

Correcting Pupils

The teaching staff at Ballynacally NS favour the adage...

‘Mol an Oige agus Tiocfaidh sí’

When correcting, even reprimanding, a pupil we feel that is important to be firm, fair, positive and proactive.

Correcting a child professionally with the above notions in mind is based on the following.

Our school is a happy school, both to learn in and teach in.

Correcting a child should aim to correct the behaviour not the child.

In line with our Christian/Catholic ethos we strongly believe that the child is intrinsically and unconditionally good.

A child may already be listening to persistent, negative criticism outside the school.

The teacher is the adult in any situation of conflict with a child at school and as such is morally bound to behave as such.

The child performs best when his/her self esteem is intact.

A negative remark in word or tone towards a child disarms and disempowers. The child may meet many throughout his/her lifetime that will freely engage in harmful behaviour. Our SPHE/STAY SAFE programmes underpin our positive approach towards identifying inappropriate behaviour and suggesting an alternative.

It may sometimes feel more appropriate to reprimand harshly. However this can often be a matter of convenience or habit.

Positive interaction with the child results in a healthy relationship between pupil and teacher. There is a positive spin off for the teacher in the workplace.

Children remember what may appear to the teacher as an appropriate remark may be interpreted damagingly by a child e.g. peers/classmates ridicule as a result of what teacher says.

A solid code of discipline and supplementary code of discipline exists in the school. These exist for the safety and well being of pupils and teachers.

If we expect pupils to 'Be Nice' to each other, pupils are entitled to expect teachers to 'Be Nice' to them.

Pupils can also be upset and become confused if they witness other pupils being reprimanded inappropriately.

When a pupil witnesses this, it may result in fear that s/he is next for the same treatment or one pupil getting a reputation

for misbehaviour --- 'it's always John Smith's fault!' or 'It's John Smith again Miss'

A child may be acting out due to traumas outside the school. The teacher needs to be mindful that the school may be the only environment, at that specific moment, where the child feels safe and secure.

Teachers will use the following approach when correcting a pupil...

- John, what are you doing? (Pupil identifies his own behaviour)
- Do you know what you are supposed to be doing? (Pupil recalls instructions, which teacher can repeat if necessary)
- Can you please do this now, good boy. Thank You.

Recommendations

From 'Cracking the Hard Class – A whole school approach'
By Bill Rogers

- # Rules and routines based on shared rights and responsibilities are made clear to pupils
- # Teacher is consistent in terms of cues to students
- # Corrective discipline and consequences is clear in 'Our' classroom and 'Our' school
- # Teach routines, rules and positive behaviours
- # Avoid talking over significant noise
- # Use tactical pausing
- # Overall 'calmness' will have a positive effect in conveying confident intent... Not always easy but still an aspiration
- # Keep verbal directions and reminders brief
- # Use positive corrective language wherever possible
- # Reliance on negative discipline language can quickly create a negative tone

- # Keep directions and reminders BEHAVIOURAL e.g. 'Facing this way and listening...' that's as opposed to ... 'don't talk while I'm teaching..!'
- # Balance correction with encouragement
- # Keep rules simple and few in number
- # Foster whole-school ownership of the positive 'We'
- # Clarify how students gain teacher's attention
- # As teachers we need to be aware of our characteristic discipline language. Avoid using the interrogative form e.g. 'why are you calling Tom?'
- # Avoid using frequent negative directions... 'Don't do..!' This increases teacher and pupil frustration, resentment etc.
- # Identify the behaviour and ask a pupil if he/she is supposed to be doing at that moment. 'Jason, you are out of your seat. What are you supposed to be doing now?'
- # This helps focus responsibility back to the student.
- # Calmness, positive engagement and expectation
- # Communicate anger by assertion

- ✚ Do communicate frustration, even anger, if necessary but briefly
- ✚ Focus on pupil's behaviour rather than our own reactive behaviour towards student
- ✚ Use a calm voice to de-escalate the natural tension
- ✚ Allow appropriate cool-off time
- ✚ Try to engage in repairing and rebuilding with the student
- ✚ Avoid public humiliation, isolating a student
- ✚ For ourselves, we need to separate the distracting, offending behaviour from the student