

DISCIPLINE IN SCHOOL

In accordance with the provisions of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, corporal punishment is no longer used. Teachers are reminded that all physical contact intended as punishment is included in this.

By far the greatest single factor in determining a child's behaviour at school is the home and the degree of success the parents are achieving in bringing up a socially well adjusted individual. The great majority of children exhibit the signs of their parents' success in that their behaviour conforms with the accepted social norms.

In a minority of cases, the parents, for whatever reason, are unable to achieve this success with their children, and the end result is for their teachers, and classmates, to cope with.

H. M. I. have stated that the features most often associated with an orderly school are:

- 1) good relationships with mutual respect between pupils and teachers;
- 2) teachers' high expectations of pupils, academically and socially;
- 3) curriculum and teaching methods well matched to pupils' needs;
- 4) the nurturing of pupils growing maturity and self-esteem.

Fortunately, these features are not new to this school, but they are worth re-stating so that all staff remain aware of them, thus ensuring their continued existence.

The maintenance of good order depends on the constant vigilance and insistence on high standards of behaviour from pupils by staff. In such a way, the children will learn what is expected from them, and will be rewarded with acceptance within the school community. The positive climate in this school, mentioned by H. M. I. , is the result of staff applying this systematic approach, and this will continue, despite the changed disciplinary structure. This climate is engendered by children having a feeling of worth and self-esteem, and by the realisation by children that the school is there for them and within it, they have both rights and responsibilities.

There will always be a small minority for whom some system of sanctions will be required beyond the normal day-to-day admonishments for the kinds of mischief and over-exuberance to which all children are liable from time to time.

Disapproval of a miscreant by those whose views s/he respects, the teacher, peer group etc. can be a powerful sanction if the climate in the school is correct.

In terms of moulding behaviour patterns, praise is much more effective than blame. It is often said that teachers do not praise enough. It is indeed difficult to remember to praise when children are working well and in an orderly fashion, and a conscious effort has to be made to do this, especially when a disruptive child is claiming the teacher's attention.

Obviously there must be sanctions, starting within the classroom and moving up a scale of seriousness. Classroom sanctions might start with the withholding of praise, a rebuke, withdrawal of a privilege, or the setting of some extra task. This last should be of some intrinsic value either to the child or the school community as a whole, not just "lines". It could be extra work beneficial to that child, or some community task like clearing litter. It is important to follow up such tasks, as their successful completion can contribute to the child's sense of worth. The punishing of whole groups for the misdemeanours of one or two is discouraged.

The use of the dining area as a sin-bin is of limited value, except in the short term as it removes the troublemaker from the classroom. It also removes that child from the supervision of the teacher, with consequent difficulties should further mischief ensue; (Please refer to the document on Supervision of Children).

In cases of chronic troublemakers, or where a single offence is of a serious nature, a parental interview may be requested. This may suffice, or the child may be placed on report if thought a suitable case.

The ultimate sanction provided in the school is exclusion. This could be used where the offence is regarded as serious, and where it is thought that such a move is necessary to provide time to ensure that the child and the parents fully understand the seriousness of the situation. A rough and ready guide to the use of exclusion would be where the offence committed outside by an adult would lead to a custodial sentence; examples being theft, serious assaults, criminal damage, arson etc.