**Children are at school Children are at school to learn, not to behave**

Top tips on encouraging behaviour for learning that will revolutionise your teaching

What's good behaviour? Well, that's obvious isn't it? Good behaviour is sitting still, doing what you're told, speaking when you're spoken to and generally following instructions. And that's great, except for the fact that students are in school to learn, not to behave.

Ever heard of behaviour for learning? Most often, all that seems to mean is that students are being quiet and respectful so that the teacher is free to impart knowledge instead of trying to make them shut up and listen. Of course shutting up and listening is important and anyone who's ever had charge of a truly dysfunctional class knows how horrible an experience it can be.

To overcome this, you'll often see lists of classroom rules fastened to classroom walls. They usually contain some variant of the following:

I. Listen when others are talking

II. Follow directions

III. Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself

IV. Work quietly and do not disturb others

V. Show respect for school and personal property

VI. Work and play in a safe manner

These are great rules for instilling "good" behaviour. Students need to know that these things are important. But they've got nothing at all to do with the types of behaviour required for learning.

We're told that most behaviour issues can be solved by well-planned, stimulating lessons that engage students. Now, it's not that I think this is wrong, it's just that there is so much more to behaviour than occupying students' minds in an effort to make them behave. The need to make students behave can be used as justification for word searches and all sorts of other pointless wastes of time which keep students busy.

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It's no good bleating about "behaviour crises" if all you've got to offer is some rules to follow. Frankly, I wouldn't follow 'em. I'm a bugger for asking "Why?" which accounts for my personal struggle with recipe books: I always want to be given a reason why the onions have to be cooked for five minutes, or why the water has to be ice cold, or why you have to keep on stirring.

I'm interested in knowing the thinking behind these instructions and really struggle to follow them unless they're explained. Possibly the reason I'm bad at following recipes is also the reason why I enjoy teaching?

Robert Sylwester, Professor Emeritus of Education at the University of Oregon said, "Misguided teachers who constantly tell their pupils to sit down and be quiet imply a preference for working with a group of trees, not a classroom full of young people."

All too often we get good behaviour hopelessly confused with good behaviour for learning. Sitting still, following instructions and paying attention might look superficially like every classroom's holy grail but it's worth having a look at this list of good learning behaviours from the [Project for Enhancing Effective Learning](http://www.peelweb.org/index.cfm?resource=about) (PEEL).

1. Checks personal comprehension for instruction and material. Requests further information if needed. Tells the teacher what they don't understand

2. Seeks reasons for aspects of the work at hand.

3. Plans a general strategy before starting.

4. Anticipates and predicts possible outcomes.

5. Checks teacher's work for errors; offers corrections.

6. Offers or seeks links between: different activities and ideas; different topics or subjects; schoolwork and personal life

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7. Searches for weaknesses in their own understandings; checks the consistency of their explanations across different situations.

8. Suggests new activities and alternative procedures.

9. Challenges the text or an answer the teacher sanctions as correct.

10. Offers ideas, new insights and alternative explanation

11. Justifies opinions.

12. Reacts and refers to comments of other students.

How often do you see these behaviours encouraged in lessons? How important are they in your classroom? Try putting them up as a wall display to remind them (and you) exactly what good behaviour for learning looks like.

**What are learning behaviours and why are they important**?

We are developing children's ability to discuss their learning and helping them develop a language to talk about their own learning. The children in school today are going to be facing huge challenges in the wider world and we are working with them to develop skills and attitudes that will help them be successful in the wider world. In consultation with the children we have decided to work with the children to develop the following learning behaviours: -

**Resilience** - We want to see children learning from mistakes and seeing that having to rethink an aspect of their learning as a way to impove, resilience is about picking themselves up after a setback and being able to give it another go

**Risk Taking -** This is about about children questioning and asking "What if...?" and "What shall we try now?" - it is also about children pushing themselves to try new things and knowing that learning is sometimes uncomfortable!

**Thinking -** We are looking for children to be seen thinking and considering, valuing their own ideas and believing that they have the strategy to solve problems.

**Respect** - Children treating others as they wish to be treated is the core belief around this learning behaviour, this is mirrored in the way they speak to adults and adults speak to them. We want children to believe it is okay to think differently and it is fine to change your opinion.

**Reflection** - We want to see children actively evaluating their work and developing the ability to believe that they can always improve whilst taking a pride in their own and others work and achievements.

**Independence** - We wish children to believe that they can help themselves when they are stuck, but also know when and who to ask for help. This is also about children wanting to find out for themselves and being skilled to be able to do so.

**Active/motivation** - This is for children to develop the belief that learning is for them and they have a responsibility for their own achievements, it is also about valuing effort and taking the initiative for their own learning.

**Creativity** - This is an area where we believe children are naturally adept, they can be creative in many ways not just art and drama, but creativity in all areas of the curriculum including the sciences. It is also about linking with other areas of learning behaviours especially risk taking.