

# ECT Mentor session

Module 1: Enabling pupil learning

Week 3: Establishing the learning environment

## Session Elements



observe a  
colleague



discuss with a  
mentor



scripting



rehearsal

## Learning Intentions for this session

Your ECT will learn how to:

### Demonstrate consistently high behavioural expectations by:

- 1e. Creating a culture of respect and trust in the classroom that supports all pupils to succeed (e.g. by modelling the types of courteous behaviour expected of pupils).
- 1f. Teaching and rigorously maintaining clear behavioural expectations (e.g. for contributions, volume level and concentration).
- 1g. Applying rules, sanctions and rewards in line with school policy, escalating behaviour incidents as appropriate.
- 1h. Acknowledging and praising pupil effort and emphasizing progress being made.

### Develop a positive, predictable and safe environment for pupils by:

- 7a. Establishing a supportive and inclusive environment with a predictable system of reward and sanction in the classroom.
- 7b. Working alongside colleagues as part of a wider system of behaviour management (e.g. recognising responsibilities and understanding the right to

assistance and training from senior colleagues).

- 7c.** Giving manageable, specific and sequential instructions.
- 7d.** Checking pupils' understanding of instructions before a task begins.
- 7e.** Using consistent language and non-verbal signals for common classroom directions.
- 7f.** Using early and least-intrusive interventions as an initial response to low-level disruption.
- 7g.** Responding quickly to any behaviour or bullying that threatens emotional safety.

## Introduction

In their self-directed study this week, your mentee learned about strategies for establishing and maintaining the learning environment. This session builds on week 2 content and draws on the '*learn that...*' statements addressed there (1.1–1.5, 7.1–7.2).

In this session, you will support your ECT to observe a colleague's teaching and see, in action, some of the strategies discussed in this week's research and practice summary. You will reflect together on this observation and you will work with your ECT to script and rehearse a strategy of their own.

You might find it practical to split this session across a number of shorter meetings in this week. For example, the lesson observation ('Plan') may take place before you and your ECT meet (when you would begin with the 'Review' activity and then move on to 'Theory to Practice').

## Research and Practice Summary

This reading will help you understand some of the theory behind this week's topic.

We will start by introducing some of the key concepts (these are in bold). You will also see some suggestions of how to put these concepts into practice. **When using these concepts in your own practice you will need to take account of your pupils' characteristics, the context of your classroom and the nature of the material that you are teaching.**

### Behaviour in KS3 design technology

Toby teaches design technology and only teaches each of his Key Stage 3 classes once per week. Behaviour is especially important in design technology, both for pupils' learning and their safety.

Toby knows that setting and reinforcing consistently high behavioural expectations is important, but he lacks confidence about how to do this, especially as he does not see his classes very often. This makes it harder to establish effective relationships.

Toby asks a senior colleague, Muhammad, for advice. What strategies do you think Muhammad might suggest?

You saw last week how maintaining high expectations, particularly about behaviour, is important. This week you will further examine practical techniques that you can use to do this.

Demonstrating consistently high behavioural expectations can help you to create a positive, predictable and safe environment for pupils. Doing this will support pupils' overall school experience, improving their learning and reducing opportunities for bullying.



To consistently demonstrate high behavioural expectations, you should:

- **create a culture of respect and trust** – this can be achieved by doing lots of simple things well, such as actively modelling and reinforcing the courteous behaviour you expect pupils to show you and their peers. For instance, by respectfully listening to others' ideas and actively modelling how to do this and why it matters

- **teach and maintain your expectations** – explicitly teaching and reinforcing your expectations is important. Last week, you used the ‘clarify, model, practice, reinforce’ framework to establish routines. You could also apply this to your expectations about behaviour
- **use school policies** – schools typically have detailed policies and procedures, especially relating to rules, sanctions and rewards. Ensure that you understand and apply these policies consistently and fairly. This will support pupils to understand your high expectations, provide predictability and support your colleagues in using the same policies
- **acknowledge pupil effort and progress** – maintaining appropriate behaviour is harder for some pupils than others. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge and praise when pupils are making an effort and to try to link this to the progress pupils are making. For instance, ‘Lucy, well done for focusing and settling down to work quickly today. I can see how hard you’re trying to follow the rules. You’re getting faster at this, which means more time for your learning’

## Using school systems and colleagues for support

As Toby has limited time with each of his classes, it is harder for him to demonstrate and rigorously reinforce his high behavioural expectations. Muhammad suggested that it is particularly important for Toby to follow the school's policies closely, as this will help pupils more easily transfer what they already know about expectations of their behaviour to Toby's lessons.

Muhammad suggested that Toby spend some time using the 'clarify, model, practice, reinforce' framework to think about the behaviours that are particularly relevant to design technology. Muhammad worked with Toby to specify, script and rehearse important subject-specific behaviours about safety and listening to instructions, which dramatically improved behaviour and the climate for learning in Toby's lessons.

Muhammad also clarified key aspects of the school's behaviour policy with Toby and showed him some tips for ensuring that he followed through with sanctions and rewards using the school system. Muhammad explained that he made a note of behaviour 'events' in his planner after each lesson and then spent 10 minutes at the end of each day adding these to the school's information management system, so that his colleagues could understand and respond to patterns of behaviour for different pupils. Toby saw how this system could work for him and ensure that behaviour, positive and negative, was consistently followed up and reinforced.

Muhammad reassured Toby that it was his job to help him and it was not a sign of weakness for Toby to ask for help – it is part of being a professional to work collaboratively with colleagues. If Toby needed support, especially with managing disruptive pupils, he knew he could ask for assistance and training from senior colleagues.

Teachers have significant influence over the culture in their classrooms. To maximise learning and pupils' school experience, you should aim to create a positive, predictable and safe classroom environment. Predictability is especially important for pupils as it helps to reinforce your high expectations of behaviour. A key way of developing this predictability is to consistently apply rules, sanctions and rewards in line with your school's policy, and to escalate matters as appropriate. Fairness is an important part of predictability and it is something that pupils are acutely aware of, so focusing on it will help to ensure the legitimacy of your rules and expectations for behaviour.



To create a positive learning environment, you can:

- **be predictable** – schools use sanctions and rewards in many different ways to reinforce desirable behaviours. The success of any system will be determined by its implementation, and predictability is a key part of this. For instance, sanctions that are only enforced sometimes will be less effective than those that always, predictably, follow a certain behaviour. Being predictable helps to reinforce the school's high expectations of pupils
- **be aware** – awareness is important for preventing low-level disruption as well as for quickly managing bullying or other behaviours that threaten pupils' emotional safety. To maintain awareness, you should position yourself physically so that you can visually monitor the whole class even when speaking to an individual or small group, and frequently 'be seen looking' so that pupils know you are aware of what they are doing
- **be responsive** – responding early to low-level disruption usually helps to shut it down quickly. 'Least-intrusive' approaches – i.e. those which limit disruption to learning, including non-verbal signals – can be appropriate at this stage, such as pausing abruptly, moving physically closer to disruptive students, or looking at pupils to show that you know what they are doing and that it is not acceptable (the 'teacher glare')

### Responding early using the least-intrusive interventions

Muhammad invited Toby to come and see one of his own classes where he was working hard to reinforce positive behaviours. Toby watched intently as Muhammad explained a key learning point:

'Victorian society became incre...'

Muhammad paused abruptly – mid-word – and looked calmly and directly at two pupils who had begun to talk to each other. The pupils immediately stopped, refocused, and Muhammad resumed his explanation with minimal disruption to the whole class, having reinforced his high expectations of behaviour.

Toby noted how the abrupt pause instantly got the attention of the disruptive pupils with only minimal interruption to learning. Afterwards he reflected on what he had seen and asked himself, 'how can I use that approach?'

**Giving instructions** can be challenging for all teachers, as they need to ensure that all pupils understand what is expected of them. Fortunately, the way that instructions are given can ensure more pupils understand them the first time. If pupils misunderstand instructions, this will waste lesson time and can lead to disruptive behaviour. It can also leave pupils feeling excluded and, in some situations, pose a risk to pupils' safety.

Instructions given to pupils should be:

- **manageable** – pupils' working memory is limited, so it can help to give instructions both orally and visually. With practical tasks, for instance, you may include a written or visual representation of the method in addition to verbal instructions, which pupils can refer back to and check their understanding
- **sequential** – think about how you sequence instructions so that the right information is given at the right time. Where possible, providing instructions at the point they will be needed is useful. For instance, you can break up instructions for multi-phase activities so that instructions for later phases are only given once pupils have completed earlier phases
- **specific** – ensure pupils understand what exactly it is you expect of them. It can be helpful to consider at the planning stage how your instructions may be misinterpreted (i.e. 'what could go wrong here?'), and use this to provide the right level of specificity when teaching
- **check understanding** – after giving instructions, it can be helpful to briefly check that pupils understand by asking questions such as, 'what should you do if/when...?' This should be given higher priority in the case of complicated instructions and for pupils who frequently struggle to understand instructions
- **consistent** – there are some instructions that you will give often, such as getting the attention of a class to 'bring them back' from independent or group work. It can help to use consistent signals for this. For instance, you might use a specific phrase, a countdown or a non-verbal instruction such as raising your hand to gain attention

## Give better instructions

Giving clear instructions is a really essential part of Toby's job. After examining the evidence about clear instructions, Toby gave much more consideration to how he ensures all pupils understand what he expects.

Toby thought it was particularly important to give clear instructions when pupils were doing practical work, because of both the risks to safety and the potential for difficulty in regrouping and guiding the class as they moved around the workshop.

Toby decided to script out some instructions that he would give ahead of beginning practical work. As he often needed to give instructions like this, he decided having a consistent approach would be useful, and that he could adapt this approach to the context of each lesson. 'Victorian society became incre...'

**Thanks everyone [pause for silence]. Today we are going to [e.g. begin painting our birdhouses]. There are [e.g. three] stages to what you need to do. I'm now going to show you each of these stages, and you have a summary of the key steps showing on the whiteboard to help you along the way.**

**[Show and explain each stage clearly. Link to the summary on the whiteboard.] For example:**

- 1. clean your birdhouse to remove any dust so that this does not get stuck in the paint [why]. Use the same technique as you can see here [modelling]. Remember to be careful if your birdhouse has any delicate sections.**
- 2. prepare your workspace – [further detailed and clear instructions]**
- 3. begin the painting – [further detailed and clear instructions]**

**Okay, so that's what we're going to do. Before we begin I want to check we know what we need to do. It's important that we are all clear so that we can work on this task safely and effectively.**

**[Ask targeted questions to clarify key points from the instructions.] For example:**

- Vicky, what can people do to remind themselves if they get stuck?**
- Louise, why is it important to remove the dust before we paint?**
- Chris, what are the tricky bits of the task that you'll need to watch out for?**
- Finally, does anyone have any questions before we begin?**

By carefully structuring his explanations, and building in checking for pupils' understanding, Toby improved the quality of his explanations, which



maximised the time for safe learning. After thinking more about how to give instructions effectively, Toby devised the following questions to help:

- what are the key things pupils need to understand?
- what are the likely misinterpretations and how will I both avoid and check for these misunderstandings?
- should the instructions be given all at once, or will it help to phase them?

## Mentor Meeting Activities

Throughout the session, try to refer explicitly to the Learning Intentions, and encourage your mentee to record key points in their Learning Log. Tailor your use of the Theory to Practice activities below in response to the Review and Plan sections of this session.

### Review: 5 mins

- (1) Start this session by briefly following up the actions that the mentee set at the end of last week's session. Ask your mentee to summarise
  - a. what they did
  - b. the impact of this on pupil learning (including how they are evaluating this)
  - c. what they will do going forward to build on these actions
- (2) Clarify the Learning Intentions for this session with your mentee.

### Plan: 10 mins

**Observe a colleague** – arrange for your mentee to observe a colleague for 10 minutes as they demonstrate some of the strategies covered in this week's research and practice summary. Ask your mentee to make brief notes against the following prompts during the observation:

- What strategies does the teacher use to communicate and maintain their high expectations of pupils' behaviour? (e.g. for contributions, volume level and concentration)

- How do pupils respond to the teacher? Which strategies appear to be most effective in this classroom?
- What strategies does the teacher use to develop a positive, predictable and safe environment for pupils? (e.g. giving instructions, use of reward and sanction, verbal and non-verbal signals for common classroom directions, early and least-intrusive interventions, responding to negative behaviour or bullying)
- How does the teacher implement the reward and sanction policy of your school?

To support the impact of this activity you should:

- if possible, accompany your mentee for this observation, so that you can help them to make sense of what is observed
- consider carefully which colleague will offer the most fruitful learning experience for your mentee by modelling some of the strategies covered in this week's research and practice summary (this could be you if you feel you are best placed to do this)
- wherever possible, brief the colleague who is being observed about the focus of the observation, so that they can tell your mentee which would be the most useful part of the lesson to see

## Theory to Practice: 35 mins



### 1. Discussion with mentor

Discuss with your mentee what they saw in their observation and how this helps them to make sense of this week's research and practice summary.

You could address the following questions:

- how do the strategies in use reflect the good practice outlined in this week's research and practice summary?
- how do the strategies in use reflect the characteristics of the pupils, the context of the class and the content being taught?

- which strategies does your mentee already use in their own practice?
- what would your mentee like to add to or change in their own practice, having completed this observation?
- how do the strategies, sanctions and rewards observed reflect your school's behaviour policy?



## 2. Scripting

Drawing on your discussion in activity 1, work with your mentee to script the details of a strategy that your mentee would like to add to their practice. This should draw on the content of this week's research and practice summary.

To make this as useful as possible, address these points as you complete this activity:

- clarify explicitly the purpose of the strategy (e.g. gaining pupils' attention, giving clear instructions for a common routine in the classroom)
- be specific about whether this script is for use with all pupils, a specific pupil or group of pupils
- make use of examples provided in the research and practice summary, adapting these as required for your mentee's context and pupil characteristics
- include within the script specific language that your mentee could use (e.g. rather than noting 'I will use a standard routine for getting pupils' attention' you could note 'I will count down from 3 with positive actions for pupils, saying, '3...stop writing, 2...pens down, 1...show me that you're listening')



### 3. Rehearsal

Now work with your mentee to rehearse the strategy that has been scripted.

To support this process you can:

- play the part of a pupil and 'act back' appropriately to help your mentee rehearse the strategy
- give feedback on how well your mentee's rehearsal aligns with the script as planned in activity 2 (this could include non-verbal aspects as well as the words spoken)
- highlight aspects of strength in your mentee's performance, connecting these to this week's research and practice summary
- model aspects of the script to your mentee if this is helpful in sharpening their enactment of it
- repeat the rehearsal a few times until your mentee is confident that they are able to use this in their practice going forward

#### Next Steps: 5 mins

Agree with your mentee how they will now put their learning from this week's session(s) into practice in their teaching. Help your mentee to clarify:

1. the action(s) they will take and how these action(s) are expected to contribute to improved pupil learning
2. what success will 'look like' in relation to these action(s)
3. how they will evaluate their success in taking these action(s)

Note the date of your next mentor meeting, when you will check on your mentee's progress.