St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School

What is 'Behaviour for Learning'?

Most social, emotional and behavioural skills are learned. As a theoretical approach it can best be conceptualised as a set of three relationships experienced by the pupil. These relate to their:

• relationship with themselves (how they feel about themselves and their self-confidence as a learner);

• relationship with others (how they interact socially and academically with all others in their class and school);

• relationship with the curriculum (how accessible they feel a lesson is, how best they think they learn).

In order to foster a positive learning environment in the classroom at St Cuthbert's, we recognise the importance of each of these relationships and, especially, our own contributions as teachers in developing them. Some pupils may already have effective skills for learning when they arrive at school. Others might need support and direct teaching to develop skills they have yet to learn. Within school we recognise the need to focus on helping pupils to develop appropriate skills which enable them to learn within a variety of social contexts (in whole-class or small-group situations in the class-room and elsewhere in the school, at break-time, lunchtime and immediately outside the school).

Important points to note:

• A 'Behaviour for Learning' approach is positive. It helps pupils understand the behaviour skills they need, what the teacher wants them to do and why this will help them to learn (rather than focusing on unwanted behaviours).

• It puts a value on positive behaviours, which enable and maximise learning. Depending on the pupils, effective behaviour for learning can range from high-level listening or collaborative learning skills to remaining seated for two minutes. As with other aspects of behaviour, the emphasis is upon setting targets. The concept is one which is relevant to all pupils, irrespective of their stage of development and is a key element in promoting educational inclusion.

• The way in which we establish a positive climate for learning is crucial in increasing opportunities for behaviour for learning. It begins with a recognition that this is one of the main elements which is directly under our influence. We need to ensure that we select approaches which are most likely to increase learning behaviour. We strongly believe that these will be ones which are characterised by the promotion of positive relationships and the development of an appropriate emotional climate in the classroom.

• Moreover, a 'Behaviour for Learning' approach is consistent with our Catholic ethos and the approach to developing personal, social, and emotional and behavioural skills as outlined in our PHSE provision.

Building positive relationships in the classroom

Structuring the lesson for positive behaviour and attendance

The design of effective lessons is fundamental to high-quality teaching and learning. This in turn promotes and supports behaviour for learning in the classroom. Good teaching fosters good learning. It stems from effective lesson design whatever the age of the learner, their level of achievement or the subject or skill being learned. However, even a perfect lesson structure will not engage pupils who are bored or overwhelmed because the learning they are being asked to do is too easy, too difficult, repetitious, poorly presented or not matched to their preferred learning styles. The following points are key factors in effective teaching to support behaviour for learning and attendance. It is important to:

• create an environment that promotes learning in a settled and purposeful atmosphere; (All pupils need a calm and ordered learning environment; those who are easily distracted or who try to deflect attention from their underachievement are less likely to focus on lesson content.)

• support the pupils' emotional well-being within the learning and teaching environment; (Pupils who are emotionally secure are better able to concentrate on their learning and on developing effective social relationships.)

• focus and structure teaching so that pupils are clear about what is to be learned and how it fits with what they know already; (Pupils who do not have skills to direct their own learning soon become disengaged and are at risk of behaving inappropriately: a simple, clear lesson plan provides them with a framework for their own learning.)

• modify and adapt the curriculum to meet the diverse individual needs of children in your classroom; (Pupils who have difficulty accessing the curriculum in the way in which it is presented may respond by engaging in inappropriate behaviours.)

• actively engage pupils in their learning so that they make their own meaning from it; (Pupils who underachieve feel isolated from the learning process – they are infrequently asked to respond to questions, participate meaningfully in group activity or otherwise contribute in lessons. Lack of involvement confirms to them their own failure.)

• develop pupils' learning skills systematically so that their learning becomes increasingly independent; (Pupils who sometimes behave in unacceptable ways have not internalised the key features of positive learning; reliance on external 'control' is both time-consuming for the teacher and short-term in effectiveness for the pupil.)

• use assessment for learning to help pupils reflect on what they already know, reinforce the learning being developed and set targets for the future; (Positive behaviours are built around the reinforcement of routines which offer a secure framework for all learners, but especially those who have difficulty in seeing the relevance of their learning in school.)

• have high expectations of the effort that pupils should make and what they can achieve; (Many pupils who fail to achieve and who behave in an unacceptable way have low self-esteem; their

experience of the curriculum is frequently negative, and they will deflect attention from this by misbehaving.)

• motivate pupils by well-paced lessons, using stimulating activities matched to a range of learning styles which encourage attendance. (Pupils whose attendance is poor frequently state that 'school is boring' and that lessons hold little interest or relevance to them. They are often unable to recognise the intrinsic benefits of achieving in school and in consequence do not attend regularly.)

Research suggests that certain key attributes assist in the development of positive relationships:

• modelling appropriate behaviour;

• positive recognition and the effective use of praise;

• positive correction;

• consistent application of rules;

• use of verbal and non-verbal communication;

• listening to pupils and respecting their opinions;

• remaining relaxed but vigilant (pre-empting unacceptable behaviour);

• dealing positively and sensitively with lateness and non-attendance.

As teachers who strive to assimilate all of these characteristics into our professional repertoire we will be more likely to forge lasting and positive relationships with our pupils. Effective relationships mean that there is 'common ground' between pupil and teacher. This is as vital in securing appropriate conditions for learning as it is for managing behaviour issues which may be potentially problematic. It is therefore central to a 'Behaviour for Learning' approach.