

Creating a Culture: How school leaders can optimise behaviour **An independent review of behaviour by Tom Bennett in March 2017**

This guidance has been prepared by Vanessa Nice, Head of Halton Behaviour Support Service. It is intended as a summary of the DfE advice published in March 2017. The full document can be read [here](#). This guidance sets out strategies and features for effectively developing, embedding and maintaining a culture of high expectation around behaviour in schools.

The document itself is 76 pages long so I have summarised the main elements of it in order that it is more easily adaptable to Halton school settings.

High expectations and consistency are the two fundamental elements to any school's vision for excellence in behaviour. They represent the foundations of any attempt to create a culture. School leaders and staff must embody ambition, aspiration and high expectation for every member of the school community. They must demonstrate through their actions and words the belief that progress is not only possible but is expected.

The school ethos, its vision, and the strategies used to achieve it, must be consistent with one another, and must be consistently demonstrated. Rules and values that fluctuate too much confuse what the school stands for. Exceptions may be permitted, but they must be exceptional.

Whatever one believes the aim of education to be, it is best realised in schools where good behaviour is the norm, and antisocial, selfish, or self-destructive behaviour is minimised. Staff well-being, retention and working conditions are also optimised by the propagation of good behaviour. Time and material resources are saved. Highly socialised communities where good conduct is common provide a more stable and transparent environment where mental health issues can be observed, anticipated or supported more effectively.

There has been some discrepancies between the views of behaviour in schools. According the Teacher Omnibus Survey of 2015, senior leaders have a more positive view of behaviour than classroom teachers and primary teachers have a more positive view of behaviour in the classroom than secondary colleagues.

We need to reframe what we view as 'good behaviour' so that it is engaged, purposeful behaviour with good study habits, resilience, effective relationships with adults in the room and self-regulation. It is not good enough to continue to accept low-level disruption and a lack of engagement. We have to develop young people who are able to self-regulate and demonstrate engagement in the tasks requested in order that they are able to effectively transfer to individual study or to the world of work. An empowering and aspirational model is to understand that good behaviour surpasses minimising the negative and seeks to maximise positive behaviours.

Expecting good behaviour is not oppressive and must not be construed as being unhelpful – such an attitude can actually be harmful to the development of pupils and is a serious attitudinal impediment to developing a culture of high expectation. It is necessary for **all** adults to create in children self-regulation and self-restraint. Compliance is one of the rungs on the behavioural ladder but it is a necessary one to be achieved first in order that students can then be supported to autonomy and independence where they reliably and consciously make wise and civil decisions without supervision.

While increasing positive behaviour should be the aspirational goal of school leadership, this must be realised in conjunction with the reduction of negative ones. More straightforward student goals of calm, safe working environments must be secured robustly before (or at least simultaneously with) attempts to build more sophisticated models of behaviour. If students routinely verbally abuse one another openly in class, for example, they will find it much more difficult to learn habits of concentration, argumentation and discourse. As with academic subjects, mastery of the basics is necessary before proceeding to more complex tasks.

Commonly found features of the most successful schools

Committed, highly visible school leaders, with ambitious goals, supported by a strong leadership team

This is leaders at all levels in the school including classroom teachers who are leaders in their room.

Leaders who possess tenacity, vision and ambition for improvement who are present and visible in all areas of the school community – in the lunch queue, the playground, at the beginning and end of the school day and routinely popping into classrooms.

Effectively communicated, realistic, detailed expectations understood clearly by all members of the school

A dream described with clarity and passion which is understood by all members of the school community (including *really* understanding the reasoning and logic behind it). This needs to include how strategies will be monitored and tracked and what strategies are required. A similar level of vigour and detail to a school action plan is required.

Pupils need to understand the school's visions and values and be able to articulate them at an age-appropriate level, how that vision can be achieved, what the rules, rewards and sanctions are.

Staff need to feel ownership of the policy, support in their application of it and confidence in communicating it to the pupils.

Parents need to have clear communication about the policy. They need to be clear about the school's core purpose and vision and are supportive of the behaviour policy, its sanctions and rewards. They understand the positive impact on their home-life of consistent behaviour rules. Parents need to be helped to publicly support the school's position with their child. This may mean that they have to be informed of why the school has a particular stance and need to be reminded of the school's behaviour policy, which has been publicised to them in writing at least annually.

Behaviour is high profile

Behaviour policies are a continual focus in every aspect of school strategy and planning. Tackling behaviour is proactive and strategised as opposed to being reactive. It is regularly discussed at all levels of school leadership from governing bodies to parent forums to school council meetings.

Consistency between all staff and pupils

Expectations are simplified and more easily achieved when there is consistency throughout the school. This means that all staff have to have the same thresholds of acceptable behaviour and have to apply them all day, every day. Staff make the weather in a school. The children appreciate knowing where they stand and knowing that the expectation is always the same regardless of the activity, staff member or day of the week.

Consistency is king!

Well-advertised, repeatedly demonstrated routines

Schools, and individual classrooms in them, run on well-designed routines. They benefit enormously from clear, consistent expectations of habitual conduct. Any aspect of school life that could successfully be made into a routine should be clearly defined as such. Leaders should proactively seek to identify what behaviour is universally required in every aspect of school life, and then strive to make it clear to all stakeholders what the routine involves.

High levels of support between leadership and staff

A commitment to staff development with the concomitant expectation that staff reciprocate by contributing their best efforts. Continuing professional development and performance management conspires to raise success in the staff's collective skill base in this area. Conversely, all staff are expected to be accountable for their decisions, their adherence to the school routines, and their demonstration of school values.

Attention to detail and thoroughness in the execution of school policies and strategies

In the most successful schools, nothing is left to chance and every aspect of school life is thoughtfully considered and made to comply with the values of the school's behaviour policy. The policy itself has sufficient detail and

clarity. It is constantly referred to and made explicit in school life. There is little chance that any member of the school community can misunderstand any element of the school's strategy on behaviour.

A commitment to every pupil's wellbeing and success and a belief that all students matter equally

Every student is seen as an opportunity for success rather than the vehicle for failure. When students fail to behave, it is seen as a problem to be solved rather than merely a nuisance.

Having high levels of positive regard for every member of their community, running parallel with clear, high expectations of student behaviour. Challenging students when they misbehave, reprimanding them and setting sanctions, for example are consistent with having high regard for students' potential, as well as the dignity of their peers.

Pupils with high levels of behavioural need are proactively supported rather than waiting for their needs to manifest themselves and require a response.

Developing a school culture of high expectation needs careful consideration

Design

Cultures require deliberate creation. Leadership need to design a detailed vision of what the culture should look like for the school, focussing on social and academic conduct. Expectations **must be as high as possible for all**.

Build

Staff and pupils need to know what the culture looks like in practice in all areas of school like (including break-times and lunchtimes and any school transport). This means demonstrating it, communicating it repeatedly and thoroughly and ensuring that all areas of school life are covered by it.

One key way of achieving this is by designing routines for all staff and pupils to follow. Any behaviour that should be performed identically most or all of the time should be made into a routine (for example, queuing in the canteen or walking in the corridors).

Maintain

Embedding and maintaining a school culture of high expectation means that regular reminders are needed. Staff need regular training, pupils need regular communication and data needs to be monitored to ensure that lessons are learnt and standards are maintained.

Challenges to the culture

There are always challenges to developing and maintaining a culture. Some of the most significant ones are listed below:

- lack of clarity of vision, or poor communication of that vision to staff or students;
- a lack of sufficient in-school classroom management skills;
- poorly calibrated, or low expectations;
- inadequate orientation for new staff or students;
- staff over-burdened by workload, and therefore unable to direct behaviour effectively;
- unsuitably skilled staff in charge of pivotal behaviour roles;
- remote, unavailable, or over-occupied leadership;
- inconsistency between staff and departments.

The role of school leaders

Schools always have a culture whether it has been designed or not. School leaders need to be conscious architects of the culture they want, the behaviours they want to achieve and the methods they will use to achieve them.

Leaders have a responsibility to provide their school community with a clear behaviour vision which is commonly understood. This needs to be explicit in its permitted, encouraged and prohibited behaviours. It needs to have clear sanctions and rewards and needs to be adopted and consistently enacted by all members of the school community. The school's behaviour policy is a vehicle for this but the values need to invade all aspects of school life and be a fundamental value of the school. An undercurrent to all of the work that is undertaken there.

Leaders need to ensure that the school's vision for behaviour is given a sufficiently high profile, is given due regard at every level of strategy and is adequately funded. Excellent behaviour should be a fundamental goal of the school. It is not sufficient to eradicate poor behaviour, there is a need to strive for, to plan for and to strategise for excellence.

Creating a culture is about designing social norms that you would like to see reproduced throughout the school community – what do you want pupils to believe about themselves, their achievements, each other, the school? Any aspect of behaviour that can be standardised because it is expected of all pupils should be. They should be communicated to, practiced by and refined by all staff and pupils until they become automatic.

When communicating the vision and expectation to the community, it is important to exemplify all expectations in as much detail as possible so that they are clear and there can be no misconception and that all perceptions of every expectation are exactly the same.... **Consistency is key!**

In order for this vision to be successfully enacted, every member of the school's leadership team needs to be actively involved in embedding it. In some cases, their roles will be to innovate and lead, for example, taking responsibility for discrete areas of operations, and taking initiative within those roles. At other times, their roles will be managerial such as the efficient maintenance of established systems, and guaranteeing that staff roles are being fulfilled, projects are on schedule, and goals are reached. The ability to discern when to innovate, and when to consolidate, is key to the role of every leader or manager in the school. It is crucial to the success of an excellent school behaviour culture.

Managing staff through transition

In order to move a school forward from its existent circumstances to an improved state, school leaders must be ready to offer high levels of support to all members of the school community so that they understand the new systems and expectations. They may need to offer targeted support in order to achieve this and need to be ready to defend their policies and decisions with reasoned arguments. They must be prepared to see their ideas fail to inspire a small minority of teachers who cannot be persuaded. Once every avenue of support and reflection has been exhausted, they must be prepared to consider their options with regard to those staff.

Similar to methods used with pupils, it is important to publicly support staff and challenge and hold them to account in private in the event that they need to correct practice.

It is important that it is clear that **behaviour is everyone's responsibility**, everybody from governors to pupils to staff to parents have a fundamental role to play in developing and maintaining an effective school culture.

Some sources recommend 'front-loading' behaviour management training in CPD timetables so that all staff start the year with a clear understanding of the culture of high expectation in the school. Initial training can be clustered under 3 sub-headings:

Routines: classroom routines as a fundamental source of high expectation, a scaffold for conduct, and a community vision of optimal habits and behaviours.

Responses: strategies and interventions for de-escalating confrontation, resolving conflict, redirecting unproductive (or destructive) behaviours, and reacting to antisocial behaviour in a just, productive and

proportional way. These include formal interventions (for example: consequences described by the school behaviour policy) and informal ones (for example: verbal/ non-verbal cues, body language).

Relationships: regulating one's own emotional state; understanding personal triggers in one's own behaviour, expectations or reactions; how special educational needs and disability (SEND) affects behaviour. Understanding for example: attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism, dyslexia, Asperger's; the basic psychology of: motivation; long and short term memory; concentration; learning; cognitive load, spacing and interleaving; group dynamics.

Schools need to pay regard to the Equalities Act (2010) in both their formation of a behaviour policy and in their management of individual pupils. Treatment of pupils must take into account individual circumstances and if a pupil has known disabilities, treatment must be proportionate in light of the pupil's disabilities. **Fairness is not treating everyone the same, it is meeting the needs of every individual.**

Pride is a key element of a shared vision for excellence. Pupils, staff, governors and parents should value and have pride in the school environment and in the achievements of individuals and the school community as a whole. This consists of staff and pupils taking pride in their school, valuing themselves and the institution they are part of. Being positive and aspirational at all times and in all conduct, showing appreciation for each other in highly visible ways and ensuring that the building is treated with respect, kept immaculately clean, free from vandalism and well-managed. This includes high quality displays celebrating the work of the school as a whole and of individuals.

Routines & Rules

Highly effective schools have well-established and universally known and understood systems of behaviour, for example, student removal, consequences, and sanctions, corridor and classroom expectations, behaviour on trips, arrival, transition and departure behaviour and so on. Any area of general behaviour that can be sensibly translated into a routine should be done so explicitly. This removes uncertainty about school expectations from mundane areas of school life, which reduces anxiety, creates a framework of social norms, and reduces the need for reflection and reinvention of what is and is not acceptable conduct. This in turn saves time and effort that would otherwise be expended in repetitive instruction. These routines should be seen as the aspiration of all members of the school community whenever possible.

Central to the concept of embedding routines, is the idea that there must be rules. Rules can be explicit and implicit, but for the sake of good conduct, it is advisable that they are explicit, as short as possible, compact and memorable.

They must be widely known and demonstrated throughout school life. When they are broken, it is no trivial matter. There must be some form of consequence which is not to say that exceptions should never be permitted, only that they must be exceptional.

Rules are a form of routine and the difference is that they are explicit, codified and formal. Typically, their adherence or rejection are attached to some form of formal or informal school consequence, which will be shared and agreed through school policy. Rules are a reliable way of ensuring that conduct is communally understood. They should be designed for the benefit of the many and the few, for example, they should have maximum utility as well as promoting the rights of the individual. They help students to learn, keep them safe, and feel secure. They assist staff every lesson, every day.

Not everything forbidden must be governed by a rule, and rules cannot cover everything. But a core set of rules creates a skeleton for good conduct in a communal space where the definition of acceptable behaviour can often be in dispute.

Many schools have rules, but do not adhere to them. Some schools have bad rules. Some prefer to believe that schools do not need them. All three of these approaches should be avoided. Schools should have as few or many rules as they need. Older students with a clear understanding of how to behave may require less structure and guidance, for example, but no less or more than that.

There are no perfect lists of rules. School leaders must work out which rules are the most important to their own school context. Schools only starting to improve their behaviour may need to design extensive rules with breadth, depth and detail in order to facilitate order and the creation of routine. Other schools with less challenging intakes may find fewer rules are not only acceptable, but necessary. Rules can neatly encapsulate values, but cultures are exhibited in complex and subtle ways, and rules are often too inflexible or uncomprehensive to direct every possible scenario. This is where character becomes a useful concept.

Particularly in the primary school context, students are encouraged to be a certain type of person. The 'ideal school student'. The qualities expected of these students frequently revolve around being kind, brave, hard-working and polite. In some primary schools this is demonstrated by such messages as 'at school we have kind hands'.

Pupils with SEND

It is important not to sanction behaviour when help would be a more appropriate response – sometimes behaviours are an enactment of an inability to cope in a circumstance and often in the classroom this can be down to learning challenge and an inability to complete the work set (or a longstanding belief that there is no point in trying because the work is too challenging). Failure to provide support in these circumstances is simply punishment without scaffolding a way to better behaviour.

Many students struggle to meet key school behaviour milestones for reasons connected to an identified SEND and as much assistance as possible should be given to these students to do so. In particular, where a student has a disability that affects their behaviour, the school must make reasonable adjustments. To use an example previously quoted by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, if a school has a policy that if a pupil breaks the school rules on three occasions he or she will automatically be given a detention. Their legal duties over equality will be relevant. Some disabled students, such as those with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autistic spectrum disorders or learning difficulties, are much more likely to break the school rules than other students. Rigid application of this policy would be likely to amount to indirect disability discrimination because, where a reasonable adjustment has not been made, a school will find it very difficult to justify the treatment as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. However, schools must still always aim high. A school should do as much as possible to demonstrate high expectations of all students, and to scaffold the best behaviour that a student is capable of, otherwise there is a risk that some students with SEND will suffer from the poverty of low expectations. Schools must be careful to publicly and consistently apply consequences to students' actions. If a student misbehaves and no response follows, the student is encouraged to assume that the school does not mind. Worse, there is a possibility that the student will explore greater misbehaviour.

At all times, the school should scaffold ways towards better behaviour for students as far as they are capable. It is unacceptable to accept misbehaviour from any student who is capable of modifying their actions, and the best schools look for ways to equip students with better skills, habits and qualities no matter their circumstances. Compassion, high expectations and wisdom must be carefully blended to decide where this point lies for students with SEND.

Consequences are a conversation. The school culture's reply to the actions of the individual. That reply can either be to permit, to prohibit and discourage, or to encourage and praise. Without consequences, this conversation between the students' behaviour and the school's culture is lost.

The simplest and often most misunderstood method of communicating the concept that actions have consequences, is through sanctions and rewards.

Sanctions and rewards

All schools should have a clear and clearly communicated policy on consequences, what they are, how they are incurred and avoided. **Most importantly, they must be used consistently, across the whole community. The absence of this consistency is one of the key factors in the failure of a school behaviour policy to sustain or support good behaviour.** Policies are only as real as their demonstration in practice. A policy that is frequently ignored is one that will never succeed.

The reliability of the school system is a key factor in its success. This does not mean that no exceptions can be made (particularly when there is good reason, such as an identified SEND), but that exceptions must be exceptional, with good reason, and coherent with other exceptions.

Sanctions need not be severe, as Bill Rogers states, their 'certainty is more important than their severity'. Rewards need not be material. In many circumstances, proportionate, sincere recognition of the student's achievement is the most valuable reward available. Intrinsic rewards to good behaviour (better learning, the value of the subject in itself) should be prioritised in order to avoid 'reward fatigue' where students become desensitised to benefits. External indicators of intrinsic success can be powerful motivators, and reinforce existing norms, for example, prize ceremonies, used judiciously.

Internal Inclusion Units

The most successful schools value every student can make ambitious efforts to include children in mainstream lessons whenever possible. However, the mainstream classroom is not always the best space for all problems to be addressed and needs to be met.

It is challenging for mainstream classroom teacher to cope with the differing, challenging needs of multiple children in the classroom. Once all available strategies have been exhausted, it can be necessary and in the student's best interests to be somewhere their needs and behaviour can be provided for.

If it is necessary to remove a pupil from the classroom it shouldn't be seen as a failure but as a positive solution so that the teacher can continue to deliver lessons to the rest of the pupils in the class.

Removal can be temporary or for a more extended periods of time. If the removal is due to poor behaviour, then consequence systems must be used. Schools should consider if the pupil needs more extended support.

What happens next is crucial. The response must be appropriate, fair and targeted at helping the pupil improve their behaviour. This might mean time spent elsewhere in the school, away from their peers, being instructed and supported by a variety of trained staff. In cases of extreme misbehaviour, they may need to be excluded externally from the school on a fixed term or permanent basis.

Exclusions

Exclusions are not a necessary evil. If they are necessary, they are not evil, and the belief that they are is a limiting one. They can be an important part of a healthy school system, demonstrating that even tolerant supportive communities have red lines, and terminal destinations when all else has been tried, or an acceptance that some students will need the level or support provided by specialist settings.

Punitive exclusions are a last resort. Every school should aspire to their extinction, but by making their use unnecessary rather than by simply refusing to use them. When they are required, they should be used. Inspections must not unfairly deter schools from meaningfully using exclusions by treating their existence as an exclusively negative strategy. It is important to examine the patterns of exclusion carefully, and to consider the

context of exclusions in order to understand how appropriate they are. In some schools, a temporary, high exclusion rate may be a sign of effective leadership, not weak or over-punitive.

All students have a right to learn. This means that if a student is making it impossible for a teacher to teach or students to learn, and in-class strategies have been attempted, they must be removed from the lesson temporarily until the situation can be resolved in some way.

A restorative meeting or conversation to set the terms of reintegration should follow fixed term exclusions (FTEs) or even temporary removals. FTEs must lead to meaningful discussions about how to avoid recidivism, and to unpack problems that may provide context to misbehaviour.

Exclusions should, wherever possible, lead to meaningful educational experiences within, or as an adjunct to, mainstream schooling. Every school should consider investing in inclusion facilities that separate (as far as possible) students attending for disciplinary reasons, from those attending for remedial, restorative or re-integrative reasons.

Permanent exclusions are a necessary part of a functional national and local school system. However, every effort must be made to retain and amend such students' behaviour before that happens. There is additional strain on the system if some schools attempt to retain and reintegrate pupils while other schools do not. Some schools exclude too quickly in order to improve their examination results and remove the need to deal with the challenging behaviour. But this benefit to them comes at the expense of other schools that have to admit disproportionate numbers of very challenging students. It also fails to support the excluded pupil.

To reiterate: schools with highly successful systems of behaviour make every effort to support all of their students, even the most challenging ones. This attitude permeates their whole school approach, and no students are seen as less valuable than another. Where permanent exclusions happen it is because the school has exhausted all other options, and can no longer cope with the extremity of behaviour, meet the student's needs, or guarantee the safe learning environment in the school for other students and staff.

While excessive levels of exclusion might appear to offer a short-term improvement in school results and culture, they are ultimately corrosive as a long term or primary strategy. This is because they indicate an instrumental approach to student behaviour that treats students as a means to an end, as a credit or debit to the school balance. This report argues that schools have a greater purpose than their summative data.

In summary, exclusions must be only used when they are needed. This means they must be used when all else has failed, and not before.

Creating the culture

There are many ways that a school's culture can be publicly conveyed. These serve as a visible reminder that the school has a shared identity with shared values. They are also an opportunity to usefully instruct or redirect students towards positive social habits.

Assemblies

Core school values can be reinforced both implicitly (through speaker & topic choices, rewards and reminders) and explicitly (making direct reference to school rules). Use praise and direction in equal measure. If assemblies are varied with different speakers and are given high priority in terms of staffing and precision, they can be a valuable adjunct and scaffold of the whole school life.

The use of routines such as clear routines with rigour, timings, entrance and exit procedures, they are an excellent way of reinforcing expectation and routine as well as demonstrating to pupils that as a school community, behaviour expectations are carried out in all areas of school life, not just in the classrooms!

Wall Displays

Wall displays can send a powerful message to pupils and staff. Of particular importance is the celebration of achievement through school awards, pupil certificates and work of the highest standard as well as any letters of praise from parents of community leaders in order that the public perception that the school portrays of itself is a positive one.

Uniforms

Uniform can be an effective level of cultural change but uniforms by themselves do not have the power to modify behaviour. When they're used to good effect, they help to instil a sense of communal identity by communicating a sense of self-pride and pride in their institutional community. If a school does not reliably or routinely insist on adherence to their uniform policy, then there is little to recommend having a uniform policy in place. It can associate the school culture with low standards, inconsistency and exemplify a chaotic way that other aspects of the school are run. If uniform rules do not need to be followed, why follow any other rule?

Stationery/Equipment

A lack of appropriate materials is an impediment to learning. The best habit is to have all items to hand whenever needed. Habituating pupils to this routine expectation prevents many misbehaviours and conflicts before they occur.

In schools with a positive culture, a lack of equipment provokes a consequence (in the best schools, equipment is available to buy inexpensively). In some schools, missing equipment is provided during lessons and its absence dealt with later.

Coming to school with the right equipment to hand is a life-skill and good preparation for adulthood. It should be exemplified by staff who are fully prepared for each lesson and ensure that learning is not disrupted in order to gather or organise resources.

Using premises to support behaviour

It is beneficial to the school community to have somewhere where pupils who are presenting temporarily with challenging behaviour to be housed safely, quickly and without fuss. Such an area can provide a cooling-off period after emotional incidents, can act as a temporary way of separating students presenting disruptive behaviour, as part of the school's sanction process. They send a clear signal to the pupils that anti-social or destructive behaviour will not be taken lightly by the school.

These areas need to be appropriately staffed in order to assist the school's aim to reintegrate the pupil back into mainstream classrooms.

Locational, physical inclusion without strategies to create social inclusion (returning a pupil to a classroom after a serious behavioural incident without any reintegration process) is a punishment to all parties and the school community. Conversely, exclusion without an attempt at remedy is an abdication of the school's duty to the individual pupil.

Attendance and punctuality

Attendance and punctuality are an important part of good behaviour. Pupils who miss valuable time in lessons fall further behind and become more disengaged from the work of the class which in turn encourages misbehaviour. In successful schools, the expectation should be 100% attendance and 100% punctuality. This near-impossible goal can be embedded as an aspirational norm. Best practice would suggest that monitoring and tracking in real-time rather than retrospectively has more benefits as it allows an immediate reaction to the absence and swift intervention to ensure that the school's expectation is more closely adhered to.

Use of technology

The best schools have very close controls on the use of technology during lessons and use it only when there is a real justification for it. They also have very clear guidelines for pupils using their own devices during the school

day and impose a 'no visibility' policy. They appreciate the irresistible distraction that smartphones can provide and have carefully weighed up the benefits and costs of allowing their use during school hours.

Maintaining the culture

Once routines, habits and expectations have been conveyed and embedded, it is necessary to continually patrol these expectations and aspirations. They will not sustain themselves without conscious and persistent maintenance. As Charlie Taylor said, *"Schools need to be thinking about improving behaviour when things are going well, not only when there are problems to fix."*

Only consistently high expectations have long-term impact. And if school rules are not all consistently enforced, pupils quickly learn the difference between the boundaries that are supposed to exist and those that actually exist. It needs to be the expectation that **all** pupils meet the expectation **all** of the time. Anyone not meeting the expected standard must expect an intervention of form from a member of staff and any member of staff not maintaining these boundaries must be challenged, retrained or otherwise engaged to aim more closely to the standards expected.

School rules and values must be lived, explicitly, constantly in every aspect of school life – in corridors, in the playground, on trips, with visitors, in games, on the way to school, at assemblies etc.

The message that everyone is responsible for behaviour must be repeated and transmitted to all members of the school community very regularly.

The leadership team and the headteacher need to exemplify and embody the values of the school at all times, without complaint and with a missionary zeal. They must be extremely visible as their presence is an essential component of building and maintaining the learning culture.

CPD

While 'front-loading' staff training for behaviour is helpful, it must be a continual process through their career and teachers should be able to consistently display the ability to manage rooms well. Robust and effective CPD enables teachers (and consequently pupils) to believe that they are capable of more than they previously thought possible.

This CPD does not always need to be external training days of INSETs. It is a fluid continuum with endless learning opportunities.

Schools need to focus far more on holding staff to account for the way they direct their classrooms. Teachers displaying poor judgement should receive extended, targeted support that is aimed at raising their skills rather than simply sanctioning them. However, teachers that refuse to engage with the school's ethos need to be firmly directed. Accountability needs to be held at all levels of the school system in order that schools are coherent, consistent and stronger than previously. Headteachers should give consideration to whether failure to comply with the behaviour policies is a result of unreasonable workload issues or because the policies themselves are too time-consuming to execute effectively.

The teacher standards linked to behaviour are listed in Appendix 2 of this document.

Sharing good practice between schools

Schools need to be less insular and headteachers are encouraged to observe and copy good practice that they see effectively implemented in other schools as long as they think the strategies are portable and give due consideration to the impact they can have and the most effective implementation in their school and do not attempt to copy them wholesale.

Parents, families and the community

Part of the route to a successful school lies in their strong links with parents, local community, local business and neighbouring schools. This success is driven by good communication between senior leaders and each of these groups and means that members of the local community can get access to senior leaders relatively easily. It also means that senior leaders need to be visible with pupils when they are off-site at the beginning and end of the school day, ensuring that pupils conduct themselves in an appropriate way at all times and are respectful of community members and their businesses and homes.

An important function of the school is to encourage pupils to see their behaviour existing within the community, having an impact and mattering to others. This is an important social lesson, creates valuable goodwill and encourages parents and pupils to feel a sense of pride in school and community membership.

Home-school communication should be fast, efficient and given high importance. Using multiple layers for home communication (social media, app, email, text message) means that messages can get home to parents rapidly and in a way that allows parents to choose the platform on which they engage with the school. Good schools ensure that they make positive communication with parents as well as communication in negative circumstances and ensure that parents are updated about school life.

Obstacles to developing cultures of good behaviour and how to overcome them

Below are a list of some of the most common obstacles to creating a culture of good behaviour. It is important that schools do not lose heart or purpose when they face an obstacle and that they consider the changes that they can make in order that the culture is created or maintained.

- lack of clarity of vision
- poor communication of that vision to staff or students
- demonstrating values or routines contrary to the stated ones
- lack of perspective, considering low standards to be high
- inadequate orientation for new staff or students
- staff over burdened by workload, unable to plan for effective behaviour
- unsuitably skilled staff in charge of pivotal formal roles
- remote, unavailable, or occupied leadership
- inconsistency between staff and departments
- unfair consequence systems that punish industry or reward poor conduct
- staff unable or unwilling to promote the school routines
- lack of support for staff to promote the school routines

It is possible to be too precise or too detailed when setting out the school's vision. Detail must always be matched by clarity and consideration should always be given to whether measures are over-burdensome or time-consuming and therefore too much for staff to implement in addition to all of the other things that they have to manage.

There is a virtuous mean in every strategy, a point where the intervention or strategy is applied to the correct degree, at the right time, for the right duration. Establishing where this is, is a core responsibility of leadership.

Furthermore, in some schools where behaviour is poor, the following factors can have a significant relationship to the school's lack of success:

- **Limiting beliefs.** The belief that students cannot improve, or achieve, because of their circumstances.
- **Inadequate understanding.** School expectations are not been made concrete, demonstrated clearly, or repeated often enough.
- **Lack of skills.** Having insufficient skill bases in behaviour management to effectively maintain consistency of training. Additionally, having inappropriate staff in charge of behaviour, for at least one of the two reasons given above. Executing a behaviour programme is a highly skilled and difficult role, and should not be assigned to staff without the experience, character or skills to deliver it.

- **Poorly calibrated expectation.** It is necessary for leaders to step out of one's context and observe schools with similar contexts but better behaviour, in order to re-assess what is possible in their own circumstances.
- **Lack of resources.** Additionally, there was general agreement among school leaders surveyed that there is a resourcing issue for some schools with a disproportionate numbers of the most challenging students. Even ambitious and skilled school leaders can only do so much without funding, premises and suitably trained staff.

Self-auditing

Where capacity exists, it is recommended that schools undergo some form of self-inspection of audit in order to ascertain developmental needs. This will allow critical reflection by skilled people in order to remedy issues. The problem arises when there is a lack of local capacity to do this and this could be a factor for why schools experience problems in the first instance. Schools should be able to rely on the LA or on sharing practice with partner schools, members of multi-academy trusts and other clusters.

Response to the challenges

Awareness of these obstacles is crucial. If leaders rely on only their own instincts, or experiences, it is possible to lack perspective on how the school's behaviour compares with other similar schools. Some strategies to overcome this could be:

Import experience. Visiting other schools, engaging new members of staff, participating in professional social media, can all be useful ways to revisit the parameters of one's own expectations.

Staff survey. A non-judgmental, low-stakes, anonymous survey of staff and students about their views on behaviour can be a sobering and powerful reconnection with the cultural landscape of the school, experienced by those who inhabit it.

Re-prioritise behaviour as a whole-school ambition. Establish that behaviour is one of the school's key progress targets, and design success milestones across the whole school year in every aspect of planning. This helps to refocus minds on its promotion. Re-visiting the school's vision of what a successful culture looks like on a regular basis, should be a key task of leadership.

Ensure workload permits core staff functions. If staff do not have time to monitor and follow up on behavioural incidents, then they will not, or will not do so as efficiently as they should. It is of utmost importance that school leaders design systems of practice that free staff to perform their roles. When adding an additional burden to a member of staff's tasks, ask which tasks can now be safely deprioritised to free time. Ask if the new task is worth the loss of time available to staff for other matters as a result.

The government responded to the recommendation made in this report in March 2017. The full document can be found [here](#). It is replicated as an appendix to this document.



Rt Hon Justine Greening MP
Secretary of State

Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, Westminster, London, SW1P 3BT
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus

24 March 2017

Dear Tom

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your review of behaviour in schools, *Creating a culture: how school leaders can optimise behaviour*, which focuses on school leadership, culture and ethos.

This report can help make a real difference to school leaders, and to children. I know the report draws on the experience of the many school leaders and experts who have assisted you during the review.

As you are aware this government wants a country that works for everyone, not just the privileged few. Just as we need a world-class education system that works for everyone.

My department has already made progress in empowering teachers to tackle bad behaviour and we know from teachers themselves, that this has been very welcome and long overdue. We have done this by strengthening teachers' powers to tackle disruptive behaviour, making clear teachers can use reasonable force to maintain behaviour, extending their searching powers and allowing teachers to impose same-day detention. In relation to exclusions, we have also introduced a system of independent review panels that strikes a balance between providing parents an avenue for review, and putting the final decision about exclusions with the school.

Your report highlights the important role played by school leaders to create, maintain and sustain a school culture that encourages good behaviour. The practical advice set out in the report will no doubt support school leaders in this regard. I welcome your recommendations and attach the government response in the annex to this letter. I am pleased to highlight the following areas of work my department is currently undertaking that address a number of your recommendations:

- It is our ambition to give schools control of AP budgets to enable them to commission AP for pupils who require it (including those who have been permanently excluded) as well as accountability for pupils' educational outcomes whilst they are in AP. This will ensure that schools arrange AP in the best interests of the child and also incentivise schools to take earlier

action to address behaviour which could result in exclusion.

- Reforms to the National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) for school leadership which will be delivered from academic year 17/18. These include provision for aspirant and serving middle leaders, senior leaders, headteachers, and executive leaders. The new NPQ Content and Assessment Framework requires accredited providers to deliver evidence-based content that equips participants with the knowledge and skills they need to address behavioural issues in all pupils, including those with particular needs (e.g. SEND pupils).

In light of your recommendations, I have asked my officials to explore further the support we can provide to schools to manage the most challenging behaviours. One of the underlying causes of challenging behaviour can be mental health issues. We will therefore be reviewing our existing mental health and behaviour in schools guidance in parallel with developing the joint green paper on children and young people's mental health with the Department of Health. We will ensure it reflects the changing context resulting from the implementation of the SEND reforms and changes that are happening in children and young people's mental health following the *Future in Mind* report.

I understand that HM Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, will respond separately on the recommendations for Ofsted.

Once again, thank you for your extensive efforts in compiling this review, which I know school leaders will find beneficial as they endeavour to shape behaviour and a culture in their schools that maximises the learning experience of all pupils.

I am placing a copy of your report and copies of our correspondence in the libraries of both Houses of Parliament. I am also copying this letter to Amanda Spielman HMCI.



RT HON JUSTINE GREENING MP

Appendix 2

Teacher Standards relating to behaviour

1a
establish a safe and stimulating environment for pupils, rooted in mutual respect

1c
demonstrate consistently the positive attitudes, values and behaviour which are expected of pupils.

2e
demonstrate consistently the positive attitudes, values and behaviour which are expected of pupils.

4a
impart knowledge and develop understanding through effective use of lesson time

5a
know when and how to differentiate appropriately, using approaches which enable pupils to be taught effectively

5b
have a secure understanding of how a range of factors can inhibit pupils' ability to learn, and how best to overcome these

5d
have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs; those of high ability; those with English as an additional language; those with disabilities; and be able to use and evaluate distinctive teaching approaches to engage and support them.

Section 7

7. Manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe learning environment

- a) have clear rules and routines for behaviour in classrooms, and take responsibility for promoting good and courteous behaviour both in classrooms and around the school, in accordance with the school's behaviour policy
- b) have high expectations of behaviour, and establish a framework for discipline with a range of strategies, using praise, sanctions and rewards consistently and fairly
- c) manage classes effectively, using approaches which are appropriate to pupils' needs in order to involve and motivate them
- d) maintain good relationships with pupils, exercise appropriate authority, and act decisively when necessary.

8c
deploy support staff effectively

8e
communicate effectively with parents with regard to pupils' achievements and well-being.