**Positive relationships: The Dalkeith Way**

*Dalkeith High School: Enabling all young people to succeed in an inclusive, respectful and stimulating environment.*

This paper reflects some of the collaborative work undertaken by staff on the ways in which they support a positive school culture and a productive learning environment. It should be read in conjunction with our policy on classroom expectations, available from: <https://dalkeith.mgfl.net/positive-relationships-in-the-classroom/>

**Relentless routines**

Predictable behaviours support young people in feeling secure in their environment.

*Routine 1: Meet and greet.*

This includes:

* Standing at the door of the classroom to welcome learners and monitoring the corridor throughout the period changeover
* Welcoming the young people in with an appropriate greeting

*Routine 2: Ready for learning.*

This includes:

* Mobile phones in a ‘bag or box’, earphones out and away
* Jackets, hoodies, scarves etc. off
* Equipment at hand as appropriate
* Starter activity ready

*Routine 3: End and send.*

This includes:

* Clear and orderly dismissal, timed to minimise crowding
* Standing at the classroom door to say goodbye to learners and monitoring the corridor throughout the period changeover

**Key phrases**

*Key phrase 1: “Over and above.”*

This acknowledges that a young person has done something in the classroom that goes beyond core expectations and can be used as part of verbal praise or more formal recognition.

*Key phrase 2: “Thank you for…”*

Beginning your sentence with thank for rather than ending it with please makes it clear that you expect your instruction to be followed e.g. “thank you for taking off your jacket” rather than, “can you take your jacket off, please?”

*Key phrase 3: “I need you to…”*

This supports classroom dialogue by ensuring that there is a focus on the positive action the young person can take rather than admonishment for an action they have already taken e.g. “I need you to turn around to see the board” rather than “stop talking to the person behind you.”

**Recognising excellence in class**

Whether it be in learning or in their behaviour, young people value knowing that you have recognised their effort. When young people go “over and above” this can be celebrated in a number of ways.

*Idea 1: Recognition boards*

These create a space in the classroom where a young person’s efforts can be celebrated. They might simply involve a list of names, or could include positive comments or even examples of classwork, as suits you, your department, and the young people.

*Idea 2: Using Merits*

Merits at DHS contribute towards House Prizes but, more importantly, show young people that you have noticed them doing well. In order for these to be effective, young people need to know that they have been awarded a Merit and what it is for. This also links to systems such as Learner of the Month or Achiever of the Month which further celebrate achievements.

*Idea 3: Praise postcards*

Parents and carers value the opportunity to hear about their young person doing well. Sending a praise postcard home with a personal message can really help to build positive relationships between home and school. Staff can use the whole school version or design departmental versions if they wish.

**Dealing with difficult situations**

Despite all of our best efforts, there will be times when the young people in our care exhibit challenging behaviour. Some of the following phrases are useful when diffusing a difficult situation.

* ‘I know you can….’
* ‘I know you will…’
* ‘I understand’
* ‘I am listening’
* ‘You sound frustrated. Let’s take a moment to think.’
* ‘How can I help?’
* ‘What choices do we have here?’
* ‘How can we make this situation better?’
* ‘How can we move on from here?’
* ‘We will talk about this further [at a particular time/in a particular place]’

Having a few key phrases ‘to hand’ can help you to stay feeling calm and in control as well as supporting the young person in recognising that the conversation you are having is designed to support them.

**School rules: Be Ready. Be Respectful. Be Safe**.

Staff were strongly in agreement that these rules will work well in our school and should be applied consistently.

*Be Ready:*

* Following the relentless routines set up in terms of ‘Meet and greet’ and ‘Ready for learning’ to maximise learning time
* Get to class and move between activities in class in good time

*Be Respectful:*

* Treat other pupils, staff and members of the community the way you would want to be treated
* Look after yourself, each other, your school, and your community

*Be Safe:*

* Don’t engage on behaviours that could hurt you or other people

These rules will look different according to the context and departments may wish to consider what these will look like in their subject specialisms.

**Picking up your own tab**

Below are some reflections from your colleagues at DHS as to how responsibility can be shared for creating a positive learning environment:

* Restorative practices are key
* Everyone should take ownership of actions that affect pupils and staff
* There is more respect for the class teacher if they deal with issues themselves rather than getting the Curriculum Leader
* Follow things up at the end of the lesson; don’t let things go
* Reflect on why issues have arisen and work on strategies to prevent issues from repeating
* Don’t pass the buck- take responsibility for chasing up and resolving behaviour
* Take time to properly consider your response
* Don’t escalate a situation too quickly
* Don’t start what you can’t finish!