
DEALING WITH DISRUPTIVE
AND CHALLENGING
BEHAVIOUR OUTSIDE
THE CLASSROOM :

With special reference to confronting,
hostile and aggressive behaviour .
Draft paper only.

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A Discussion Paper : draft only

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Ever Present?

The bell rang. Period 3 was – finally – over. I'd been team teaching in a 'challenging' class and was on my way to a well earned cuppa.

As I walked down 'B wing' (sounds like a prison doesn't it; but it's actually called 'B wing'!) I saw some minor scuffling with several boys, a lot of very loud talking; the normal hurried movement of scores of year 8's and 9's moving to exit doors. As I scanned a relaxed, but 'vigilant' eye across the students I noticed (how could I fail not to) Craig leap up in the air and jump on Corey (testosteronic bonding?) with the words "Ow yer going yer poofter!" He punched him hard – but 'playfully' – on the neck. Corey looked really annoyed but as he whipped around to meet his 'assailant's' eyes – he saw it was a mate and replied ... "Alright yer dickhead!" and kneed his mate in the groin. Should I ignore it? My colleague, walking down 'B wing' with me, frowned but wanted to go straight to the staffroom; I decided these boys needed reminder about reasonable and safe movement (without the 'testosteronic bonding'). It had been an over the top piece of 'bonding' (in my judgement). I called Craig over and was about to call Corey too when they both ran around the corner of 'B wing' [it still sounds like a prison doesn't it – looks a bit like it too; it's the old – poorly refurbished – part of the school. "Shades of the prison house begin to close ..."].

I cut my losses at that point. I learned a long time ago it is pointless chasing students, it only adds to the 'game' in their eyes – and the audience. There are few occasions when we need to chase students (keep them in line of sight – yes; especially young children). As I walked on I saw Craig and Corey chatting as I turned the corridor. I beckoned them over again (away, now, from their immediate peer audience) "Craig (I paused for some eye contact) Corey (...) see you for a minute." "Me?" (as he pointed to himself feigning surprise ...). "Yes ... see you over here for a moment". They came over somewhat sulkily. Raising the voice, down the corridor, I beckoned to the side of the corridor to keep it 'low-key'. I briefly described what I had seen a few minutes earlier. Craig seemed put out; "Gees – we were just mucking around! He don't care if I do that do you Corey?. Corey replied (on cue?) "Nope!" And here is the typical bane of it all, students who 'argue the toss', discount and

make 'light of it all' or compare teacher with teacher ("Other teachers don't care if we ..." "They don't make a big deal ..."). When Craig said he was "just mucking around", I'm sure he meant it – "S'no big deal" Does it mean we do not bother with such reminders? How many times have we addressed students eating in the corridor, running in the corridor, pushing/shoving ... only to met with "... But Mr. (so and so) doesn't care ..." or "Ms Snaggs said we can anyway ..." (annoyingly both statements may well be the typical reality).

I avoid arguing with students wherever possible (especially when I'm on the way to a cuppa and merely trying to give a simple, and fair, rule-reminder about 'keeping hands and feet to yourself!'). I 'agreed' with him, "... Maybe it's no big deal for you Craig and Corey, but we've got a school rule about safe movement around the school. Hands and feet to yourself. This is a reminder." The tone was pleasant, quiet – but firm. **Relaxed vigilance.**

They gave the 'obligatory' look that said : 'Alright, we've got your message. OK?' I went off to my, now, time-diminished tea break. That's another reason why some teachers choose not to address such corridor behaviour. Some teachers will argue that they're merely going down the corridor (and not technically 'on duty'), therefore, they have no *obligation* to exercise managerial 'vigilance'. Surely *duty* means just that – duty.

Relaxed vigilance

My view is that there is a sense in which we are always 'on duty' once we leave our classroom. '*Relaxed vigilance*' by teachers – as they move around the school – can send a powerful (and positive) message about acceptable and unreasonable, unfair and unacceptable behaviour and the general 'behaviour culture' of the school. Teachers can also convey consistency of expectations by *what* they address in student behaviour and *how* they do it (see later).

It can also help to note down students' names who frequently become *overly* argumentative when teachers seek to address inappropriate behaviour. If I had seen Craig and Corey behave in a similar way again I would have both reminded them of the (safe-movement) rule and noted their names down – to be later recorded in a staff monitoring book for duty-of-care management outside of the classroom (see later) p 9.

This 'monitoring book' is reviewed each week and if a student's name crops up three times, *in close succession*, they are called in by senior staff who will work with the student/s to discuss their behaviour or follow-through with appropriate consequences, or develop a behaviour plan with the student as is necessary. More serious behaviours are reported to administration, immediately and directly, and are followed up as soon as possible that day.

Our duty-of-care role (outside classroom time) ...

It is important, in the first instance, that teachers take all duty-of-care outside the classroom seriously; whether on *rostered* duty or not. In one of the school where I mentor, a student had been running up the outside concrete stairs *en route* to the playground. A friendly grab, strangle and push (*en passant*) by some of his mates and a rolling fall saw him taken to hospital with concussion ... 'Play-bonding/fighting' can easily end with a student being hurt (even seriously hurt) from a play fight or the real fight that wasn't intended. While the 'jostling testosterone' is normal with many boys, relaxed vigilance can enable a teacher's experiential common sense and awareness about when to tactically ignore and when/where to intervene early ... (as on the stairs). Even if one is on the way to the staff room for a well earned cuppa and we see a student jump on another student (and give a 'friendly rabbit punch' ...) we still have an obligation in terms of duty-of-care, to direct the student(s) aside for a brief chat and a rule-reminder ... The 'blind eye syndrome' of some teachers only makes it twice as hard for others when addressing :-

- Overt, and fast, running in the corridors;
- Overly active male testosterone bonding anywhere out of classtime ... (so-called 'friendly' punching, kicking, pushing shoving, strangling ...);
- Eating in the corridors (while this may seem a 'small-beer' issue it contributes to mess and residual litter ...);
- Really loud yelling;
- **Loud** 'conversational swearing', racist / sexist/homophobic language (even 'jokingly').
- Students out of class who hassle other classes after the bell has gone and are on their way to class (or students who enter classes in a grandstanding manner, disrespectfully, without consideration for teachers or fellow students);
- Silly behaviour in toilet areas, drinking tap areas, canteen and lunch areas ...

When addressing hostile or overly 'aggressive' behaviour in corridor, playground, or bus queues it is important to consider the nature, extent and limits of one's own (individual) duty of care and management role, especially physical intervention – say in a major fight (see later) – and when to call for immediate colleague assistance. Our own health and safety is always at stake too.

Consistency

Staff consistency is important – it minimises students 'playing lawyer or playing one teacher off against another. Consistency needs to address :

(a) **Workable expectations/rules based on common rights**, such as general safety; fair-treatment; safe and fair play in non-classroom settings. Even bus duty and uses of buses by students need clear guidelines and established behaviour expectations. Many schools now develop a 'shared bus policy and plan' with the bus company that services their school.

(See Rogers, 2006a).

(b) **Common responsibilities** : The message to students is :- 'you are responsible and accountable for your behaviour. This includes care for school-property and equipment, treating others with thought and respect, and considering how *your* behaviour affects others...'; (eg : safe/inclusive/play; using drinking and toilet facilities healthily; litter disposal ...).

(c) These common expectations – and rules –for corridor, playground, use of buses, wet-day timetable (etc) need to be published in a user-friendly form and communicated to all classes, in the establishment phase of the year and in review sessions during the year where necessary.

(d) **Common managerial practices** by staff and consistent follow-up of disruptive students (see later).

Bus behaviour policy

Some school buses (for example) have the basic 'bus rules' published on a laminated card in the bus itself :

- find a seat and stay in it, no seat changing or ‘play-fighting’ will be tolerated...
- keep your hands and feet to yourself
- remember basic courtesy / manners
- if you eat it on the bus – bin it on the bus
- use positive language in, on, around the bus. (it is important to discuss with students that this rule means we do not call out of the bus windows – or gesture – to passing motorists or pedestrians!)
- **bullying is totally unacceptable / it will not be tolerated.**

Students need to know that any significant breaches of these rules results in follow-up by senior staff and possible consequences (including withdrawal of bus privileges for a set period of time) *as in any significantly disruptive or dangerous behaviours or unaddressed bullying..* Of course rules (as such) need to be based on appropriate student ownership through discussion and clarification in the ‘establishment phase’ of the year across all grade/tutor/form classes.

They also need to be supported by positive management practices from duty staff and even bus drivers.¹ This assumes we will have discussed this policy with the bus company at the beginning of the school year.

Parents receive a copy of the bus-travelling policy; it is basic for parental support and for discussion, and reference, and student and parental follow-up when students abuse bus service privileges and policy (particularly for bullying).

Review of duty-of-care policy in non-classroom settings

It is essential to review the rights / rules for out-of-class behaviour through pastoral / home groups and with the Student Representative Council. This review will be based on a common *needs analysis* exploring such questions as :

- **What is working well** in the playground (or in the lunch area; the tuck-shop area/canteen/student common room; or on the bus, or on wet days ...) and why? This question explores such issues as the state of / and use of physical environment and facilities, even canteen queues and seating; number and use of litter bins ~ to/from/at meal areas; shade areas; movement patterns of students in and out of buildings; (and movement through buildings), etc.

- **What is not working well and why?** It can help to use a map survey to augment this question. Students are given a map of the school and asked to nominate areas on the map where they feel safe and comfortable to move around in and recreate, and areas where they feel unsure, unsafe ... to recreate, move around or play ... They are then asked to note *why* they feel safe, less safe or unsafe in their *nominated areas* (on the back of the map). These areas of relative safety are enumerated on the map by the numbers 1, 2, 3 (1 = safe and comfortable ..., 2 = uncertain, wary ..., and 3 = would not go there!). With younger primary-aged children this can be established through a class discussion.
- **What can we do (all of us) to make the playground (or canteen area, or bus, or ...) safer, cleaner, a more enjoyable place to be?** Eg :- What can we do to make exit and entry to / from classroom and corridor areas safer, less noisy etc. What can we do to make the bus journey more enjoyable, safer ...?
- **What do we need to change about our current approaches and why?** How can we do it as a school community (students and teachers)? This is also a questions that addresses our current managerial and behaviour leadership practice as teachers.
- Some changes will be 'structural'; some organisational; some educational / pastoral in focus; some changes will involve policy review and management plans. Staff will also consider necessary changes to management practices when in any duty-of-care role in non-classroom settings.

Review of staff management and behaviour leadership/discipline : needs analysis

It is also important for staff to review the *typical behaviours of concern* in terms of duty-of-care outside the classroom (from litter to running in the corridor to roughhouse play and fighting).

The issues of concern about non-classroom behaviours can be noted and discussed in terms of their *frequency* and *seriousness*.

The most common 'pattern' observed (from such a survey) is **high frequency / 'low serious'** behaviours such as eating in corridors, running in corridors, 'friendly' pushing, shoving, 'friendly play-punching', (that 'testosteronic' male-bonding ...), throwing a ball thoughtlessly, etc. If these typical behaviours are not consistently addressed (in a relaxed, low-key, way) by all staff it makes the management of the more serious behaviours more difficult to address. (See also notes addressing **Playground Supervision – a whole-school review**).

Low frequency / high serious these are behaviours involving safety (psychological or physical) such as threatening others, any form of harassment, bullying, aggressive behaviours (to property or person) or fighting; *any* use of drugs or alcohol.

As noted earlier, the problem with 'low-serious' behaviours such as 'play-punching' and 'pushing and shoving' ('karate-kicking' – in fun, 'play-fighting', throwing sand, bark chippings ... sticks etc) is that this can quickly erupt into more serious behaviour when someone gets hurt or when school property is damaged. We need, as staff, to consistently address any overt silly play or play-fighting, even when students respond / retort "... that we're only mucking around!" or "... he's my mate," and the use of put-downs/sexist/racist/homophobic language ..., " he don't care if I call him a f_____ poofter!" or "... we're only having fun ... Gees!"

A 'relaxed, managerial, vigilance will see a more positive playground culture in time. We can create a culture of *reasonable fairness* and *respectful certainty* about : *what our school realistically considers fair, reasonable and safe behaviour*. What it requires of staff is that we make the managerial effort – every day; **relaxed vigilance**.

Some teachers will not make the effort of addressing disruptive behaviour out-of-class (especially when not on duty) because of anxiety about their own safety (psychological or physical); this is understandable. Students have a frustrating propensity to minimise, discount their behaviour and argue back, challenge, and (even) run off when we seek to address their behaviour. Some students tend to regard out-of-class as quite a different social context '... this is *our* territory!' (we can do 'our own thing' here, 'it doesn't matter ...').

When developing reasonable consistency in duty-of-care management beyond the classroom, schools need to address :

- What the *typical concerns* are of staff regarding student behaviour (see the earlier note on needs analysis).
- What are we *currently* doing in terms of ‘short-term’ corrective and discipline and management while we’re on duty eg : what sort of language do we actually use to two boys ‘playfully fighting’ in the corridor or playground? What approaches have we found to be effective? (in terms of our behaviour management aims) particularly with respect to students’ typical responses to what we say and do, eg when they argue, defy or run off ... (see also later.)
- Where do we need to ‘*fine-tune*’; *adapt*; *modify* or *change* our policy and practice, and *how can we change – what can we reasonably do?*

Hostile, threatening or aggressive behaviours

When addressing any form of hostile or aggressive behaviour it is important to consider *teacher safety*, as well as student safety (as noted earlier, also see on p 16f). What do we do in a serious fight situation? How do we get immediate staff back-up? How do we deal with the ‘ever present’ student audience in such a situation?

Staff may need to be skilled in *preferred* management that is both realistically practical and as effective as one can be as a teacher (given the context). Such practice needs to be consistent with our beliefs and aims about student behaviour management. Preferred practice (especially when addressing serious behaviours) should be known by all staff. These are addressed later (and in some detail in Rogers, 2006a).

Preferred management and discipline practice will also need to address issues such as *what sort of things to say* when we direct/command students to stop fighting (for example) (p 16f and pp 22-23); how we should deal with the peer audience; how we should get immediate adult assistance; how to report and what follow-up procedures need to be employed. Such follow-up needs to address consequences and accountability dialogue with students (for example, with students who have verbally abused a teacher out of class see later p 10f and p 23f). In some schools students feel there will be no consequential outcome if they swear *at* teachers and run off in settings outside the classroom.

One of the important principles of behaviour management with such behaviours is the *certainty* of follow-up and follow-through with students, of necessary and appropriate

consequences. Teachers will also need to track students who refuse reasonable teacher requests (about their behaviour) or who verbally abuse or harass a teacher (p 10) (see the notebook usage below). Any harassment (of teacher or students) needs to be addressed as soon as possible; early intervention is crucial. I have known staff put up with frequent and on-going harassment in the playground yet not reporting it for fear they will be seen as 'weak' or ineffective, or (as bad) not report because they believe nothing will be done (or nothing effective will be done).

Duty-of-care notebook ...

It can help if each teacher carries a notebook when 'on duty', to note down students' names and behaviour(s) that need follow-up and follow-through by senior staff. What is recorded (in the notebook) is transcribed daily in a monitoring / tracking book / computer 'tracking' in the staff room eg : date, time, student's name, incident, immediate action taken ... suggested follow-up noted. [This notebook carries the school logo so it looks appropriately 'official'. Perhaps a bright yellow notebook? Like the yellow card used in football.] If students run off or refuse to give a name/s, or students in an 'audience' refuse to supply a name/s we'll use the notebook to track students via the photo files.

STAFF NOTE BOOK : DUTY-OF-CARE

For all duty-of-care contexts
in our school.

(Name of school)

2019

STAFF NOTE BOOK

Use *skillfully* to **remind**, **offer choices to / warn** or **take names** of students challenging rules, routines, expectations and instructions in our school.

- ❖ Inside or outside classrooms
- ❖ On duty
- ❖ To assist *your* follow-through
- ❖ To inform other staff
- ❖ In conjunction with notes in student planners
- ❖ **For *positive* reporting where appropriate**

Our Aim : To create a *visible* and *professional* response to assist staff and students in our school.

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Please carry at all times

Date _____ Time

Name and form (check carefully)

Information / incident

Next Steps? (note in planner?)
(Key follow-up with colleague[s])

Print /
Sign

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nb This idea comes from a colleague of mine in the UK, Harry Pearce. I thank him for his support in this aspect of positive duty-of-care management.

Follow-up with students who challenge, swear and use offensive or harassing language to teachers

There are students who use offending or abusive or harassing language to teachers in non-classroom settings (they feel their behaviour will be less likely to be challenged or followed-up – particularly in larger schools ...). It is crucial, obviously, to address this as it happens directly, assertively (p 14f), but also to follow-up one-to-one (or with the several students ...)

This follow-up must include senior teacher support. The offending student/s is called to a special meeting with the teacher they have ill-treated, vilified or verbally abused, harassed or threatened. This meeting is facilitated by a senior staff member. The teacher addresses the student (face-to-face) through an *accountability dialogue* :-

- describing specifically the student's offending and abusive behaviour, briefly and clearly. It is not a lecture or harangue (tempting as that might be!). It will help to have

the student's *specific* harassing behaviour and language recorded (including a copy for the student/s in question), prior to any such meeting.

- The teacher, clearly, respectfully, describes how they feel about the student's *behaviour*, and why such behaviour is unacceptable (focusing on fundamental rights / responsibilities in the school's code of behaviour). The recorded list helps here ...
 - The student is given a right of reply. This is responded to by the senior teacher with special reference to *the basic rights / responsibilities of our school*. If the student counters that he was 'just joking', or 'mucking around', or 'other kids do it too ...' the facilitator will *refocus* why it is not 'a joke', or merely 'mucking around ...' and explain why ...
 - The teacher then describes what needs to happen 'now' and from now on ... i.e. : that *this* (be specific) kind of behaviour is totally unacceptable (explain why) and needs to stop. Students will often apologise; we point out the difference between sorry *words* and sorry *behaviours*.
 - The student/s is asked what they can do to reassure the teacher about the hurt they have felt regarding the student's behaviour.
 - The facilitator directs the student to the appropriate consequence : apology and assurance such behaviour (be specific) will not occur again. If considered necessary the senior staff facilitator will also direct the student (and teacher) to a review meeting in a week's time to 'see how things are going in the playground ...'
- When there has been any on-going harassment, a review meeting will need to involve parents. More serious harassment will always occasion parent contact (and formal due process for harassment),

The message to the student is we are *aware* of your behaviour and its effect on others' rights (just as they need to be); "*We cannot let you speak, or act in any way you feel like doing. Your behaviour is your 'choice', you will always be given a chance to have your say however you will also have to face the consequences of your 'choice' of behaviour.*"

On some occasions it will be necessary to point out that behaviour consequences can include loss of privileges regarding *social* play (appropriate when students play very aggressively or frequently hurt others); in-school suspension; parent notification; parent-teacher conference; out-of-school suspension.

nb Of course we need to balance the consequential aspects of discipline with the supportive aspects of discipline (such as restitution, restorative conferences, counselling, even developing supportive individual management plans for behaviour out-of-class). The most fundamental, and difficult, feature of such a 'balance' is that teachers will not hold grudges against such students.

Teacher management / discipline skills (some common examples)

The skills of behaviour management and discipline in non-classroom settings are based in *school-wide preferred practices* of behaviour leadership and discipline. (see Preferred practices in Rogers 2006a and 2011).²

'Teacher A' sees two boys play-fighting in the corridor or playground. He yells out (as he marches over) "Oi, you two, here! NOW! ..." He berates them, loudly and 'publicly' and puts both on detention. A slight overreaction?

In a similar situation 'Teacher B' directs the two students across to her (away from the immediate corridor 'audience'). As she knows these students (this always makes a difference) she personalises the direction. *Lifting* the voice firmly – with expectation – she calls them over ... "Adam (...), Lucas (...)" she pauses and repeats ... "Adam (...), Lucas (...)" They turn "Eh?!" (annoyed) "What? What'd we do?" She doesn't answer them; she repeats the 'call'. "See you over here for a moment." She turns aside (to remove *direct* eye-contact and give some take-up-time). They come over – away from their immediate peer audience – sulkily. She speaks to them quietly – now – at the side of the corridor : "I saw you doing some serious strangling and kicking. I know you're mates but – fellas – this isn't a football field without umpires."

When they argue, or protest, ('But we're just mucking around ...'(etc)) she will refocus them back to the fair rule or expectation, "Even if you are mates. Even if you think it's no big deal. That kind of 'play' is not on fellas." She separates amicably. If they refuse to 'come', or run off, (when she calls them) she will track them via the staff monitoring book (p 9). She will not run and chase them. The message of *certainty of follow-up* does not take long to 'get around' the 'tribal tom-toms' of a school.

She seeks to use positive corrective language, where possible, for the minor disruptions such as running in corridors eg “Walking in the corridor Jason ...” Rather than “Oi *you*, don’t run!” A quiet, pleasant, reminder to the students eating in the corridor ... “I notice you’re eating. Looks delicious; well sort of. What’s our rule for eating in corridors?” The standard reply to a descriptive reminder (and question about the rule) is : “Every other teacher lets us eat meat pies that slop residual gravy meat on the corridor lino. Every other teacher lets us drink Coke, and eat chips, and hot dogs ... in the corridor ... every single day ...” She replies : “Our school rule is clear ...” She beckons to the corridor exit door ... The teacher does not ‘argue the toss’. She will refocus to the school rule without defending the rule or arguing about which teachers do, or do not, allow eating in corridors. If the rule is clear (and fair) we do not need to keep defending it.

It does not help to over justify the fair rule or ‘reason’ with students in such a context.

Teacher : “... but the corridors get so messy with litter and bits of food and ...”

Student : “... are you saying *we’ll* drop food and litter? We know how to use a bin!”

Teacher : “I didn’t say *you* would drop litter did I?”

Student : “So; how come other teachers don’t hassle us about eating – we are in year 10 you know.”

Teacher : “Which other teachers let you eat in the corridor ...?”

And so it goes on ...

Corrective reminders – in such cases – can often be positive even non-verbal eg hats off inside / beckoning to the ‘eaters’ to go outside / even eye contact. Non-verbal reminders/corrections depend – of course – on how we communicate and the relational status of the teachers cueing the students; we need to know the student/s if we use non-verbal cueing. The corrective reminders can be encouragingly brief :-

“David, the bin’s over there” rather than “Don’t leave litter on the ground, what are you – pigs or what?”

“ ... Do the bin a favour ... give me a hand to pick up a few bits each, we’ll soon clear this area up.” (This to students sitting in ‘residual litter’.) Almost all students will respond reasonably to this positive, expectant, request (a few whinge – that’s par for course).

We always distinguish between how we address students we see dropping litter and how we address students ‘sitting in residual litter’.

In many schools where I work we take several plastic bags (and the cheap tongs) and pick up 5 bits of litter each *with students* while on duty; it is a basic expectation and most students are willing to give a 10-15 second help, even if there's a sighing whinge ... We do this in areas where students are sitting, eating and where there's residual litter ...

Addressing verbal or non-verbal harassment (see also earlier, p 10f)

If a student *mutters* sexist or racist language about a teacher (or to other students in the teacher's hearing) it will be important to address such behaviour assertively, unambiguously, without (tempting) counter-aggression.

A teacher hears a group of boys loudly 'mutter' comments about her body and clothing as she walks past. She stops, she eye-balls the whole group (they snigger). Speaking in an unambiguously assertive voice she says, "I don't know who said it, but I heard it. I don't want, or expect, *any* of you to make comments about my body or clothing. I expect you to stop now – *do you understand?*" One of the boys says (pathetically) that he was 'only joking'. She replies firmly – *eye-balling them all*, "It is not a joke – **ever** and it stops now; do you understand?" (This is a rhetorical retort.) She walks off. If she thinks it is appropriate she will also follow-up and follow-through by organising an accountability dialogue (see later) with key ringleaders; or each one of the group if necessary.

Any such comments need to be addressed (in the immediate short-term) straight away – and assertively with appropriate follow-up as necessary within that week. This will always minimise the behaviour of students who are tempted to go beyond the one-off gutless comment to any further confronting or harassing behaviours.

Assertion

Assertion is a skill. The ability to convey one's rights and needs (or to protect others' rights, needs and feelings) with appropriate degrees of assertion is not easy. The *skills* of assertion embrace :

- what we say :- the words and phrases, especially use of 'I' statements (see earlier example);

- Confident expression of non-verbal behaviours such as eye-contact; non-aggressive body language; firm tone of voice; the ability to convey anger unambiguously (but not aggressively); confident voice tone, as when directing students away from their immediate peers for a ‘private chat’ or rule reminder ...); use of take-up-time where appropriate.
- *Conveying anger* (within assertion) assertively, even respectfully – yet convincingly – means we will need :-
 - ~ To briefly, and *consciously*, ‘calm’ ourselves before we attempt to calm the other person(s). This does not mean we are unemotional but that we are controlling the expression of our anger *assertively* (especially what we say).
 - ~ To communicate *what* we are angry about. We do this briefly, addressing the behaviour rather than attacking the person.
 - ~ To give the student/s (who are disrespectful, verbally or gesturally rude / hostile / aggressive) cool-off-time wherever possible (especially in a fight situation). This will often involve *formal time-out*.
 - ~ To avoid merely shouting or yelling (or screaming) at students who are in conflict with us, or with each other.
A firm, *raised* voice is often necessary to gain attention eg “Oi!” / “Stop!” if they are a distance away ... (or even using the students’ names). This is different from yelling or screaming. The raised loudness in our voice / and our firmness is to gain attention; the teacher then drops the raised, tone and gives the command (or direction) in a firm, calm, ‘slower’ *assertive*, voice.

In less serious situations

- Where appropriate (and possible) distract the student(s) away from their immediate peer audience to ‘chat’, or remind them of the rules for (eg) playing handball and directing the question of responsibility back to them “*Where* should you be playing ...?” or “*What’s* our school rule for ...?”
All teachers should have a clear map of the playground with marked ‘out of bounds areas’ noted and designated ball games areas.
Avoid over-use of “Why?” questions when addressing student behaviour eg : “*Why* are you playing downball here ...?” It is more helpful to *describe* to the students what they are doing and then ask them *what* they should be doing (or ‘*where* they should be

playing; or ‘*what* our rule is for ...’) Eg : “You’re playing handball in the infant area of the playground. Where should you be playing handball?” If the students say that Mr or Mrs ‘x’, ‘y’, ‘z’ ‘lets them play here ...’ we will need to refocus them (without suggesting our fellow teachers are inept or incompetent) “I can check that with Mr or Ms ‘x’, ‘y’, ‘z’ – *where* should you be playing handball?” If they don’t know, or choose not to say, we will simply direct them where to play. If they refuse we need to make the consequence clear (this will, at times, include confiscating the ball) – and following up with the note book (see p 10).

- On minor ‘discipline’ issues (eg addressing eating in the corridor, or running in corridors, or low-level ‘testosteronic bonding’) the teacher can ‘preface’ any corrective rule-reminder with a brief greet and chat; it makes the corrective discipline easier to ‘take’ by the students (wherever possible). Staff will always enhance a more positive management style by adopting a ‘relationally personable’ tone wherever reasonably possible when moving around the school, the playground or supervising bus queues – *relaxed* vigilance.
- Avoid arguing with students in ‘the emotional moment’ (especially in front of their audience of peers). Keep the focus of the transaction (briefly) on their behaviour or the relevant school rule or right (with older students) as it addresses their behaviour.

Play-fighting

When confronting – and stopping – potentially serious play-fighting it is important the teacher addresses what they see and makes the corrective point clearly and decisively. Two lads are wrestling and punching each other – pushing each other into the lockers and holding up ‘through-traffic’ in the corridor. The teacher calls out “Oi!” to raise attention, or uses the students’ names if known. Firm, clear, *raised* voice. – She then drops the louder tone, to a clear, firm, assertive tone. “In *our* school *that* kind of play-fighting is not on. Full stop.” Students : “... but we were just muckin around gees! Is it a crime?” (They have stopped now.)

Teacher : “No; but it is a school rule.. Maybe it’s mucking around to you but in our school that kind of mucking around *is not on*. This is a reminder. Now – go and enjoy the rest of recess time without that kind of play.”

If she has to address *these* two boys *again* (in that week) about similar behaviours ... she will note it in the staff monitoring book (p 10). ‘Tracking’ of such students is important. Follow-up and follow-through, even on *overly vigorous* testosteronic bonding behaviour (above) says “... we are serious ... we need to talk about this a little longer ...” It invites clarification, and demonstrates the school’s commitment about basic rights *and responsibilities* and a fair and reasonable ‘behaviour culture *in our school*’. Follow-up also outlines the appropriate, *and certain*, consequences of such behaviours.

Dealing with aggressive behaviours and fighting

These behaviours are among the most difficult to address, especially at adolescent level. It is essential that all staff have thoughtfully discussed this issue. This is particularly important when teachers are engaged in duty-of-care management outside the classroom where they may not know the students concerned and have no ‘relational mileage’ to draw on (as it were).

It is also important for staff to discuss the legal implications of *any* sort of physical restraint of students. The appropriateness of *any* physical touch by teachers is often a topic of public discussion, and any use of physical restraint (say in a fight situation) should not be left *merely* to professional discretion. It should be the outcome of a whole-school discussion, policy and practice.³ (See also Rogers, 2011 and Rogers and McPherson, 2014).

These days when schools have been the target of litigation-conscious parents, we will need to have thought through the implications of situations where a student is : ‘... a danger to himself or others’. There are some – rare – occasions when physical restraint is appropriate but no teacher should be forced to have to restrain a student. If in doubt *always* send for colleague assistance – immediately. In any fight situation it is always advisable to send a ‘safe’ student to the administration to get another teacher (preferable senior teacher) on-site as soon as possible.

Schools now (of course) have mobile phone cue-ing on playground duty for colleague assistance in a crisis situation, or assessing a *potential* crisis ... Where there is an issue of significant concern or danger : where a student has 'done a runner'; a fight is 'brewing' or 'on'; students have threatened a teacher ..., or a student is on the roof, or up a tree ...

Some key points for whole-staff discussion will need to focus on the typical examples of aggressive (verbal or physical) behaviours in *our* school in terms of frequency; typical places where such behaviours occur; age; particular (noted) students; degree of seriousness and any precipitating factors.

From this 'needs-analysis' teachers can address :-

- What we're *currently* doing to deal with such behaviours :- *preventatively* where possible?; *correctively*? (in the immediate sense when we have to speak to students about their behaviour); *consequentially* ? : follow-up (mediation, restitution)?.
- How *consistent* is our practice (in terms of relaxed vigilance ...)?; How do we report incidents in terms of 'degree of seriousness'? (especially overly vigorous 'play-fighting' as distinct from 'full-on-fights');
- *What are our follow-up procedures?* (especially for students who run off when challenged ...). What is our typical use of, and kind of, consequences? Who is responsible for follow-up? What is the role of duty-teacher in any follow up / follow through?
- What are our preventative/educational measures? How clearly (for example) have we discussed the issue of 'play-fighting', 'rough-play', verbal hostility/aggression with our students in class meetings, tutor/pastoral groups?
It is always helpful for staff to access some kind of educational focus with students addressing and discussing the issues of 'male-ness' and 'male' behaviour, in light of stereotypes in sport and the media; peer-approval of aggression as a means of displaying power, status, or even one's 'manhood'; how relational conflict is dealt with in the media etc.
- Preventative measures will also need to include the basic – but essential – clarification of *safety and treatment rights and the responsibilities and consequences contingent on those rights*, for example with reference to any kind of bullying. These should be published in user-friendly language in each

classroom, learning area and each corridor area. 'Home groups' / tutor groups / pastoral groups can also discuss these issues in the establishment phase of the year, or as a special focus issue.⁴

- Schools also need to have a published policy and plan for staff in terms of addressing verbal or physical harassment, aggression, violence and fighting. Staff should also receive professional development in this area of concern. The overriding policy concern, and need, is to create an environment, where *the fundamental rights of safety and fair treatment are protected by a school-wide policy and practice involving all members of the school community.*

Fighting : in the immediate moment

In a fight situation it is important to take decisive action as soon as possible :

- Give a firm, clear command – even from a distance – once a fight or serious play-fight is in progress. A universal command such as “Stop!” – said firmly and loudly – indicates to *all* (the audience and those involved in the ‘fight’) that an immediate response by students is required. We will often have to repeat the command to gain attention, especially if the students are locked in combat.

“**Stop**; Stop fighting *now!*”, or “Move away *now*” The command to separate, accompanied by decisive teacher body language, should also convey unambiguously what is expected of the students. It is also important to direct the peer audience away immediately.

“Right (...) – All of you – (this to the watching, baiting (?) peer audience), I don’t want to see any of you here within 5 seconds. I’m counting ... *move!* ...” Then focus on the immediate participants. The audience of peers is often waiting for adult ‘permission’ to leave in a face-saving way! A kind of ‘social permission’, particularly for boys ...

- It will be important to give the students engaged in the conflict some cool-off-time (often separately and away from all other students) before we seek to find out what happened and where we go from here.

If fighting students refuse to separate we will need to send for help as soon as possible and have a school-wide procedure for back-up support. Whenever we sense *any* serious trouble ‘brewing’ it is advisable to send a phone cue to the office. Whatever immediate action we take, we need to make sure the peer audience is firmly directed to

move away. Physical intervention in a fight is always risky (see earlier). I have been in situations where a couple of the members of the student audience will often offer to 'help out' by restraining those engaged in the fight. This can sometimes help, *providing* the larger student audience actually moves well away. We always need to 'read' such situations quickly and decide whether to accept restraining student assistance or intervene oneself. *Always send for adult back-up.*

In less serious situations a call to attention / focus should convey we want to speak to the students *now*. "Oi!" said firmly, then drop the voice (as we eye-ball the miscreants)"I want to see you ..." (as you firmly eye the participating miscreants) "over here now". This last command is said in a normal – but assertive – voice. It is the initial "Oi!" or "Stop!" (or the use of students' first names if known) that needs the *raised* voice (not shouting or screaming but the *authoritative* raised voice). If we *keep* the voice raised through the whole altercation we only increase the arousal of the miscreants and the audience. As noted several times now, after the raised voice, we can drop the voice of command to a more measured (but still) assertive tone.

A key feature of communicating calmness in a tense (or potentially tense) situation is to *use* the voice and the words *together* to initiate a more calm, focused, authoritative sense of 'control'. This is, of course, part skill / part personality and comes under the broad heading of assertive behaviour and should be explored as part of staff in-servicing and professional development.

Special situations (critical incidents)

There are times when situations of imminent danger require a 'calm', 'controlled', 'decisive', voice and manner.

A student walked into a high school classroom with a large knife, visibly angry (eyes ablaze, muscles tensed, heavy breathing, fists clenched ...). He walked in and stared at a fellow male student and threatened to "Cut him!" (apparently this student had gone out with 'his girl').

My colleague looked at the knife-wielding student. She knew him quite well. Initially her anxious heart skipped and raced, but she addressed the boy by his name, calmly

and with quiet firmness "... Jayson (...), Jayson (...), look at me ...". As they faced each other at the front of the class she said, in a *calm steady voice*, "I know you are very upset. I know you don't want to hurt anyone here. I know you don't want to hurt anyone with the knife. I know you don't want to hurt me. Put it down over here ... Please." (she beckoned to the teacher's table). All through this episode she kept her voice 'relaxed', calm and firm – and giving *stable eye-contact*. Her body language was calm – no jerky movement. She repeated, quietly – calmly – clearly ... "Put it down now Jayson. Please. We can talk it over. Come on ...". She beckoned, with her hand, and arm, to the open door ...

There are no guarantees in behaviour management contexts like this one, but there are some likely probabilities depending how we (as the adult) behave :

He put the knife down, still very tense and upset. He walked off with the teacher as she beckoned him away, out of the classroom. She also quickly, non-verbally 'signalled' to a student to go to the office ... Fortunately the 'tribal tom-toms' had already reached the principal and he was approaching the classroom. The now 'calmer' student walked off with the teacher, and principal, as another teacher took control of her class (and the knife).

When my colleague reached the office she 'collapsed', up until then she had operated on 'social intelligent overdrive' backed by experience (and adrenalin!).

While there are no guarantees in a situation like this, key behaviours (based on experience and skill) operate to increase the likelihood of a defused – and safer – outcome :-

- *Consciously* calming oneself before calming others.
- Communicating such calmness by giving brief, specific, firm directions – or brief assurances with stable – calm – non-invasive body language.
- No raised voices (in this context) or counter-aggression.
- Distract the student away from peers or imminent danger if at all possible.
- Get adult assistance as soon as possible;
- Always debrief with teacher (and the class) later.

Fortunately she knew this student quite well and the likely explanation of this fortunate outcome was that the student responded to her *relational* decisiveness and assertion (based

in relational trust) in the emotional moment. In any situation like this it is important that the teacher concerned fully debrief with senior colleagues before leaving the school that day.

Fortunately – too – these sorts of scenarios are rare in Australian schools. Of course in any such situations (as was the case in this incident) police will almost always be involved. It is important that have a supportive, working relationship with the local police (especially community policing).

Physical intervention in a fight

It is always risky to physically separate students who are fighting. One day while on playground duty I came around a corner and saw (ten metres or more away) a loud melee – mainly males. As I pushed through the peer audience (“Move aside – *now!* ...”) I saw (in the emotional instancy) two boys pummelling each others’ faces and grasping hair; anger and malice in their faces. Some in the peer audience were clearly ‘baying for blood’ and taking sides. I directed the peer audience away immediately; fortunately most went. I commanded the two boys to stop – it had no effect.

The smaller of the two boys was clearly getting hurt; blood already visible on his face. I tried once more repeating the command “Stop it ... *now!*” – I pushed my arm between them, pushed the larger boy off, he then bolted. The other boy started to run (screaming obscenities at the other, disappearing, boy). I held him and said (as calmly as I could) “When you’ve stopped screaming and you’ve calmed down I’ll let you go.” I held him firmly across the chest from the back. He struggled for a while ... then physically collapsed; crying. A colleague had arrived. I sent her off to look for the other boy and walked, with Brett, to the office.

I asked him to take a seat, adding : “I want you to take a few minutes to just settle down *inside*, I tapped my chest, and up here (I tapped my head) then we’ll talk ...” “Have a drink ...” I passed him a beaker of water. Once calmed down we were then able to pursue the process of resolution (see later).

It is always risky intervening physically in fights, one can get hurt so easily as the student flails their arms or legs (or teeth!) While experience helps here, no teacher should be forced

to adopt a school policy that says they must physically intervene (and restrain) if the child refuses to stop the fighting and someone is clearly in danger.

If any teacher is uncomfortable in exercising any kind of physical intervention they should immediately send for colleague assistance and stay, to direct the peer audience away. The need for physical intervention and restraint is (thankfully) a rare occurrence – in most schools.

There are professional development courses that teachers can undertake to teach ‘professional restraint procedures’, and in some difficult schooling contexts it is necessary to include this in staff professional development. (See Rogers, 2011 and Rogers and McPherson, 2014).

While it is somewhat disconcerting to have to detail these issues about dealing with aggressive behaviour and fighting, it *is* the reality in some schools; the *professional* response is to acknowledge these issues and develop a school policy to address them.

Most students in a ‘fight-type’ situation respond to a decisive command to “Stop ...!” and they then move away – reluctantly – but they normally move. Teachers will need to know how they will proceed from there :- Direct the students to a time-out area? To the office? Take them aside for a brief chat? (this for non-serious fighting) and what to do (in addition) if the students stop fighting but run off and refuse to come when the teacher calls them.

If all teachers target so called ‘play-fighting’ with relaxed vigilance; if there is a school culture (addressed educationally as well as managerially) that rejects overly ‘playful’ hostility, aggression and violence as ‘acceptable behaviour’, or as ‘acceptable solutions to conflict’, there will be fewer fights and a clearer understanding of what the expectations and norms of reasonable behaviour are in *our* school (even if the norms outside of school are different!) It is also important for male teachers to model non-hostile, non-aggressive, leadership and discipline behaviour across the school. If we scream; yell; grab; push; threaten; intimidate, or use sarcasm and embarrassment when we engage behaviour leadership and in discipline we can hardly expect students to accept our call for rights-enhancing behaviour! We can all learn to be assertive (where we need to be) without being hostile or overly aggressive (p 13f).

Follow-up after a fight

Cool-off-time (supervised by administration) should always precede any student mediation :-

- Allow right-of-reply by both (all) parties after cool-off-time. Key questions to ask are :-
 - What happened?
 - How do you feel now?
 - What right was affected by your behaviour?
 - What can we do to work things out things now (where possible) and for consideration for future situations in the playground?
 - How can we help to fix things up (?) sort things out (?) make things better so this sort of thing will not happen again?
- Keep records of student responses (as well as records of the incidents).
- Consider whether student to student accountability-dialogue may be appropriate. (See later).
- Outline the appropriate behaviour consequences; this will depend, somewhat, on the nature and seriousness of the fight. In some schools any kind of fighting involves immediate suspension processes; other schools adopt a 'degree-of' seriousness' approach to fighting involving right-of-reply, mediation and accountability dialogue.

Suspension

The school administration should not hesitate to suspend students who have a habit of aggressive behaviour, especially fighting and *any* continued bullying. As with all suspension procedures there should be due-process that is followed-up by those who report and those (administration) who process the follow-up and the follow-through with student/s and parents.

Suspension can send a clear message that *certain behaviours* are so serious they can never be tolerated here in *our* school. Suspension also gives a *formal* cooling-off-time for all. It should be followed by thoughtful follow-through procedures when the student(s) return to school. Part of the due-process of follow-through will often occasion an accountability conference. (See later).

If there are some 'hangers-on' (in the audience) who refuse to 'go' (in an audience to a fight) when directed these students should also be followed-up, mainly with regard to refusing to obey reasonable, and necessary, teacher directions (as well as making things generally worse for all involved!).

Put-downs and harassment by students to each other

Teachers often hear put-downs in corridors and playgrounds from “Idiot!”, “Dropkick!”, “Ar__hole!” through to swearing, homophobic and racist language. Professional digression by teachers will need to be used for the *sotto voce* kind of put-down – and swearing – often described by students as ‘having fun.’ We will need to distinguish such language from any vehement racist or sexist slur, or put-down, delivered in a loud, aggressive, manner.

In the first instance, calling the student(s) aside for a *quiet word* / clarification, or rule-reminder is often enough : “... that’s a put-down ...”, “... excuse me (...) that kind of language is not on (or acceptable) here”. The tone of such a reminder does not need to be nasty or ‘high-minded’, or petty – just *quietly serious*. If the student discounts what they have just said, or argues, “... it don’t matter if I call him a dickhead or a poofter he doesn’t care do you Craig ...?” “It’s no big deal!” The teacher will need to clearly redirect : “Maybe your mate(s) doesn’t care; we do. I’m simply reminding you to use thoughtful language in our school.”

The fact that the teacher *makes the effort* to speak to a student/s about such language, itself, says the school cares about issues such as basic respect in our relational behaviour, and use of inter-personal language.

If the overheard / observed put-down is loud, racist, sexist, homophobic or bullying language the teacher can walk over and firmly (and unambiguously) point out “That’s a racist comment and totally unacceptable here”. Some teachers may not feel confident to assertively address students in this way. It needs to be pointed out though that :-

- if a teacher merely walks past a loud, racist or sexist comment(s) by students it (tacitly) indicates a school attitude that says it ‘doesn’t matter’, or ‘we don’t care’;
- Assertion is a *skill* – it is the ability to convey our needs and rights (or protect others’ needs and rights) in a clear, firm, non-aggressive way. Teachers need skills of assertion; there are times when they need to clearly assert, direct, confront and even command students regarding their behaviour. By discussing the sorts of situations where such teacher behaviour is necessary, and exploring language skills to address such situations, teacher confidence, professionalism and consistency is enhanced (p 13).

Where possible direct the perpetrator(s) aside from their audience to minimise student(s) ‘grandstanding’. It is also important to follow-up with the students concerned at a later stage.

Teachers on duty will need, therefore, to have a school-wide procedure for reporting (as referral) for follow-up of such students. Any follow-up of serious put-downs and harassing language / behaviour should always involve a senior teacher *and* the reporting teacher (wherever possible – see below).

Accountability dialogue (See Rogers 2015)

For serious put-downs and harassing language or threatening language / behaviour, senior staff will need to call the perpetrator and victim into an accountability dialogue at a calmer, specified time.

- make sure that victim and perpetrator(s) have had ample cool-off-time (even several days later if necessary);
- Get the facts straight about the verbal/non-verbal harassment – and written down *beforehand*;
- Invite, and encourage, the ‘victim’ to come into a one-to-one meeting with the perpetrator of the harassment / bullying. This meeting will be fully supported by a senior staff member. It is essential to plan this meeting carefully, with the victim (of the harassment) beforehand.

At this meeting the perpetrator’s behaviour will be addressed in the light of the school’s non-negotiable rights of safety and fair-treatment and they will have to ‘hear-out’ what the victim has to say about the perpetrator’s behaviour. The perpetrator will, of course, be given a right-of-reply. They will also be directed (and expected) to account for their behaviour and its consequences; to apologise and assure the victim it will not happen again. Beyond sorry words *to sorry behaviour*.

Of course it is crucial to plan ahead with the student or victim (or teacher victim) as to what sort of things they will need to say when facing the perpetrator; in a ‘one-to-one’ meeting the re-living of such events can naturally be stressful. This approach can, however, be empowering and supporting to the victim. It will be pointed out clearly to the perpetrator why his behaviour is wrong and unacceptable. Such a meeting also gives a ‘public’ acknowledgement of what happened, in the sense that the bully’s behaviour is exposed before a senior teacher – (as well as the victim of their harassment). Bullying students trade in ‘secrecy’ from adults (not from their social peers of course – they seek ‘social approval’ for

their bullying behaviour – their social power ...). This accountability meeting includes the victim in the school's formal response to the perpetrator in question.

It is also important that the victim (even if the victim is a teacher) not use this formal meeting merely as an opportunity to gain some kind of psychological revenge. Keeping the basic respect intact in such a meeting is essential to any workable outcome (difficult but essential).

- At the meeting the teacher will set the context by explaining why the perpetrator and fellow student ('victim') are here, now. As noted earlier, teachers are sometimes victims of bullying by students. Reference is always made to the written record of their specific bullying behaviour. The victim is then invited to make clear to the perpetrator (as they face them) :-
 - what it is the bullying student/s did, or said, or suggested, or implied or texted, or posted on social media ... (sometimes with gutless repetition over many days).
 - Where and when (all this has been written down prior to the meeting).
 - How the bullying behaviour has affected the student (the victim).
 - How the bullying behaviour affects *basic, fundamental, rights of safety and respect*.
- The victim then outlines what they want to happen as a result of this 'meeting'. Most victims of harassment simply want an acknowledgement by the perpetrator that they did the wrong thing (explain briefly – and clearly – why such behaviour is wrong) and expect the perpetrator to apologise for their behaviour and give an assurance that this harassing behaviour will not occur again ie : to take responsibility and accountability for *their behaviour*.
- The facilitating teacher (a senior teacher) will, of course, give the opportunity of an appropriate right-of-reply to the perpetrator. If the perpetrator discounts (or excuses) their behaviour the facilitator will firmly bring them back to the essential rights and responsibilities "... *we all have here at our school*."

Many students will discount their behaviour by saying that it was "just a joke", or "others do it too", or "I didn't mean to upset them ... (the victim)". It is crucial we clarify that such behaviour is not a joke *because ... (always clarify why)*; "even if others did it *you are responsible for what you do, say, suggest, text, 'post' online about others ...*"; "You say you didn't mean to ...*but you did behave in this (be specific again) way. You are*

responsible for thinking about your behaviour and its consequences. Bullying is never OK. Ever.”

- It is important to keep a record of the event/s that necessitated the meeting as well as a record of the accountability session and outcome.
- It will also be essential to direct the perpetrator as to *what they will do* to ensure that this sort of language / behaviour will not occur again. This puts the responsibility back onto the offending student. To enhance future responsibility it will be necessary to reconvene a second meeting with the perpetrator in a week's time "... to see how things are going....". This alerts the perpetrator to their on-going responsibilities – to monitor and regulate their behaviour. If there is no meaningful change in the bullying student's behaviour the review meeting will outline further consequences (including formal meeting with the parent/s and pursuing the school's harassment policy).
- If there is a group of harassing students (often with a ringleader) it is advisable to interview them *one at a time*, with the 'victim' (if the victim is willing). Such meetings are also appropriate for situations where the teacher is the victim of harassing behaviour by student(s)..

Summary

It's rarely possible to get all teaching staff to agree 100% on precept and practice for behaviour, leadership and management across a school. Notwithstanding the variance in teacher personality, temperament, experience and skill it is important for staff to gain common agreement in behaviour management practice. The issue of disruptive and aggressive behaviour outside the classroom setting needs to be addressed from a *whole-school* policy perspective that outlines and addresses :-

- (1) Clear aims and purposes regarding duty-of-care by staff outside the classrooms :- to enable a safe, fair, orderly, even enjoyable out-of-class environment for all our students. These aims enable, and shape, our discipline practice in such a way as students are more likely to own their behaviour in a way that respects others' rights.

- (2) Preferred whole-school practices for discipline and behaviour management; (practices that enhance 'relaxed vigilance' by teachers engaged in duty-of-care. See Rogers 2006[b]). See also notes on *Whole-School Preferred Practice* (2019)
- (3) Common action plans that address key aspects of duty of care and management beyond the classroom :-
- corridor areas.
 - 'tuck-shop'/canteen areas.
 - inside meal/eating areas.
 - playground management.
 - wet-day management.
 - bus duty and bus supervision.
 - excursions out of school.
- (4) A common framework for applying behaviour consequences. For serious, dangerous, aggressive, behaviours the consequences will need to be known in advance; published and made clear in discussion with students in the establishment phase of the year and revisited as needs arise during the year. For less serious behaviours, consequences will normally be negotiated with student(s) and a senior teacher with reference to the school's code of rights, responsibilities and rules.

It is also important to have a published 'degree of seriousness framework' regarding consequences for behaviours such as threatening others; aggression and fighting; verbal, physical, sexual harassment. The degree-of-seriousness framework will address immediate action, as well as formal due process such as parent conferencing and accountability conferences and restorative-justice approaches.

- (5) Commitment to case-manage (where possible) students with on-going behaviour 'problems'. Such 'case-management' will develop positive *individual behaviour plans* with such students to increase their positive behaviour choices. All staff will need to support such plans if they are to be beneficial for the student in question.

- (6) Communicate to all students – in the establishment phase of the year – **the importance of basic rights and responsibilities** as they relate to behaviour anywhere in school – playground, canteen, on the bus or excursion ...

These rights are non-negotiable :-

- ~ **The right to feel safe** at school (psychologically/physically).
- ~ **The right to be treated fairly and with basic respect.**

As with any right the statement is easy, the concept understandable; the practice of such right enabling behaviour is subject – always – to the vagaries of human nature. We point out to students the difference between liking and respecting; respecting others (including basic civility and manners) is seen in our actions, our behaviour. This right includes the non-discrimination of others by virtue of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation ...

We will also need to point out that if students ignore, or challenge, teacher management when students are reminded of rights and responsibilities, that there will always be follow-up by senior staff. This forewarns any students who whinge about teachers ‘taking down names’ because they were *just* ‘play fighting’, or eating in the corridor (whatever ...) or just mucking around when they use disrespectful or hurtful or racist/sexist/homophobic language.

The follow-up of any such students *only* occurs where they have been unfairly, and unreasonably, rude or abusive in response to a teacher’s reminder, or direction, about irresponsible, inconsiderate, unacceptable or dangerous behaviour.

You may well be in a school that does not have such behaviour issues. Most of my work has been (and is) in ‘challenging schools’ where colleagues have to address the behaviour issues addressed here.

A whole school approach to these issues can give direction, encouragement, confidence and an appropriate sense of security to teachers and students alike. Above all a whole-school approach will seek to establish, and maintain a safe school ethos and environment for everyone.

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See also *Developing a student behaviour agreement (middle and secondary level)* Rogers, 2015. (In-service notes)

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Footnotes

¹ Many schools (even educational regions) now develop shared policy and management practice with bus service providers.

² See notes on Whole-school Approaches :- Preferred practices (2019)

³ Duty of Care :-

A duty-of-care may then be owed, not only to refrain from injury-creating activities, but to take steps to protect that person from injury. Such a responsibility applies in respect of a teacher's duty to a student. ... being to subject persons under their control to such reasonable supervision as to prevent injury to other persons. These persons could be other students or outsiders who may reasonably be foreseen as being endangered by a lack of control.

The law of negligence

Liability for negligence rests on three elements being satisfied. First there needs to be a duty to take care. Next the standard of care required must be breached. Finally the damage thereby arising must be caused by the breach of duty and must not be too remote from that breach.

The courts have long recognised that teachers owe a duty-of-care to students in their charge. This duty is not limited to refraining from doing things that may lead to a student being injured, but also obliges a teacher to take positive steps towards maintaining safety.

The *standard* of care that is required cannot be fixed with scientific precision. The law of negligence sets the standard of care as that expected of the reasonable person in the same position. In the school context this means the reasonable teacher armed with the education, skills and insights appropriate for that vocation.

Negligence requires that there be sufficient connection between the breach of duty and the damage. This connection can include a question of causation. If it was highly likely that an injury would have occurred even if all reasonable steps had been taken.

Boer and Gleeson (1982) pp 122 – 126

The Law of Education

⁴ See : Developing a student behaviour agreement middle / secondary level. Rogers, 2015 (notes).