

Behaviour: Top tips for planning lessons around behaviour management

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There is a myth that the secret to behaviour management lies in a lesson plan. No matter how interesting, challenging or fun the lesson is, children will find a way to misbehave if they set their minds to it. Make no mistake, the relationship between teacher and class is the defining factor. A teacher with good command can have classes working hard even through the most tedious fifty minutes. That said, a badly planned lesson will have a detrimental effect on behaviour. These are my three best strategies for making the structure and content of your lessons as behaviour-friendly as possible:

Set the right pace for managing behaviour

Make sure that the pace is appropriate for the class. In general I find that a fast pace with shorter activities is more suited for weak classes, or those that find it tricky to sit still and apply elbow grease. Plan activities that last no longer than five to ten minutes and BE RUTHLESS with your time keeping. Explain what you need from them, get them on it and when time is up, then IT IS UP. Move on.

Content to help classroom management

Is the work at an appropriate level for the group? If activities are too hard, then you will be wading knee-deep in complaints of helplessness. Some children give up at the mere rumour of effort, but if you plan work that is genuinely too hard for most of them, then you are building a grave for yourself. Too easy for them? They might do it, but they will either cut through it like a meteor, leaving you to pad out the rest of the time like a stand up, or they will screw up their faces at it. Like Goldilocks, they need their porridge just right. Work should be just outside of their reach, but not so far that they can't see it. To allow for differentiation, design tasks that can be approached in different ways. With time, you can train pupils to understand they are allowed to tackle work in ways that suit their ability. For example, I allow G&T kids to answer questions all at once, or in prose, or in diagrams, if I feel they can do so without missing primary learning aims.

Free yourself from delivery duty

With a tough class, you can design a lesson that frees you up as much as possible from talking at and directing the kids. Worksheets and book work, which often seem to be forbidden territory, are perfectly acceptable learning activities. Did no one learn from such methods before educational rentagobs started saying worksheets don't develop five sub-faculties of higher emotional intelligence? Give me strength.

Tasks like this set you free. The kids who want to work can. The kids who rebel against such impediments to their civil rights will rebel, but you are free to monitor and amend their behaviour directly, without worrying that no one has any work. Over-complex lessons tie you to the mast, and as you dance about with resources and explanations, kids go off task under cover of your industry.

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