



## Managing Children's Behaviour

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The school ethos focuses on non-punitive means to manage and modify student behaviours. Due to the severe and often volatile nature of many students' social, emotional, and behavioural reactions to stimuli or anxiety, however, situations may arise that require immediate intervention to keep both staff and students safe.

The following methods, strategies or techniques are adopted, from time to time, to manage, promote and respond to behaviours at The Joseph Varga School.

This procedural statement is intended to be a practical guide (cf. ***Behaviour Management and Response***).

### **2.0. MANAGING BEHAVIOURS**

#### **2.1 PRE-EMPTIVE INTERVENTION:**

##### **2.1.1 Class charter**

This is generated by students and the teacher about how each will behave towards one another. Students also sign this and it can be referred to if situations arise whereby students are not behaving as has been agreed upon. Staff members in classrooms should ensure equity is maintained with regards to student access to teaching/learning, consequences, and privileges set within the class to limit issues of 'judicial' unfairness.

##### **2.1.2 Redirection**

Finding an activity the student can do and enjoys that will help him or her to change their focus away from the situation or anxiety which has promoted the undesirable behaviour. This may include asking the child to do a 'job', take a message, or it may be that they are asked to go and work with a teaching assistant on a 'quiet' task until they can re-engage with their peers or the classroom. The principal can discuss possible ideas with you.

##### **2.1.3 Student interests**

Should be utilized when planning individualised programs. Often when a skill is a focus then the content is negotiable e.g. in learning to write using a specific text-type, the steps and structure are prescribed, but the content can be based around children's interests.

#### **2.1.4 Novelty**

Often it is novel or unusual approaches that can key students into learning a concept or performing a task. This underpins the school's philosophy 'The Joy of Discovery'. This also requires classroom teachers to consider multi-modal approaches to the teaching and learning environment; not merely 'pencil to paper' activities.

#### **2.1.5 Understanding A Child's 'Triggers'**

Involves having read all available documentation on each child (each child has a blue folder in the office) in order to 'Minimize' situations which trigger behaviours. For example, in the case of a child that does not react well to 'change', the student can be 'pre-warned' about the impending change, to provide the opportunity to get used to 'change' or a situation that poses a basis for fear, anxiety, or frustration.

#### **2.1.6 POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT: Extrinsic vs. Intrinsic Motivation**

The school believes in helping students develop intrinsic motivation for learning rather than a focus on gaining a reward. Therefore, reward systems are not deemed as effective to increase positive attitudes towards a 'love of learning' unless in the case of child who is disengaged or exhibiting highly inappropriate behaviours, reward system should move from immediate to irregular reinforcement models i.e. as the desirable behaviour/s increase and behaviours become more habitual or intrinsic, token reinforcers are gradually withdrawn.

Effective feedback including 'feed forward' that focuses on how to improve a behaviour or skill i.e. praising aspects achieved and why they are effective, is considered essential to encouraging more intrinsic motivation.

It is also considered good practice for teachers to present 'success criteria' to students from which they will clearly know how and what will make their work/behaviour meet certain expectations.

### **2.2 REACTIVE INTERVENTION**

Despite our attempts and best efforts to ensure undesirable behaviours do not manifest in or outside of the classroom, many of the JVS students may behave inappropriately without staff being aware of what antecedents may have taken place e.g. the home context, interactions out of earshot of a teacher, cyber interaction outside of school etc. In these situations, the following approaches are recommended:

#### **2.2.1 Dialogue**

It is generally the better option to discuss a behaviour with a student away from their peers, to prevent any actions or comments by peers from further de-stabilizing the situation, and also helps the student to 'save face' i.e. minimizing their need to increase any oppositionality.

#### **2.2.2 Quiet Time**

Often dialogue attempted when a child is highly agitated or angry is ineffectual until they are able to process what is being said. For this reason, sitting somewhere within

view of the teacher, but by him or herself, can be an important first step. Teachers should also attempt to promote this as a strategy for students to self-determine/nominate the need for space rather than being pre-empted by the teacher.

### **2.2.3 Time-Out Task**

If a child is highly disruptive to other students, and refuses redirection, helping the student with their work, or modifying a task may prove ineffective, though a student may be asked to complete a task outside the class (yet still being supervised and monitored by the class teacher or another staff member), for a specified period of time. The child is then brought back to the class. If a teaching assistant or staff member is not available to supervise, then the student should be sent to the principal.

### **2.2.4 Peer-Negotiated Agreement**

In situations involving two students who are equally responsible for an argument or negativity towards one another, asking them to work out a solution to the problem themselves (i.e. after they have had time to 'cool down') and then signing an agreement to that effect, can be an important reference document for later use if similar situations arise. It also helps clarify what the difficulty is and how to prevent this in the future.

### **2.2.5 Restraint**

This is a last resort intervention by the teacher when there is a direct threat of violence towards another student, a staff member, or themselves. The focus is on keeping the student safe as they have lost the ability to regulate their emotions or behaviour (including rational thinking). All teachers are expected to attend an annual workshop on 'Child Protection/Duty of Care' in which non-punitive restraint procedures are modeled and practiced, so that the steps to ensure personal and student safety are fully understood.

There are several steps before a restraint should be considered (provided no actual violence has or is taking place):

1. Do not take any actions or words personally and remain calm.
2. Teachers should not move forward into a student's 'personal space' to reprimand or assert authority as this is seen as a challenge or threatening gesture, unless there is an eminent threat of violence or 'flight risk'.
3. Ask the student to remove themselves from the classroom and either sit in the hallway 'upstairs' (for a short 'cool off', or sit on the couch (downstairs) – in both cases the student is supervised.) The classroom teacher should inform a colleague so that the remaining students can be monitored. When the student is calm, dialogue may begin. A student who has threatened or committed violence may need to go home to ensure no repeat or retaliation takes place later in the day (the Principal or delegated authority will make this decision).
4. If a student refuses to leave, the teacher should take the remaining students out of the classroom and inform a colleague of the situation who can monitor the student from a distance, so that the classroom teacher can let the Principal know of the situation.
5. If an act of violence is threatened by a student, a student should be informed that they should leave the classroom/vicinity and that if they attempt to carry out

any act of violence towards another person, they will be escorted from the premises by staff (or police if they are physically large and would put staff at risk of injury). For younger students, they should be told that their arms and legs will be held to prevent them from harming another person (or themselves). The student is informed that a restraint will be necessary if they make any threats or movements suggesting an imminent threat to themselves, another child, staff member, or member of the community whilst in the care of the school.

6. For any high school student who is threatening or attempting to conduct physical violence against another person in the school, the child should be asked to leave the building. Should this be refused, the Incident Response Team should remove the student from the building and call a CODE RED that will initiate 'Lock Down' Procedures (*See Lock Down Procedures*).
7. Any situation where an implement or weapon is brandished with the intent to cause harm, should result in other children being removed from the immediate area/classroom. If a serious threat occurs, students are all asked to move into another classroom and a CODE RED Lockdown should be initiated (*See Lock Down Procedures*).
8. For students whose behaviour has escalated to the point they have 'locked in' to retaliation, pre-warning may not be an option as immediate intervention may be required by a staff member to protect others.

In all of the above scenarios, an incident report needs to be written out. The severity of the situation will determine whether an 'incident description' or a 'full report' will need to be completed. Where violence has been observed in the classroom by children, or a restraint has been required, the Principal must be directly informed by the classroom teacher (or staff member who observed the behaviour), and arrangements should be made to 'talk through' the situation with the appropriate parents/guardians. It is considered 'best practice' to inform parents early on of any ongoing undesirable behaviours (i.e. a trend) exhibited by a student. The use of classroom incident registers, duty incident registers, empirical evidence (recorded anecdotally), and incident reports, that do not include emotive or speculative statements or responses, should be employed to support any claims of inappropriate behaviours or trends.

**Please note that Corporal punishment in any form is against the law and is not condoned, promoted, or accepted in any form, context, on or off the school premises, or by any person associated with a child at JVS.**

**Related Policies and Procedures include Discipline, Behaviour Management & Response, Restraint Methods, Corporal Punishment.**

**Last Updated: 20 September 2013**