful resources.

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SECTION ONE



BEING AN EFFECTIVE TEACHER

Teaching is all about communication. It is not, however, just formal knowledge that is transmitted. When a teacher also communicates passion about her subject, interest in students' progress, delight in their attainments, sympathy with their difficulties and patience with their efforts she is more likely to have students who are engaged and behave well. When a teacher communicates self-respect and respect for others, concern about his students, a willingness to listen and also share a laugh he is likely to have students who are more cooperative and responsive to direction. Not only do students say this is what they want and need, it is also confirmed by research on effective education.

Socially and emotionally competent teachers support the development of positive behaviour and respond with professional integrity in times of crisis. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) have identified that such teachers:

- set the 'emotional tone' of the classroom
- model respectful communication
- model expected pro-social behaviours
- develop supportive and encouraging relationships with students
- establish and implement behaviour guidelines in ways that promote intrinsic motivation – rather than impose non-negotiable rules
- design lessons that build on student strengths and abilities.

These teacher behaviours are associated with an optimal classroom climate, characterized by low levels of conflict and disruptive behaviour, smooth transitions between activities, appropriate expressions of emotion, respectful communication and problem solving, engagement with tasks, and supportive responsiveness to individual differences and students' needs (La Paro & Pianta, 2003).

Effective teaching is also increasingly associated with personalised learning. Teachers need to know their students, not just their subject. Each individual has many stories that inform the person they have become. Our most challenging students are often vulnerable and at risk. Even if we know only a fragment of their personal stories, establishing the protective factors that promote resilience ensures everyone learns in an environment that responds to the 'whole child' and maximises wellbeing. This means high expectations, fostering a sense of belonging and believing in the best of each student, letting them know we think they are worth the effort.



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