

## **Suggested behaviour management strategies for children and young people with SEMH needs**

Strategies to support to parents and teachers in managing challenging behaviours.

- ❖ Adapt the environment. Organise and provide structure  
e.g. ensure workspaces and equipment are all set out and ready before they arrive.  
This reduces chances of distraction.
- ❖ Remove anything that could distract them.
- ❖ Alternate tasks. Do something fun and motivating then try something hard. They are less likely to give up or get agitated if they are already in a positive framework.
- ❖ Give choices but maintain some control in the choices that you offer  
If the child or YP is uncooperative/oppositional, you could offer them an alternative task to complete but try to choose something they are unlikely to find more motivating. This will increase chances of them opting for and completing the desired task.
- ❖ Keep language positive. Feedback to them what they do well in and what they could improve on.
- ❖ Set up clear reinforcement systems. Use simple, predictable processes that rewards positive behaviour and sanctions negative behaviour. Have consistent rules and reinforce these for whole class/family.
- ❖ When delivering sanctions/disciplinary action, the message needs to be clear, simple and non-negotiable. Then move on quickly. Avoid waiting around for them to change their behaviour as they may need more time and space to think over their actions. Deliver the sanction and quickly move on or engage another child/YP in positive conversation. This will reduce chances of a power struggle and defensive reactions/escalation.
- ❖ Don't allow them to take control over your behaviour.  
This is when you've exhausted all of your positive reinforcement, warnings and sanctions and the child or YP continues to show challenging/uncooperative behaviour. Resist all temptation to address this in the moment. Remember that these are all designed to push your buttons/test you/gain a reaction/intimidate you. In such situations, calm and considered responses or quiet time are best.
- ❖ Countdown technique.  
Countdown from 5 or 10 to allow students to finish up their conversations or work and listen out for the next instruction. This is a fairer warning than asking for immediate silence.
- ❖ Use direct language. Consider your tone of voice, facial expression and body language when giving instructions. Avoid sarcasm.

A child or YP with social communication difficulties can find indirect language and non-verbal communication very difficult to understand.

e.g. Direct: *Sit on your chair, please.*

Indirect: *why don't you sit on your chair? / would you mind sitting on your chair? / we sit on our chairs at lesson time etc.*