

## Advice Sheet 5

### **BEHAVIOUR CONTRACTS**

It is a good idea to devise a **Class Behaviour Agreement** (see Advice Sheet 12; *Class Behaviour Agreements*) with all pupils in a class. This should specify the basic class rules and routines, the consequences that will accrue from abiding by these rules and routines, and the consequences for pupils on the occasions when these rules and routines are not followed. It could also specify the types of supports available to pupils who have difficulty in complying with the class rules and routines (e.g. how to ask for help, visual reminders, etc.)

For some pupils, following the generic Class Behaviour Agreement may be extremely difficult. This may apply to the small minority of pupils who display much more serious challenging behaviour by comparison with their class peers. For these pupils, it may be necessary to devise an **Individual Behaviour Support Plan**. Advice Sheet 22 outlines the steps to developing an Individual Behaviour Support Plan. One element of this may be an **Individual Behaviour Contract**. This may operate on the same basis as the Class Behaviour Agreement but is specific to one pupil, rather than applying to all pupils in the class.

In developing a Behaviour Contract, the following suggestions may need to be considered:

- Involve the pupil in drawing up the contract as much as possible. The more 'ownership' they have of the process, the more likely they will be to comply with it. This means discussing with the pupil (relative to their age and ability) why you are concerned about their behaviour, what type of behaviour is causing concern, and ways that this behaviour might be reduced or eliminated. It will also involve teaching the pupil alternative ways of behaving (replacement skills) so that they can act in a more appropriate way.
- As much as possible, focus on the positive consequences for complying with the contract rather than the negative consequences of failing to do so. If we only emphasise the sanctions that will be enforced for failure to comply, the pupil will have no positive reasons for complying. As part of the contract, identify what the reward / incentive will be for complying, and specify how and when the pupil will receive this.
- Parental support is extremely important in working towards a better outcome – again involve the parent(s) as much as possible in the process, working with them and seeking their support for the ultimate benefit of the pupil. For some pupils, it may be a foster-parent, other family member or care worker who acts '*in loco parentis*', but their support is equally important.
- Specify the one or two behaviours that you want to prioritise for change. These need to be stated explicitly e.g. *I will not kick, spit, hit or bite another person or make attempts to do so* or *I will only use positive comments when talking to or about other people* is much better than *I will behave in class!*
- Implement the contract. It's not much use if it's not implemented! Ensure all relevant staff are informed.
- Review the contract. If it's not working, try to figure out why and come up with an alternative plan.
- Encourage and support: ultimately we want the pupil to take responsibility for his/her own behaviour

**For more:** <http://specialed.about.com/cs/behaviordisorders/a/behaviorcontrac.htm>

*This is a very useful website which explains about behaviour contracts and includes templates for class use.*