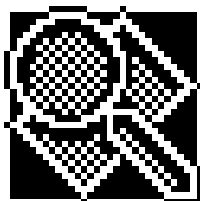


## Action on Ethos

*This Case Study outlines how the staff and pupils of a large secondary school, supported by the Educational Psychology Service, worked together to strengthen teacher-pupil partnership and working relations. It describes the strategy used, the logistics of the exercise and the positive outcomes. The school is now more able to face a variety of challenges because it is supported by a shared set of expectations of how all must work together.*



## Buckhaven High School

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### 1 Background

Buckhaven High School is a large comprehensive (currently 1200 plus) serving the Levenmouth area of east Fife. The school's catchment area exhibits the social and economic challenges that typify areas too long dependent on a narrow industrial base. Recovery is happening but there is still a legacy of the demise of coal, meaning that a high proportion of the adult population are "on the dole".

For many years the school has recognised good behaviour by issuing "Good Behaviour Certificates" to those S1 - S4 pupils having no (or very few) punishment exercises, indeed S1 pupils in this category are taken on a trip to the Royal Highland Show.

The majority of pupils receive certificates. What about the rest? The school had to work to include them.

### 2 General Aims

In session 1993-94 the school was in the fortunate position of being able to involve Fife Psychological Services in a joint project addressing one of the school plan targets, "to strengthen the teacher/pupil partnership and working relations throughout the school".

As part of this project staff were asked to consider positive approaches to pupil behaviour and to encourage good behaviour and attitudes.

The "Golden Rule" exercise evolved from work undertaken by a development group which had as its aim "to consider intermediate strategies which might be employed to resolve behaviour problems in the classroom".

### 3 Methods & Strategies Employed

The development group met formally on four occasions (Planned Activity Time) and was broadly based consisting of eight staff including an Educational Psychologist, Principal Teachers, teachers and an Assistant Rector. Interim and final reports were provided for all staff. Individual members of the development group met with



The following summarises the objectives, logistics and methodology used.

## Objectives

1. To develop an understanding of the need for rules
2. To clarify the school's expectations of its pupils in the class and in the school in general
3. To involve pupils in a genuine review of school rules so that they have a sense of OWNERSHIP
4. To help pupils appreciate the need for co-operation and, should this not be forthcoming, the need for sanctions

## Logistics

*When:*

During exam leave period (May June)

*Time allocation:*

4 x one hour slots following on from registration (Tuesday - Friday)

*To be involved:*

S1; S2 and S3 pupils, i.e. approx. 925 pupils  
All members of staff

Register teachers to be supported by another member of staff – either 'freed' register teacher (exam leave), Assistant Principal Teacher, Principal teacher, Guidance staff, Assistant Rector, Depute Rector, Rector. (Careful consideration given to pairings, e.g. register teacher with teacher who taught the class group.)

Option of team teaching a group of twenty or taking a group of ten (or combination of both)

## Methodology

Briefing sheets for staff and pupil worksheets produced by Senior Teacher with responsibility for 'effective use of form time'.

Staff had to have some advice as to approach because the style required to deliver the exercise could well be different from their usual teaching approach. Pupils were to be encouraged to participate fully, not to be passive receivers; views and experiences to be exchanged in purposeful discussion.

## Materials

Worksheets to be 'prompts' to encourage general discussion.

Day 1: Centred on the "need for rules".

Day 2: Centred on how the individual's behaviour affects others.

Day 3: An extension of the activity on Day 2.

Day 4: Centred on drawing up an agreed set of expectations from the group.

These expectations were to be collated and published.

## 6 The Findings

The responses from all the groups were collated and are shown below.

### Main Rules/Expectations - Pupil Priority List

The following list gives order of priority derived from pupil responses during the whole school exercise.

1. Look after the school building and equipment (and people's personal property);  
no vandalism.
2. No pushing in corridors or queues.  
Walk on the left.
3. Be on time for school and class.
4. Show respect and consideration for others.
5. No bullying.
6. Come prepared for work/lessons.
7. No smoking.
8. Don't disturb others or talk when others are talking.
9. No litter.
10. No abusive language, swearing or insolence.
11. No fighting.
12. No stealing.

**Population:** All pupils in years 1, 2 and 3 at May/June 1994.

Despite all staff's best efforts to encourage positive approaches, pupils' lists were still dominated by negative orders, "**No** this, **No** that..." Old habits die hard and it takes time and continuing effort to change them.

Is it a reflection of society in the 1990s or of Buckhaven High that property has priority over people?

### **Golden Rule: Show Respect and Consideration for Others.**

Expectations about the way we behave.

We should:

- be able to get on with our work without being disturbed by others.
- all feel safe in the corridors, in queues and on stairs. (No pushing, keep to the left, etc.)
- never feel threatened by physical or verbal abuse. (Bullying, fighting, insolence, swearing)
- all be on time for classes (including Registration) and be prepared for work and to work.
- be allowed to answer questions without being interrupted by others.
- all look after the school building, its equipment and everyone's personal property. (No litter, no vandalism, etc.)

#### **Remember:**

Treat other people with respect; treat them well and they will do the same for you.

The Golden Rule and expectations were then issued to all pupils through Registration, spoken about in Assembly, discussed in Social Education and displayed, poster fashion, in classrooms and around the school.

## 7 Evaluation

Evaluation of the exercise was not undertaken in any quantitative fashion although there was a perception that there was a reduction in referrals, punishment exercises and a greater openness in reporting bullying.

The "Golden Rule" exercise did however clearly help create the environment in which other ideas could be progressed.

The school has undertaken a whole series of initiatives in promoting positive behaviour and any improvement derives from these collectively rather than from any individual exercise.

A similar type of exercise was carried out in May 1997 reviewing "The Golden Rule", linking "Rights" and "Responsibilities" with expectations and looking at attendance and punctuality.

"Golden Rule 2" was undertaken without hesitation by staff, perhaps a good indication that the approach is one with which they are comfortable and that the outcomes are recognised as valuable.

## 8 Suggestions & Experiences

- The exercise was carried out with S1 - S3, effectively the next session's S2 - S4. "The Golden Rule" had then to be presented to the incoming S1 and to S5 and S6 pupils in a different way, i.e. "These are the expectations. Why do we have these?"

- The Golden Rule and expectations are frequently repeated in school leaflets to parents as well as in the school organiser diary.

- The exercise should be repeated, in some fashion, more frequently than has been done although the main points are revisited in Social Education and in Registration.

