

Minimising and Addressing Low Level Disruptive Behaviour

This resource sheet is based largely on an extremely useful article written by Tom Bennett who writes regularly for the TES on behaviour matters.

“Low-level disruption is like kryptonite for the well-planned lesson. It’s like a woodpecker boring a hole in your head with a toffee hammer while wearing a Pete Doherty mask. It’s that annoying. And it’s that insidious.

By itself, it is disrespectful and distracting. Left unattended, it erodes the sharp edges of your lessons like a river rubs a path through a mountain, grain by grain. It’s the thin end of the wedge.

Why so serious? Because low-level disruption is what pupils do instead of learning. It’s a classic diversionary tactic where the sole function, by intelligent design or dumb malice, is to turn your lesson from a symphony to a cats’ chorus.”

Tom Bennett

The key, as with all behaviour management issues, is to aim for prevention rather than cure. Many of the strategies listed below will help with this.

THE LESSON STARTS AT THE DOOR

Meet and Greet:

- Positive recognition – communicate a sense that it’s nice to see the pupils (yes, including those who you aren’t perhaps so keen to see!).
Aaffirming of expectations re: conduct, uniform – conveyed positively.

Dealing with lateness:

- Minimal attention.
- Notice those who have arrived on time – and give explicit recognition for this.
- Direct pupil to seat and continue with lesson; go to pupil once task is started – check on reason for lateness; restate expectation re: arriving on time if necessary; consequence only if necessary.

BEGINNING LESSONS

- Register — eye-contact; using names.
- Making it a more meaningful activity eg answering register with key fact learned from previous lesson.

GETTING DOWN TO WORK

- Address any anxieties pupils might have about being able to do the work.
- Check that everyone understands what is required.
- 10 minute concentration rule - Mini-breaks eg through questioning, reading out response.
- Maximum of 3 instructions at a time; written version of instructions to refocus.
- Make expectations clear re: how to work eg *‘I expect heads to be down and no speaking during this task’*.
- Give time to settle – be clear how long – then *‘Good to see that Marie’s table are settled – well done. And Nick’s – again, well done.’*
- Peripheral praise – move towards pupil – then praise those around him/her.
- Avoid talking over pupils once they are settled.
- Interventionist marking – opportunity to provide positive recognition.
- Focusing individuals – support those who particularly struggle by eg providing targets in the margin; Concentration lines – timeline of lesson – set time challenge for task ‘x’.

- Traffic light system to reinforce expectations.
- Working noise – be explicit as to your expectations; noise barometer.

FINISHING

- Allow sufficient time.
- Train them to pack away and show you they are ready to leave.
- Gain their attention.
- Provide a time limit and count this down – music, 'Countdown' TV programme music.
- Clear expectations - *'I expect anyone to stop talking, put their equipment down and face this way.'* *'Ok, everyone facing this way and show me that you are ready to leave.'*
- Reinforce achievements – both work and behaviour.
- Use group activities.
- Leave the room clean.
- Control the exit – stand at door; ask groups to leave; *'Well done Tom's table. You've tidied away and are showing me you are ready to leave.'*
- Remember to follow up any 1:1s needed eg pupil who was late.
- Say goodbye!

ADDRESSING SPECIFIC BEHAVIOURS

Dealing with pupils who speak over you and other pupils

- 'Power Look' - Stop, look at the individual speaking, catch their eye, make an appropriate facial expression and continue to speak as you look at them.
- Embedding pupil's name within a generic instruction "So what you need to do – Tom - is;
- Proximity – moving closer to the pupil's whose attention you are needing
- The 'Yes Set' approach - *'Johnny, are you in my classroom? Am I teaching? Will the class learn more if everyone could hear? Then: Would you learn more if you listened?'*
- If inappropriate behaviour(s) continues, offer the choice:
"You have the choice now. Either you do 'x' (ie the desired behaviour) or you will be choosing to move seat (in order to get learning back on the go) + sanction if appropriate."

Dealing with pupils shouting out

- Restate expectation - *'I would like people to put up their hands.'*
- Ignore by focusing on those who are doing the right thing - *'Abby, good to see your hand up.'*
- Repeat that you will only speak to individuals who have their hand up.
- Apologise to the pupil you have asked, *'I'm sorry I couldn't hear your answer, because Mark/someone else (look at that pupil) was shouting out.'*

Tapping, banging, lobbing

- State carefully your intentions, *'I want all equipment on your folders, and you looking this way.'*
- Tapping - Matching, pacing, leading - Whilst speaking, tap your pen or pencil whilst looking at the individual, slow your tapping down, finally drop your pen.

Chair swinging

- *'I want everyone in their chair, facing the front.'*
- Use non-verbal signals, four fingers pointing down at the individual involved.
- Use proximity – ie move towards pupil