

The Great School Framework

Creating a positive school culture with impactful behaviour for learning systems

Case study – Haileybury Turnford School

www.haileyburyturnford.com

Focus area

This case study focuses on establishing impactful behaviour for learning systems and practice. In 2016-17 behaviour across the school was not consistently good, as a result of varying and unreliable practice. The behaviour policy was not implemented consistently by all members of staff and across all departments. The most important change we had to make was to flip the culture of the school to an inclusive and positive one and establish a more positive ethos of adult-student relationships.

Rationale

Focusing on behaviour management and culture change was a priority and pertinent to our school improvement plan. Staff had not had any explicit professional development or training for behaviour management for over 10 years. A culture was developing across the school whereby students were given sanctions and there was a need for a stepped approach in dealing with behaviour issues. Behaviour was a barrier to learning and limited students' learning opportunities. A whole school approach to change the culture of the school was essential.

Background context

Staff were not consistent in their approach towards students. It was evident we needed to create a culture where we could embed positive relationships between staff and students. Student surveys indicated that 63% of students believed staff were inconsistent in dealing with behaviour incidents. Parent survey results revealed a perception that students who were badly behaved received greater recognition and reward than their quiet and conscientious peers. Many students said they did not always feel school was an inclusive and safe environment. Attendance was significantly below the national average. The attendance of the most vulnerable groups of students was significantly below average. Punctuality to lessons was a concern and the exclusion rate was significantly higher than the national average.

A survey of students in Years 7-11 emphasised a requirement for a consistent approach and more positive and respectful relationships across the school. There needed to be a shift in the way some staff viewed students. This would encourage a more positive response from students and improve their behaviour and sense of pride in the school.

The planned approach

The school held a whole school staff training event, working with Pivotal Education (an external company specialising in leading behaviour change) in April 2017. The purpose of the initial training event was to establish an agreed whole staff behaviour blueprint as a collective agreement of how we would change the behaviour and culture of the school. Training staff was a key priority in leading and bringing about change.

The Vice Principal in charge of Behaviour and the Year Achievement Coordinator for Year 11 received intensive training in leading behaviour change across a school and co-led the initial INSET training day. The school-based trainers were essential for delivering further training to the whole

school and sustaining the planned approach. The Vice Principal was responsible for developing, leading and embedding the planned two-year behaviour strategy across the school.

We agreed a whole staff approach when dealing with behaviour issues. Our approach initially focused on simple steps. The first step involved defining the change we wanted to see. The change started with altering adult behaviour. The first priority was to remain calm and consistent when dealing with student behaviour issues.

As a result of the INSET day we agreed on certain visible adult consistencies:

- We would smile, meet and greet our students prior to each lesson and be visibly present to welcome students at the door of the classroom at the beginning of each lesson
- We agreed to praise students in public and reprimand students in private
- We agreed to have a formal and orderly 'end and send' to each lesson.

There were a number of issues to fix across the school. However, at the start of our journey we targeted one important issue: punctuality to lessons. Setting a 30-day pledge, a strategy to deal with student punctuality to lessons was agreed. The plan to address this issue was shared with all students, parents and staff to ensure clarity around how the process would work. The plan involves all teaching staff agreeing to positively meet, greet and seat every individual student on arrival to the lesson. This means staff are visibly present at the door of their classroom prior to students arriving. Teaching staff ensure a starter activity is either handed to the student on arrival to the lesson, or an activity is clearly displayed on the white board and the expectation is for students to start this immediately upon arrival to the lesson. Seating plans are compulsory for all students in all classes. If a student arrives late to a lesson, the student understands they will incur a 15-minute payback at the end of the day for each lesson they are late to. The student's tutor and parents are notified every time a student arrives late to a lesson.

Often, when a new approach is adopted, there can be a level of trepidation and concern about whether the plan will work and how it will be sustained. It was imperative that leaders remained optimistic and reassured colleagues that our united approach would be successful. It was important for senior leaders to be visible in their leadership, for example being visible during transition times as this showed commitment and support to our collective mission.

Middle leaders played an important role in modelling, leading and embedding the initiative. With a collective effort, student punctuality to lessons improved significantly. The key to the success of the strategy was the continued and consistent practice from all staff. This was the first step in changing and bringing about a positive culture.

Led by the Vice Principal and Year 11 Achievement Coordinator, staff received regular behaviour management support, to help in creating and sustaining a positive, supportive and safe environment for all. The school's new approach to behaviour encourages students to develop positive relationships with staff and each other and develop self-discipline.

The next step was to focus on developing the relationships between adults and students. Using strategies from our Pivotal training we focused on developing calm, consistent adult behaviour, establishing positive relationships between students and staff. As a result of whole school staff training, we simplified our behaviour and learning management procedures, reducing them to one side of A4 paper. We agreed 5 Absolute Consistencies in Adult Behaviour:

1. Model positive behaviours.
2. Smile, meet and greet at the door with 'Ready, Respectful, Safe' displayed and taught.
3. Do not shout at students.
4. Praise in public and reprimand in private.

5. Follow up every time and engage in reflective dialogue with students.

Sanctions now have a learning focus, build relationships and show students how to take responsibility. 'Payback' has replaced detention. Restorative approaches are encouraged and supported. If a student receives a sanction for a serious incident, the student will attend an isolation room for the rest of the lesson and will attend an after school 'Payback' on the same day as the incident. Staff will personally follow up every time and engage in reflective dialogue with the student to re-build and restore the student-teacher relationship and re-set the boundaries and expectations for the next lesson.

Our behaviour framework places emphasis on developing positive relationships whilst maintaining high expectations of students in order to create a calm and productive culture, ensuring that effective learning takes place.

A strong focus is placed on recognising students who deserve recognition and reward for making the right behaviour choices and going above and beyond through focusing on giving positive attention to students who behaved as we expected and followed our minimum expectations of being Ready, Respectful and Safe. Teaching staff and classroom-based support staff are asked to make three positive phone calls home per week. Post cards and subject certificates recognising student work going above and beyond are given out publicly, during assemblies. Teachers recommend students who have gone above and beyond to sign the Principal's Book. Students are recommended by staff to receive rewards given at a public celebratory Rewards Evening which recognise the achievements of many of our students.

Impact

We have effectively raised our expectations for our students' behaviour and conduct. These expectations are now commonly understood and applied consistently and fairly. This is reflected in the majority of our students displaying positive behaviour and conduct. Staff make sure that students follow appropriate routines.

Through introducing a whole school initiative, there is a common understanding of our Behaviour & Discipline Policy, resulting in improved behaviour. Behaviour logs demonstrate a reduction in the number of fixed term exclusions by 52% in 2019-20 when compared with 2018-19. Serious behavioural incidents have reduced by 18%. Low level incidents have reduced by 20%. In recent school visits, external visitors have commented that lessons are calm and purposeful and the school environment is inviting. No low-level disruption was seen during a recent external visit to the school and students, including those with SEND, were viewed as being committed to their learning. An external visitor recently observed that students were polite, respectful and talking about their learning with some confidence. She also commented on the positive environment around school, including at lesson changeovers.

Our leaders, staff and students have created a positive environment where bullying is not tolerated. If bullying, aggression, discrimination and derogatory language occur, they are dealt with quickly and effectively. There is demonstrable improvement in the behaviour and attendance of our students who have particular needs. For example, the attendance of those eligible for pupil premium funding rose by over 1% to 93.15% in 2019-20 compared to 2018-19. Fixed term exclusions for disadvantaged students have reduced by 82%.

Our students' attitudes to their education are now, in the main, positive. A significant and growing majority of students are committed to their learning, know how to study effectively, are resilient to setbacks and take pride in their achievements.

Our students have good attendance, come to school on time and are punctual to lessons. Overall attendance is at 94.4% (92.1% for those eligible for pupil premium funding). Persistent absence is

at 13% and has declined rapidly in the past 18 months. Fixed term and internal exclusions are now used appropriately and sparingly. We reintegrate excluded students on their return and manage their behaviour effectively. Permanent exclusions are used only as a last resort. Fixed term exclusions have dropped by 52% from 2018-19. Repeat fixed term exclusions have dropped significantly to 2%.

Relationships among our students and staff reflect a positive and respectful culture; students are safe and they feel safe. In a recent student survey, 96% of students questioned said they felt safe in school at all times. In February 2020 100% of Year 7 parents surveyed stated their child felt safe at school.

Next steps

To build upon our successes and to continue to reduce the number of low-level behaviour incidents for all students, we need to ensure absolute consistency of application of the Behaviour & Discipline Policy amongst all staff. We also aim to develop capacity and expertise within our middle leaders to train, support and mentor colleagues in sustaining our approach in creating an inclusive and safe environment for all.