

# divert, ignore OR confront

When it comes to managing behaviour, sometimes you need to take the direct approach, says **Paul Dix**...



Confront every behaviour that you want to correct and your impact on single behaviours is diluted. Ignore everything and you become

too passive. Spend your energy constantly diverting and the child never learns to take any responsibility. Is it any wonder that behaviour management seems to be a confusion of conflicting ideas?

Simplify and sharpen your behaviour management for each child by focusing on single identifiable behaviours that you want to change. For these behaviours diverting or ignoring are not an option. You will confront them every time. By firmly confronting selected behaviours, you attempt to teach fewer behaviours. The ones that you do teach are taught very well.

When you confront behaviours, early intervention is important. When the child reaches 2—2½ there will be boundaries that need to be underlined. Use the same calm, mechanical, neutral response. Separate the child from the group and run through your script to punctuate the behaviour you have chosen to correct. Practise a routine that is predictable, safe and easily repeatable.

Withdraw the child to the same place with the same key words, visual cues, and positioning. Most importantly the same smile at the end of the conversation. Simple, consistent, repetitive rituals targeted at specific behaviours will accelerate change. Children need the assertive redirection that underlines poor choices. They need to be told 'No'. Without it, the world doesn't appear to have rules.

There is great skill in diverting but become too accomplished and you

miss opportunities to teach new behaviours, to embed new routines and re-establish positive rituals. Let the child become aware of

## 30 second intervention

- 1 **Isolate the child and leave for one minute**  
Don't speak to the child until they have stopped shouting/crying/demanding their lawyer
- 2 **Get down to eye level**  
Tell them the behaviour you saw and which rule it breaks
- 3 **Tell the child firmly 'No'**  
Remind the child of their previous good behaviour
- 4 **Ask the child to apologise**  
Refocus onto positive behaviours, I have heard that you are brilliant at...
- 5 **Move back to the group**
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9

their behaviour. There is little time for self-reflection in the fast paced world of a three year old. The separation from the group and brief behaviour conversation (30 seconds at most) gives the child that chance to reflect.

The formalised response to inappropriate behaviour must be balanced with an adjustment in positive reinforcement. Refocus your reinforcement and reward around the priority behaviours and take every opportunity to tell them 'on' rather than 'off'. Mark the moment with the child with stickers, stamps and smiles. Tell home at the end of the day or send a note home with the child. Let everyone know that the new behaviours are welcome and appreciated. As you move through the year the child grows, old behaviours are modified and new behaviours emerge. Change the priority behaviours every few weeks to match the child's changing needs. When children leave your care, you leave them equipped with behaviours that they are in control of and their next teacher breathes a huge sigh of relief.

By making change in small, planned and simple steps you create a consistency that is hard to resist. In the unplanned and inconsistent world of little people it is vital that someone has a plan.

## findoutmore

Paul Dix's award-winning Behaviour Training is now available as an online behaviour management course. A free sample is available for all Teach Nursery readers who call **020 7000 1735** or email **ellie@pivotaleducation.com** with code 'OCTP'. Pivotal Education is also offering a special rate of £49.95 for the first 20 readers to call and sign up to the full online course.