WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN THE CLASSROOM?

Bridging the Gap Between Research and Practice

CARL HENDRICK AND ROBIN MACPHERSON

ILLUSTRATIONS BY OLIVER CAVIGLIOLI
What does this look like in the classroom?

so if they get a high grade on something it might be because they've just spent six weeks studying it, but that's not actually a representation I feel of how they really are doing on the larger domain, which is ultimately what grades of summative assessments tend to do.

Robin introduces

Chapter 2

Behavior

Many teachers feel that they are not supported when dealing with unruly pupils because sanctions and support from line managers are flimsy at best.

What we know about behavior shows that the most successful measures with the most tangible impact come from school leadership teams.

Getting behavior right in schools is a core ingredient in the health of the profession. Yet there exists a wide range of approaches to the problem.

The evidence collated supports the claim that there is a national problem with behavior, though the word ‘crisis’ is contentious.

One-quarter of teachers are not happy with behavior standards and don’t feel supported, which translates into a questionable education for the corresponding quarter of some eight-and-a-half million young people in the school-age population.
Many research blogs have pointed out that a well-ordered classroom is a poor proxy for learning. However, if learning is to take place at all, then there needs to be an environment in which it can thrive. Behaviour is (to state the obvious) pivotal if pupils are to have a chance of success in their education. You will not find a school that can combine academic success and mayhem in classrooms and corridors. You will, sadly, find a typical pattern whereby schools with weak policies on behaviour combine this with poor academic performance.

Despite this being desperately obvious, many teachers feel that they are not supported when dealing with unruly pupils because sanctions and support from line managers are flimsy at best. Journalists who want to fill column inches with the (revegetory) claim that behaviour in schools in the UK is at crisis point have little trouble finding anecdotal evidence, and then they simply have to tack on some figures about exclusion rates. Yet do these claims hold up to critical scrutiny? And which approaches to behaviour management reap the greatest dividends?

What we know about behaviour shows that the most successful measures with the most tangible impact come from school leadership teams. If a teacher who is overloaded and up all night preparing lessons comes into a classroom that borders on anarchy because there is a lack of firm leadership at the top, then you have a toxic mix. Getting behaviour right in schools is a core ingredient in the health of the profession.

Yet there exists a wide range of approaches to the problem. On the one hand you have schools that preach traditional methods, zero tolerance and cultivate a reputation for being strict. On the other hand there are methods like restorative justice which argue that detentions don’t work and that the rules should be developed and maintained by pupils. The Restorative Justice Council makes bold claims about the efficacy of a taking this innovative approach to behaviour issues:

Restorative approaches enable those who have been harmed to convey the impact of the harm to those responsible, and for those responsible to acknowledge this impact and take steps to put it right. Restorative approaches refer to a range of methods and strategies which can be used both to prevent relationship-damaging incidents from happening and to resolve them if they do happen. Becoming a restorative school has many benefits, including increased attendance, reduced exclusions and improved achievement. It can also alleviate problems such as bullying, classroom disruption, truancy and poor attendance, antisocial behaviour, and disputes between pupils, their families, and members of staff.

Both strategies have produced serious heat in debates; as seen by the panel discussion at the 2017 Telegraph Festival of Education. In 2015 Tom Bennett was appointed by then Secretary of State Nicky Morgan to head up a government task force on behaviour; in response to widespread claims that there was a behaviour crisis in schools. Tom is a long-standing blogger and researcher in this area. He has been very consistent in writing about the basic principles of behaviour management:

I have visited a lot of schools in my time, and I’m afraid to say that my overwhelming impression is that the ones that have the best results also have the best behaviour, and it’s almost always because they take it seriously: they talk explicitly about standards and boundaries and expectations; they revisit these regularly; they have staff dedicated to its execution, rather than simply expecting staff to absorb it into their existing timetables.

Tom’s report was published in 2017 and the findings make for fascinating reading. The evidence collated supports the claim that there is national problem with behaviour, though the word ‘crisis’ is contentious. Evidence from the Teacher Voice Omnibus carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research showed fairly consistent responses from 2013 to 2015 about perceptions of behaviour standards in schools, and interestingly there is a marked improvement since 2008. Approximately three-quarters of teachers think that their school has standards which are good or better, and feel equipped to tackle issues. Crucially, the report also shows that, ‘there are many schools that demonstrate it is possible to improve in even the most beleaguered of circumstances.’ Whilst all of this seems very positive, the report also points out that one-quarter of teachers are not happy with behaviour standards and don’t feel supported, which translates into a questionable education for the
corresponding quarter of some eight-and-a-half million young people in the school-age population.

The questions we received about behaviour made for fascinating reading and discussion. Whilst many related to specific policies and strategies, a theme throughout was about cultivating a good relationship with pupils. There are undoubtedly students who have complex behavioural issues which require a wider support network than just the classroom teacher. Extreme behaviour issues are also clearly rooted in poverty and deprivation. However, for many pupils – and indeed classes – a strong relationship developed over time and a high level of intellectual challenge will do a lot to shape a positive learning environment and reduce low-level disruption. One of the most experienced heads and teacher trainers is Dr Jill Berry, author of Making the Leap: Moving from Deputy to Head. Jill has over 30 years’ experience in teaching and leadership and has been working full time in teacher training and consultancy since 2010. Who better, then, than Jill and Tom to answer the questions from practitioners?
When do punishments work?

Tom: Punishments as part of education make many people recoil. But we have to consider what punishments represent, why they are used, and what form they take. Punishments can aim to be deterrents, revenge, retribution, rehabilitation ... the most important sense in which they are relevant to school contexts is as a cue as to what is and what is not permitted or encouraged. Every classroom is a micro-culture, and every culture has social norms and expectations. It's how cultures survive. I find it amazing how easily people can come around to the idea if one describes punishments as sanctions, so laden with baggage is the term.

So punishments work when they successfully reinforce the useful social norms you expect to see manifest in the classroom. Every teacher needs to introduce and maintain the culture they want to see in the classroom, and that means they need to set cues about acceptable behaviour and attitudes. Sanctions are an essential part of that; by supporting clear boundaries and limits to acceptability. No society can endure without them; no community has been recorded in the history of human community that doesn't have rules, and sanctions to underpin those rules.

So: sanctions work when they support the behaviour you want to see in the classroom; when they are proportionate, predictable and just. As the old saying goes: the certainty of the sanction is far more important than the severity of the sanction. It is the hum of the fence that reminds us it is electric; it doesn't need to kill anyone to do what it must.

Jill: When they send a clear message to all involved (and on the periphery) about where the parameters of acceptable behaviour lie. Where they help young people understand about good and poor choices and decisions and where, ideally, these young people are motivated to choose more wisely in the future.

How do you promote creativity in a classroom where the overriding issue is managing poor behaviour?

Tom: This question is best tackled in reverse: whatever creativity is (and the subject is as philosophical as it is empirical) it is best served, encouraged, instilled by a classroom environment that is calm and positive. The only creativity that a chaotic classroom encourages is the tendency of the teacher to develop new and more novel ways to handle misbehaviour. You cannot reliably promote creativity in a poorly behaved classroom. This is because creativity is, at heart, supported and scaffolded by secure domain knowledge in one's subject. There is very little we can do to make children creative by itself; instead we are best occupied in our attempts to teach them content that they can be creative with. This, and every other school ambition, is best served by good behaviour. It is the necessary condition for every other school good. So, in a classroom where the overriding issue is poor behaviour, the solution is clear: tackle the behaviour. Vilify misconduct; lionise exemplary thought and deed. Then, and only then, can we say that creativity has its best atmosphere in which to breathe. There is no sense in believing that creativity somehow thrives in adversity. For every outlier for whom this is true, there are 24 other pupils who suffer instead.

Jill: I think if the overriding issue is managing poor behaviour, then you have to manage poor behaviour before you can achieve much at all. I really don't think you can promote creativity DESPITE poor behaviour. If children are behaving badly, in my experience they're not receptive to learning, and they're distracting and disrupting the learning
of others. You have to focus on this before you can promote creativity. You have to establish some sense of calm, first, and I know that can be challenging. HOW you do it will depend on a range of factors – the age of the children, your relationship with them, the context in which you are teaching, the environment and whatever external factors are affecting the pupil behaviour. There are no easy answers and quick fixes. But I would say establishing positive behaviour and constructive routines in the classroom is non-negotiable. Learning can’t happen if you don’t have that in place.

**What is the most effective way of engaging the disengaged?**

**Tom:** The first thing to say is that engagement is a goal which is very easily misunderstood. Because every teacher wants their students to be attentive and interested in the class material, we value engagement to a fetishistic extent. But engagement is an outcome, not a process, and many sins are committed in its name. Another thing to consider is that disengagement occurs for many reasons, not all of them within the immediate ability of the teacher to remedy. If they are disengaged because they are bored by a poorly taught lesson, if the material is too far beneath or above their comprehension, then the teacher should look at their content and delivery. But far more frequently teachers have to wrestle with the obvious truism that not everything we teach is intrinsically fascinating, not everything we say will grip and animate our pupils.

The best way to make sure as many pupils are as focused as possible is to make it clear that the expectation is for high level and deliberate attention and effort to be given in the subject at hand. And when this attention drops below an acceptable level, an intervention from the teacher MUST occur. If not, the long, slow slide to carelessness begins.

**Jill:** I think you need to examine root causes and be sensitive to context. Why are they disengaged and which part of this may be in your control? As teachers, do we have agency and how can we use it to best effect? We can’t solve every child’s problems – we can’t ‘fix’ them all – much as we may love to do that. But we can work to establish the most positive relationship with each individual, show we care about them and their progress, separate the behaviour from the individual as far as humanly possible so that disapproval of behaviour, including lack of engagement, isn’t seen as an attack on them personally. Rather it’s about helping them to see what is and isn’t acceptable in terms of behaviour/engagement, and why. I like the Doug Lemov argument about never accepting ‘Dunno’ and a shrug. Get across that it’s fine to get it wrong and learn from that, but it isn’t acceptable not to think, not to try, not to care. Get to the point where the individual vocalises the correct answer (perhaps provided by another student) and receives positive affirmation for that. We need to encourage students to take responsibility for their learning and to see what success feels like, building on the positives wherever we possibly can.

Again, it depends a great deal on the age of the children, what may motivate them, and what they see as desirable and undesirable experiences. It depends on your developing relationship with them. I’m a secondary specialist and I remember saying to older teenagers in my early years of teaching, ‘If you choose not to work, and you don’t achieve what you could, as a result, there is an argument that says it’s your choice – it’s your life, your responsibility. But if your words or actions stop other people learning, or take up so much of my time that I don’t have the chance to support other people’s learning,'
What does this look like in the classroom?

that's totally unacceptable. Because that's their life, and their choice, not yours.' In my experience, the vast majority of learners got that and it helped them to modify their behaviour. (They care about what their peers think much more than they care about what the teacher thinks, I reckon! And young people often have a great sense of fairness.)

I would also make clear that we are on the same side. We want the same things. They want to achieve, in the main (I have met very few students who didn't, and even fewer parents), and I can help them with that. If they fight me and make it more difficult for me to do that, they're shooting themselves in the foot. They will pass on through the school and I will teach hundreds more students but, for them, the English GCSE results they ended up with would stay with them for the rest of their lives. Sometimes this helped focus the mind and increase engagement.

What's the best way of dealing with low-level disruption?

**Tom:** By getting in front of it. Low level disruption is by far the most common misbehaviour in mainstream schools. It can never be eradicated completely, but it can be minimised; not by responding to it (although it is necessary to) but more importantly by laying clear behaviour expectations to the class from the start, and insisting as much as is reasonable that these levels are met. Designing and communicating clear, concrete routines to the class long in advance of any misbehaviour will minimise misbehaviour, because students will be aware of the classroom cultural norms. Driven home often enough, it can create tram lines for behaviour to default to. Instead of leaving behavioural choices to chance, the best strategy is for teachers to draw up exactly what is expected of their students from the beginning of the relationship.

In terms of dealing with misbehaviour after it occurs, the responses can be as varied as the offence. But generally, there needs to be a reaction as close to the behaviour as possible, in order to reinforce the connection between the misbehaviour and the negative reaction. Sanctions are often all that is required. For more difficult circumstances, contacting home or enlisting support may be more appropriate.

**Jill:** Low-level disruption is difficult because it IS low level, and you don’t want to over-react, but it IS disruptive so you do need to tackle it. You just need to address it in the least intrusive way you can. I think it's about establishing the most positive, constructive routines and clear expectations from the very beginning of your time with a new class, helping them to understand the rationale behind these routines and expectations, even perhaps devising those ground-rules in negotiation with the students so that they have some investment/buy-in when it comes to making them work: what routines and behaviours in this classroom will ensure everyone has the best possible chance of learning effectively and achieving success? Then, when everyone is absolutely clear about the expectations, be consistent in your application and reinforcement of them. Don't ignore low-level poor behaviour, which can actually be the most disruptive thing of all, because it can escalate, especially if it's motivated by attention-seeking (from their peers as well as from you).

Correct the poor behaviour in the least invasive way you can, though, so that the process of dealing with the behaviour doesn't itself overly disrupt others' learning. Again, Lemov is good on this, as is Bill Rogers. Consider: where you stand (sometimes just moving towards the source of the behaviour is enough); where and how you look; body language; quick use of a student’s name (with perhaps a positive instruction, and a thank you, rather than a comment specifically on the undesirable behaviour). *Teach Like a Champion* 2 is full of practical strategies for managing low-level disruption but, as always, you need to adapt to your context and to take into account your relationship with the learners. (I've worked with HMCTT trainees for the last three years and have suggested the book as essential reading.)

I often find that boys are lazier than girls. Are there behaviour strategies that are gender specific?

**Tom:** In my experience, very few. Human behaviour appears to be far more variable between classes and age groups than between genders.
Gender specific behaviour in the classroom appears to be as much a social convention as anything else. Which means that there are very few strategies that have greater efficacy with one gender against the other. Rather, more general principles of behaviour management – consistency, high expectations etc. – seem to be the best way for all people, not just boys or girls. Which isn’t to say that boys and girls can’t display different behaviour patterns, especially in larger groups, but cod psychology approaches based on misapprehension of what constitutes a male or a female attitude seem doomed to failure. There appears to be no more evidence that boys are lazier than girls than any other scenario. Also, it doesn’t matter what gender you present as a teacher; clichés about boys preferring a mother figure, or vice versa, are confounded by exceptions that suggest the reverse.

Jill: I’ve taught all-boys, all-girls and co-ed, and there are differences, though I wouldn’t say it’s about laziness, necessarily, and I’d always say, ‘Some boys may be...’ and ‘some girls may be...’ rather than ‘all boys are...’ or ‘all girls are...’. Boys and girls can behave differently when the sexes are separated from how they behave together, too, but the strategies you adopt can’t be simplified to suit one specific gender, I don’t think. You need to tune in to the needs of individuals and the dynamic of particular classes. Unpick undesirable behaviour and try to get behind it. What is happening here, and what is motivating poor behaviour? Can we try to understand it? For example, the child who is so fearful of failure that they would rather not try, because to try and fail seems to them so much more shameful than to fail because you DIDN’T try, and you weren’t bothered anyway. Can we help address individuals’ fears and insecurities, build on the positives and give them a taste of success? Can we tune into what makes them tick – what they want to happen and what they don’t want to happen – and make use of this to get the best from them, whatever their gender?

Q: How can a teacher be helped to repair a working relationship with a class when this has broken down?

Tom: This is hard, especially if the relationship has broken hard, such as if the teacher has really lost them due to extreme mishandling, eg calling them disgusting, or something equally personal. That said, human relationships are remarkably flexible, and students can relearn their habitual responses quite quickly. Observe how differently a student can act from one teacher to another, in a heartbeat.

The best way to go about it is to be upfront, assertive and positive: ‘Things need to get better so we can all learn, and I believe they can.’ A class can be rebooted at anytime if the teacher is sincere and ready for the long haul. Reiterate the classroom expectation, assuming they have slid. And then – the hardest part of what is essentially a simple equation – hold fast this time. Set as many detentions as needed but also encourage and reinforce acceptable or encouraged behaviours. The key thing is to convey fairness and high standards, rather than partiality or uncertainty. The longer the classroom teacher can persist on this course, the greater the chance that a relationship will emerge where the students see the teacher as an authority figure than an interloper into their culture.

Jill: I think sometimes it’s a question of admitting to the fact that this has happened, that it isn’t acceptable, and that you’re all going to start again. I’ve known teachers who have done this and who have been able to claw their way back to a more productive and mutually respectful working relationship: ‘We started off on the wrong foot and we’re going to start again this term/half term.’ Even, ‘I got this wrong but I care about your learning, I care about you, and I’m going to try again.’ I know that may be hard!

Seek advice from others – you’re not on your own. Can you observe another teacher with the same group and analyse the strategies they are using which you could perhaps adapt? Could that teacher observe you and give you some specific feedback about your classroom management? Just maybe suggest ONE thing you could focus on in the next few lessons and, if that has a positive impact, then try a second different thing. You’re not asking anyone to solve your issues for you, but you’re asking for guidance and advice about what you can do next – perhaps from someone who has more experience and confidence than you currently have, and perhaps a peer rather than a manager/leader. Talk through with them what you’ve tried, what has happened, what you COULD try, what might happen, where you might go from there. Talk through, and even practise with someone else, possible scenarios.

Make the most of the support network you have. And build on the positives – there may be times when things go better, so what can you learn from that and how can you apply that elsewhere to try to achieve more success?

When I was a head, there was a year when we had a tough Year 9 cohort – there were some fantastic students within that year BUT there were also
a fair few who were harder to manage and they were strong characters whose behaviour was having a negative impact on the dynamic between some teachers and their Year 9 classes. We were dealing with some of these individuals, but felt we needed to do more. Over a two-week period, senior leaders, pastoral middle leaders and I called into a large number of Year 9 lessons – on our own, and only for 15 minutes or so each time, to observe and learn. All those who taught that year group knew they might receive a visitor at some stage of the lesson. Then all those of us who had been observing got together to discuss what we had seen WORKING, and we did a presentation to the whole staff on what we had witnessed having a positive effect with this particular year group. I hadn't heard of Appreciative Enquiry at that time, but I realise, in retrospect, that this is what we were doing. It did help.

Q Should you really not smile before half term?

Tom: This is folk wisdom with a grain of truth that is frequently misunderstood. Taken literally it is perhaps obviously mistaken. To not smile in circumstances that would normally demand it would be to appear synthetic and odd. That said, the relationship between student and teacher is best seen as a professional one. It can be warm and positive, but at all times it needs to be authoritative, or it is merely baby-sitting. Teachers need to know that students will obey reasonable instructions not because they should, but because they want to. On that basis, it is wise if teachers begin their relationships with pupils as sternly as they feel comfortable with. It is far easier to start a little strictly, and then ease into a more comfortable register with pupils, than the reverse. Classes frequently see over-familiarity as an invitation to be overly familiar. Once this tone is activated, it is hard to defuse or reverse. Because of this, the best course for teachers is to attempt to be more than usually formal.

Jill: You definitely should! I would say smile MORE, smile often, and show you are pleased to be there (even if you really feel you would rather be anywhere else). Be at the classroom door and smile at each individual as they arrive. Show your warmth, your humanity, your compassion, your interest in them. It certainly doesn’t mean you’re weak. You can be (you must be) firm/strong AND kind. Be clear, consistent, but be warm.

Q What’s the best way of liaising with parents of a poorly behaved child?

Tom: As if they were part of a possible solution rather than a problem. The vast majority of parents care for and know the student far better than we ever will, and yet a common mistake is to talk to parents as if they were a problem, or somehow to be blamed because of a current infraction. I rarely advise scripts, but when it comes to parental encounters, the best way to approach them, is to accept that they want their child, just like you and say something like:

‘Hello is that Parent X? I’m [teacher] from [school] and I teach [pupil] [subject]. He can be excellent, but today he let himself down a bit and I want to talk to you about what we do next.’ That’s the approach: positive but assertive. Accepting that the parent will want to help, and putting them at their ease. Some parents of badly behaved children resent multiple intrusions in any given day, so do check with the Head of Year/Learning to see if the parents have been phoned on multiple occasions recently.

Jill: You have to build the relationship and help them to see you are on the same side – the child’s side. Fighting each other is definitely not in the best interests of the child at the centre of your relationship. If you are critical of their child’s behaviour, you are not attacking the child personally and you are not attacking their parenting. You recognise parenting is the hardest job in the world (harder than teaching!) and you want to support them, just as you need them to support you and the school. Whatever has happened in the past, you want to work together to find the best way forward. Sometimes the most important thing to do is to ensure they have a clear and accurate picture of what has happened (rather than the potentially distorted version filtered through their child’s perspective!).

I know this can sound a bit pat and the reality is much harder, but keeping this in mind can help you to stay calm, be professional, even if you feel you are under attack. I fully understand that sometimes parents are waging their own battles with adolescent offspring, so if they have the chance to fight their child’s corner against the school they grab it because they think it will help them to forge a more positive relationship with their son or daughter. Sometimes they are really motivated by love of their child. You have to explain to them what they can do (though not in the same intensely emotional way – you have a wider perspective that comes from the fact that you care for ALL the children in the school). Helping the child understand what is and is not acceptable behaviour, and taking responsibility for the consequences, is what you and the parents need to do together to help young people construct the guiding framework I talked about earlier.

It's so much easier if you've already earned their respect. I used to feel that
What does this look like in the classroom?

you earned ‘credits’ through a positive relationship with parents which you sometimes then needed to trade in if times got tough! So establish a constructive relationship early on, if at all possible. Certainly as a new form tutor I would want to contact the parents of my tutees to introduce myself and say I looked forward to getting to know them and their son/daughter better and to supporting the student to achieve their best – perhaps just a quick email so they also have contact details. This may be something some schools suggest all teachers do for their new classes – it depends on the school policy. If your first contact with a parent is positive, that’s so much better than if the first time they hear from you it’s because there has been a problem with their child’s behaviour. Get to know the child, get to know the parents, and show you have high aspirations but that your role is to support behaviour and learning, and to find solutions, not to hector/blame if the child hits a rocky patch.

**Q** What do you do when you’re not supported by the school leadership, for example when the behaviour policy has inconsistencies?

**Tom:** This is one of the hardest problems for a teacher, as it involves them reacting against their school system rather than working smoothly with it. It is also one of the most common problems I used to tackle on social media. To be frank, some school systems are inadequate. Many are not, but some are. And new teachers need to be aware of this in order not to a) pick up bad habits or b) blame themselves. The key thing is to seek out someone in the chain of command who will support you. Secondly, manage upwards: know the school behaviour system backwards, then if support from the school isn’t forthcoming, they can be ‘reminded’ of procedures that have been publicly agreed. Set time-limited headlines from them, keep a note of all conversations, and meet with them regularly to discuss the progress they are making on your support. It usually turns it around quickly, and to be fair many staff do just need a reminder to help.

**Jill:** As I said above, you can always use peers if you don’t have faith in your immediate line manager/senior staff, though I would think it’s unlikely that you feel unsupported by ALL those in leadership roles in your school. Find who you can connect with, talk to, and ask for advice and guidance as you work to establish high standards and solve your own issues.

We all have to do the best we can within the constraints we inevitably have. I really do believe that if we can get relationships right in our own classrooms, we can achieve a huge amount, whatever is happening elsewhere. How are things going to work in your lessons, and what routines and protocols can you apply which you think will support learning? Where can you access support and guidance from others and where can you OFFER support and guidance to others? Where is your agency and how can you make best use of it? What is beyond your control and can you ensure you don’t waste your time and energies beating your head against the wall? Pick your battles.

If you get relationships and communication right within your own classroom, and within the team of which you are a member, you can achieve a huge amount, whatever whole-school systems/policies/structures you’re working within. But if you don’t rate or respect the wider school systems/policies/structures, think what you’re learning from this negative example and resolve to be better when YOU are a Middle Leader/Senior Leader/head!

**Q** Should mobile phones be banned in classrooms?

**Tom:** There’s no simple yes/no to this, because all classroom cultures vary – some can easily sustain a norm where phones are out and in use. To be honest I think far more children would benefit from environments where phones were rarely, if ever, seen. There are so few essential services a phone can provide to the learning experience that cannot easily be reproduced by low-tech solution that it seems fair to ask if they are needed at all when we consider what a distraction they are to pupils. Research has pointed to significant learning deficits from classrooms where digital devices are in play. I usually advise that phones stay in their bags, on pain of confiscation. There are very few circumstances when I would agree with children carrying phones, especially smart phones.

**Jill:** I know this is a tricky one, but I would say no, not these days. I think it’s about educating children to make the most positive and constructive use of all technology, not trying to police, restrict and control their use of it. I would rather have the phone on the desk and in use when it has educational purpose and value, rather than banning and confiscating.

Things have moved on since I left headship in 2010. We did say then that mobile phones should not be seen in school (though we knew students had them and used them on their journey to and from school). Each child had a lockable locker and we said phones should be locked away during the school day. In actual fact, I suspect just about every child had them on their person/in their bag, and used them surreptitiously, but if we saw
What does this look like in the classroom?

them they were confiscated and the child had to collect them from me (or my deputy if I was out of school) at the end of the day. Names were taken, and a second offence within the same term meant the phone was kept by the school office until the parent came to collect it.

I think our reliance on mobiles has become much greater in the last seven years, and the capacity of handheld devices to be harnessed and used in the classroom, rather than just being a distraction, has increased, so I would take a different tack now and try to use phones constructively rather than banning them. But it is a tough one. Because the pupils in my school couldn’t openly use their phones, including at breaks and lunchtime, they did interact with one another rather than huddle round devices or all be on their phones instead of talking to their friends. I think this is a difficult issue to address!