Suggested Behaviour Management Strategies

Everyone has their own range of strategies and styles of managing behaviour of pupils; however, it is sometimes worth reviewing the effectiveness of these strategies and also adding some, perhaps forgotten ones, to your list.

It is also quite easy to fall into the trap of using, or attempting to use, strategies which either do not work, or have long ago lost their impact.

A typical example of this is the school that uses detentions as a strategy. When staff were asked if they used the strategy, the reply was a very firm: 'Yes!' During one week a member of staff issued 17 detentions to a variety of pupils. All detentions were logged, parents were informed, rooms were allocated and staff were scheduled for supervision. By the end of the following week, only five of the pupils had actually turned up for their detentions, which then led to further actions and more staff time being used but no change in the day-to-day behaviour of the named pupils. In fact, the message that some pupils had not turned up for detention had a major impact on the behaviour of others!

Detention is a perfectly acceptable response to some behaviours, but if it is failing to change behaviour and is causing stress and more work for staff, it's time to review, modify or dispense with this approach.

Use the "reminders" list of the top 20 strategies to review your own techniques and school procedures. Consider adding some of your own.

Practical Tips:

1. Voice matching:
   Your voice should be at the volume and intonation you expect from the pupil. A loud and aggressive voice will usually result in a loud and aggressive response.

2. Self-calm:
   Practice all your self-calming skills. Remember that the first person who needs to calm down in a confrontation is you!

3. Move in:
   If you are speaking to an individual pupil, don't shout across the room or remain rooted behind your desk; move in. Be aware of your speed of approach!

4. Move out:
   Once you have spoken to the pupil, the temptation is to remain close by, waiting for compliance. You are far more likely to see success if you move away, expecting compliance. This enables the pupil to make a good choice without the stress of your presence.

5. Personal space:
   For most of us, personal space is approximately the radius of an outstretched arm; any further away, and it is difficult to work out who is being spoken to. Any closer and you begin to invade intimate space. If you need to be that close, consider standing slightly sideways and avoid a confrontational manner.

6. Hurdle help:
   Use positive posters as rule reminders to help pupils overcome the hurdles that prevent them from complying with rules and expectations.

7. Positive ethos:
Set a positive ethos from the outset. Be on time, be prepared and concentrate initially on the pupils who are on-task and complying with guidelines.

8. Proximity:
This is similar to personal space — remember that simply standing near the off-task pupil will be sufficient to make them consider their behaviour.

9. Proximity praise:
Rather than giving random praise, spot the off-task pupil and make sure you praise the pupil nearby who is on task and complying. This is far more positive than simply noting the wrong behaviour.

10. Non-verbal language:
Be aware that more than 60% of all communication is non-verbal. What is your body language saying?

11. Antiseptic bounce:
This is a classic strategy. Send the target pupil to a colleague with a note or message. The note says, 'Tell (pupil's name) "Well done" and send him or her back!' The pupil has been removed from the problem situation, received praise and has returned in a fresh state of mind.

12. Meet and greet:
Some pupils are simply not in the right frame of mind at the start of the day or the lesson. Set up a system to meet and greet and settle pupils.

13. Track behaviours:
It is vital that you have an accurate and objective system for tracking, monitoring and evaluating behaviour.

14. Refocus:
Don't be verbally misled by arguing pupils. Refocus them by using a statement of understanding (*Yes, I see, but that is not the point; you need to...*')

15. Broken record:
Avoid engaging in argument. Be prepared to repeat your instruction or direction up to three times (use the exact same wording) before raising the level of response

16. Time out/Change seat:
A change of environment will often help to focus a pupil. Don't forget, the emphasis should be on *time*. Make sure you have a plan of how to reintegrate the pupil back into your teaching group.

17. Think sheet/Self-review:
A simple process to enable the pupil to reconsider their actions and to decide on a more appropriate course of action next time.

18. Rules/Rewards/Consequences:
Involve pupils in the development of rules.

19. Hierarchy of response:
Have at least five levels of response and remember that your role is to use the responses to keep the pupil at the lowest level possible; not to escalate the problem!

20. Communicate:
Make sure that you have systems in place to enable the sharing of information. It is easy to determine 'hot spots', problem lessons, personality clashes and how different adults perceive the pupil if information is shared.

The above represents only a small range of strategies, so continue to add your own and continually assess their effectiveness.