Early Career Framework

Core Induction Programme

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Week

6: Managing behaviour

Session Elements

- practical exercise
- reflection
- independent planning

Learning Intentions for this session

You will learn that:

7.5 Building effective relationships is easier when pupils believe that their feelings will be considered and understood.

You will learn how to:

Develop a positive, predictable and safe environment for pupils, by:

7e. Using consistent language and non-verbal signals for common classroom directions.

You will learn how to:

7f. Using early and least-intrusive interventions as an initial response to low- level disruption.

7g. Responding quickly to any behaviour or bullying that threatens emotional safety.

Build trusting relationships, by:

7l. Responding consistently to pupil behaviour.

Introduction

This week is a chance to revisit some of the concepts you studied earlier in this module, now that you have had more time with your pupils. This time in the school year is often tricky in terms of behaviour, so this week provides an opportunity to return to how you maintain your high standards of behaviour and respond appropriately to disruption.

Research and Practice Summary

This reading will help you understand some of the theory behind this week's topic. We will start by introducing some of the key concepts (these are in bold). You will also see some suggestions of how to put these concepts into practice. **When using these concepts in your own practice you will need to take account of your pupils' characteristics, the context of your classroom and the nature of the material that you are teaching.**

Overcoming a difficult few weeks

James started in his new school in September. He is delighted with how effectively he has established his high expectations and how well pupils have responded to these.

However, as the October half-term approaches, James is increasingly aware that some of his expectations are being challenged by pupils. His mentor reassures him that this is very common and that it matters how he

responds – this is an important opportunity for James to reinforce and maintain the strong start that he has made.

What should James think about to reinforce and maintain the high expectations he has established?

You have already learnt about how to effectively establish your expectations. You saw how you can use the following four stages to establish and maintain routines and expectations for behaviour:

- **clarify** – begin by clarifying exactly what the routine involves and why you are using it. For instance, the aim of the routine about handing out equipment quickly may be mainly about maximising time for learning safely
- **model** – show pupils how to perform the routine and explain its purpose. It can help to show non-examples that represent common misinterpretations of the routine as part of this. For example, you can show how just one person in a pair should gather equipment in a science lesson, to minimise the number of people moving around the room
- **practice** – scaffold opportunities for practice when first using the routine. Including an element of competition may be appropriate here. For example, challenging pupils to hand out books as quickly and quietly as possible at the start of the lesson
- **reinforce** – regularly reinforce the routine by acknowledging when it is done well and providing reminders and further practice when it is not. This may be as simple as, 'well done for settling down and beginning so quickly, Matthew – you're already learning now'

Using this approach will help you to demonstrate your high expectations of pupils. However, you are likely now reaching the stage where careful reinforcement of your expectations is needed. It is natural for pupils to test the boundaries of your expectations, so it is important to manage your response to this well.

It can help to distinguish between situations where pupils are actively testing your boundaries and situations where pupils do not fully understand what you expect. Where pupils do not understand, re-modelling and practising are likely to be beneficial. In other situations you will need to consider how you reinforce your expectations.

To continue to reinforce your high expectations, as explored in week 3 of this module, it can help to:

- **be predictable** – schools use sanctions and rewards in many different ways to reinforce desirable behaviours. The success of any system will be determined by its implementation, and predictability is a key part of this. For instance, sanctions that are only enforced sometimes will be less effective than those that always, predictably, follow a certain behaviour. Being predictable helps to reinforce your school's high expectations of pupils

- **be aware** – awareness is important for preventing low-level disruption as well as for quickly managing bullying or other behaviours that threaten pupils' emotional safety. To maintain awareness, you should position yourself physically so that you can visually monitor the whole class even when speaking to an individual or small group, and frequently 'be seen looking' so that pupils know you are aware of what they are doing
- **be responsive** – responding early to low-level disruption usually helps to shut it down quickly. 'Least-intrusive' approaches – i.e. those which limit disruption to learning, including non-verbal signals – can be appropriate at this stage, such as pausing abruptly, moving physically closer to disruptive students, or looking at pupils to show that you know what they are doing and that it is not acceptable (the 'teacher glare')
- **review your expectations** – you will have set your expectations with the best of intentions, but it may be appropriate to carefully review them if pupils are struggling to do as you wish. You should avoid lowering your expectations, but it may be helpful to alter routines to make these expectations more achievable.

Building effective, trusting relationships with pupils will help you to manage behaviour and create an environment that supports learning. This process will take longer to establish with some pupils than others and this is quite normal, especially if you are a secondary school teacher who sees individual pupils less frequently. It is easier to build these relationships when pupils believe that their feelings will be considered and understood – even though you are 'in charge' of your classroom, you are also modelling how to develop and maintain positive relationships, and taking account of others' feelings is, of course, an important part of this. This does not mean that you always have to do as pupils wish, but that you can positively impact your relationship with pupils by acknowledging their feelings and being clear about the reasons for the decisions you take.

Responding consistently to pupil behaviour is important for two reasons:

- **reinforcing expectations** – if you only sometimes reinforce your expectations in how you use sanctions and rewards, then pupils quickly learn that your expectations are optional. Over time, you will likely find that pupils adhere less and less to your high behavioural expectations
- **fairness** – pupils have a strong sense of fairness, so if they notice (or perceive) they are being treated differently than their peers this can undermine your relationship with them. Therefore, it is important to 'be fair' and to 'be seen to be fair'. This can include, for example, using least-intrusive interventions (see week 3 of Module 1) so that pupils don't feel that they are being singled out in front of their peers, and linking your use of rewards and sanctions to the school behaviour policy. By being explicit like this, you make it clear to pupils why they are being sanctioned and others know what they need to do to achieve the rewards that their peers receive

Setting pupils up to succeed: consistency and persistence

James was coming to dread his Friday afternoon lessons. It seemed that pupils could sense the weekend coming and were especially tricky to teach at this time. He felt that two pupils in particular consistently caused low-level disruption that affected everyone's learning, and were frequently off task. This upset James as he had worked so hard to develop a positive, predictable and safe environment in which all pupils could thrive.

James asked his mentor to come and observe the class so that she could help James plan how best to tackle the problems he was concerned about.

The feedback from James' mentor was surprisingly helpful. Not only did she offer some strategies for addressing the pupils' low-level disruption, but she also highlighted the approaches that James had embedded that were supporting the majority of pupils to learn well – even on a Friday afternoon!

James had taken the time in September to carefully clarify, model, practise and reinforce the behaviours he expected from pupils, and his mentor could see that this was already paying off. She praised the way that he reinforced positive behaviours from pupils, and how he linked this to the school's policy on sanctions and rewards. She highlighted to James that he was already doing lots of things well and could feel proud of this.

James's mentor also suggested some strategies to work on. She felt that the disruption worrying James was stemming from the two pupils not always understanding clearly what they needed to do. This helped James to see that the most effective behaviour management strategy in this situation was not to respond to the disruption once it had happened, but to pre-empt it by making sure the pupils understood clearly what they should be doing.

Based on this feedback, James set himself the following targets:

1. target the two pupils with clarification questions when giving task instructions, to make sure that they fully understand expectations from the outset
2. focus on using consistent language and non-verbal signals for common directions in the classroom, so that he can more easily remind the pupils of his expectations while they are working. This includes a non-verbal 'shhh' gesture for when they get chatty, which James can use without distracting other pupils

James' situation is not unique – all teachers experience these kinds of challenges from time to time, especially less experienced teachers. By consistently and persistently applying the principles you have learnt in this

module, you will be able to address these challenges and support all pupils to learn well in your class. Remember that you are not alone in this endeavour and that you can expect assistance and support from colleagues, which can often make all the difference.

Self-Study Activities

Review: 10 mins

Read the research and practice summary on this week's topic. As you read, reflect on:

1. the practices that you are already doing well
2. the practices you are doing some of the time, but could do more of/more consistently
3. the practices you do not use in your teaching yet

As you work through the activities in this week's self-directed study session and mentor meeting, aim both to refine and extend what you already do well, and to build your skill and confidence in using practices which are not yet a regular part of your teaching repertoire.

Plan: 10 mins

Practical exercise

In last week's self-study session you wrote vignettes about two of your pupils. This week you are asked to write a vignette about your own practice, in which you 'catch yourself doing something right' – in this case, a situation in which you managed behaviour effectively. As you saw above, it can be easy as a new teacher to focus on what isn't yet going well, but remember that you have many successes each day. It is as important to build on and sharpen your strengths as it is to address areas of relative weakness. Celebrate this example of your successful use of strategies for managing behaviour.

To help you write this vignette, you could:

- describe the general situation – who was there, what was the broad setting
- describe what you did
- describe what happened
- try and connect your actions to their consequences, using the ideas in this week's research and practice summary and those from previous weeks in Module 1

Example: tricky behaviour in Year 10 computing

'My Year 10 computing class can be tricky, particularly after lunch as lots of them play football during the break and arrive hot and excitable. Often I struggle to get them to settle and this can 'blow up' into confrontation with some pupils who often accuse me of picking on them. Recently I have been starting the lesson with a quiet, independent, writing task so that pupils have a chance to cool down before moving to computers. I used the entry routine that I've been practising for a few weeks and this seemed to help them anticipate what would be happening. I can see that they're getting more used to my expectations and this is helping them to calm down more quickly. A couple of pupils were being a bit chatty but I used physical proximity (walking casually towards the pupils) as a first reminder of my expectations and then a quiet 1:1 word with one of them when a second prompt was needed. I phrased my reminder as 'you need to be working quietly on this task' rather than 'stop talking' so that I was emphasising my expectations positively. By using strategies consistently with all pupils I seem to be reducing some of the initial perceptions of unfairness, so there are fewer incidences where pupils feel they're being picked on. I am pleased that my consistency and tenacity seems to be paying off with this class.'

In this vignette you can see that there are strategies in use both to pre-empt disruptive behaviour (planning of activities, use of predictable routines, clear expectations) and also to respond to disruptive behaviour as it arises (early and low-level interventions). These are contributing to a predictable, secure environment in which behaviour is managed effectively.

Theory to Practice: 20 mins

1. Practical exercise

Now that you have identified where you are making successful use of strategies for managing behaviour, write a vignette that captures a specific situation that you found tricky in relation to managing behaviour. This could be about an individual pupil, a group or a whole class.

As above:
- describe the general situation – who was there, what was the broad setting
- describe what happened
- describe what you did (before, during and after the event)
- try and connect your actions to their consequences, using the ideas in this week's research and practice summary and those from previous weeks in Module 1

All teachers have bad days, or situations within a day which they would prefer to have managed differently. It is important that you are able to reflect on events like these so that you learn from them and plan ahead for how you will use different approaches when you encounter something similar in the future.

2. Reflection

Using your two vignettes, reflect on how you could have taken actions before, during and perhaps after the second event to change the course of the situation. Visualise this event happening differently because you put different strategies in place before it happened and as it unfolded. Use this reflection to write a checklist for yourself of how you will approach tricky behaviour management situations in the future.

To help you write this checklist you could:

- note how you can 'design out' poor behaviour through the use of routines, consistent language and the development of a supportive, predictable classroom environment
- note how you can respond to poor behaviour quickly, consistently and with as little intrusion as possible
- note how you can reset relationships and expectations after an incident of poor behaviour

3. Independent planning

Now that you have worked through the contents of Module 1, you have the opportunity for your mentor to complete a developmental lesson observation of you putting your learning into practice. Begin to think about a lesson next week that you would value your mentor's feedback on, and a specific focus from Module 1 topics that would most support your learning.

Make some initial notes about this lesson and a possible observation focus. You will have the opportunity to discuss this lesson further in your next ECT mentor meeting.

Next Steps: 5 mins

Bring your vignettes, your checklist and notes from this session to your next mentor meeting. Be ready to discuss your learning with your mentor.

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