



Ghana Education Service

Guidance and Counselling Unit

Tools for Positive Discipline in Basic Schools

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1.0. Introduction

The Ghana Education Service (GES) is implementing a package of interventions aimed at making all basic schools child friendly. A component of the child friendly school programme is creating a 'safe protective school environment'. The safe protective school environment package is essentially focused on three violence related behaviours i.e. bullying, sexual harassment and corporal punishment. The negative effects of corporal punishment is making Ghanaians, particularly, more and more committed on the need to bring an end to its practice in Ghanaian schools. Unfortunately, teachers lack the tools and skills to implement disciplinary measures without resorting to corporal punishment. It is within this context that GES with the support of UNICEF has developed a set of tools for implementing positive discipline in schools.

This toolkit was drafted as a key product of a stakeholder engagement workshop held in February 2016. Participants at the stakeholder's workshop included GES personnel, UNICEF representatives, teachers, teacher union representatives and NGOs. Key issues likely to have an impact on the implementation of positive discipline tools in Ghana were identified at the stakeholder engagement workshop. These issues, which are listed below, informed the development of the tools and the proposed approach for their implementation.

1.1. Key issues from the stakeholder engagement workshop:

- Teachers may lack the patience required to stay committed to the continued use of positive discipline tools; especially under circumstances where children appear unresponsive to the tools or when they exhibit extremely provocative behaviour

- Teachers may feel like they have been deprived of some degree of power/authority because they can no longer punish corporally
- Some students may initially see the introduction of positive discipline tools as an opportunity to challenge the authority of the teacher
- Some teachers may be afraid of losing control of the classroom
- Due to the high teacher student ratios that exist in Ghanaian schools, their often very busy schedules, and an erroneous perception of corporal punishment as a quicker and less complicated approach some teachers may feel that these tools will make things more difficult and would therefore be less receptive to them
- Parents that support corporal punishment may disapprove of the introduction of the tools

The draft toolkit was subsequently pre-tested in Karaga and KEEA districts in the Northern and Central Regions respectively and the feedback incorporated. A workshop was held with all the 10 Regional and the two District Coordinators of Guidance and Counselling as well as the National Unit to validate the toolkit. UNICEF is providing additional support to implement the toolkit in the two districts which will serve as learning centres for the implementation of positive discipline in the country. The data from the districts will feed into the development of a comprehensive toolkit on safe schools.

1.2. Rationale behind the Development of the Tools

Corporal punishment as a tool for maintaining discipline in schools has been as old as formal education in the country. The practice relies on the use of harsh punitive measures as a means of establishing a strong deterrence to undesirable behaviour. The Ghana Education Service (GES) has over years taken a number of actions towards making the school environment safe from violence - which includes corporal punishment. For instance, in the Head teachers' handbook

(1994), provision was made for the conditions that may require corporal punishment and the mechanisms for administering the punishment. The 2010 revised handbook appears to have proscribed corporal punishment with this statement: 'In your attempt to punish any pupil you should remember Illegal punishment, violence, abuses and brutal acts against pupils are offences for which the teacher can be prosecuted in a court of law' (Source: Head teachers' Handbook (2010) page 42). Despite the provisions in the 2010 handbook, the use of corporal punishment remains a preferred tool for disciplining school children. Apart from the physical pain corporal punishment inflicts on children, this approach also causes significant emotional damage. Some of the lasting effects of this method of disciplining school children include physical scars, emotional scars (trauma, fear, timidity etc.) and violent behaviour. The disadvantages associated with the use of corporal punishment to discipline children is however not limited to its damaging effect on children. It has been observed that children subjected to corporal punishment consistently repeat the offences for which they are punished. Some children even end up becoming hardened and more entrenched in their resistance to what they at times perceive as a forceful imposition of behaviours/values that they have not consented to. The focus of these disciplinary tools will be to inculcate desired behaviours into school children. This will be realized through:

- Participatory approaches,
- Promoting mutual respect between the teacher and student,
- Involving children in the setting of values, expected standards of behaviour and disciplinary measures, and
- Employing reformatory responses to misbehaviour that are commensurate to the offence committed

2.0. Levels of Application of the Positive Discipline Tools

One of the biggest shortfalls of corporal punishment that renders it ineffective in many instances is the resort to blanket

response for all types and levels of inappropriate behaviour. This toolkit offers options for effectively applying positive discipline for different forms of misbehaviour and proposes suitable proactive or reactive measure for addressing them.

2.1. Classification of the toolkit

The various levels of application of the toolkit are classified as follows:

Classification – Level of Misbehaviour	Response
Level One – Creating a disciplined environment	Proactive/preventive measures: Clearly spelling out rules and setting expectations from students, expressing approval of and encouraging good behaviour, setting an environment of mutual respect that recognizes the authority of the teacher. This should also be part of the orientation given to students at the beginning of every academic year and reinforced at the start of each school term
Level Two – Minor/first time offences	Early detection/intervention: Non-punitive actions intended to remind students of laid out standards of behaviour and expectations and the importance of conforming to them. The teacher would also need to, at this level, investigate the reasons behind the identified misbehaviour or the conditions that encouraged it in order to address
Level Three – Repeated/more serious offences	Corrective Measures: Attention of the student is drawn to the severity of the offence or the fact that it has been repeated several times. The teacher at this level must combine deterrent measures

	with counselling, agreements and consistent follow ups on the students response to the actions taken
Level Four – Chronic, dangerous and disruptive behaviour	Rehabilitative Measures: Invite other members of the school administration and the child’s family to support in the assessment of the child’s behaviour and determination of an appropriate response. Intensive counselling and monitoring must be undertaken at this level.

3.0. Tools for Positive Discipline

Tool	Description	Steps
Level One – Proactive Measures		
Schoolwide Rule Book	Rules that govern the general expected	To be done in consultation with all the

	behaviours from both teachers and students	relevant stakeholders (i.e. GES, guidance and counselling personnel, school administration, etc.)
Classroom Rule Book	A small note book that contains entries on the standards of behaviour expected from students.	<p>Step 1. Set classroom rules at a school wide level</p> <p>Step 2. Clearly explain rules to the students (allow feedback from them)</p> <p>Step 3. Hand over the rule book to the class prefect/peer educator who will periodically remind class members of the rules</p>
Notice Board Poster	Classroom rules posted on notice boards as a visual reminder of expected behaviours from the students	<p>Step 1. Set classroom rules at a school wide level</p> <p>Step 2. Clearly explain rules to the students (allow feedback from them)</p> <p>Step 3. Post rules on the notice board for future reference</p>
Encouragement At this stage the students can play lead roles. Rather than tease colleagues that energy can be redirected to encourage those who do well or are	Incentives such as periodic (e.g. monthly) public acknowledgement of good behaviour or awarding supplementary credits for consistent adherence to rules applied to encourage good behaviour.	<p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establishing consistent good behaviour as a condition for prefectship 2. Publicly acknowledging good behaviour 3. Extra credits for good behaviour

<p>making the effort to improve. School prefects and peer educators/education are mechanisms to support this initiative</p> <p>Students to discuss and adopt sanctions for different misbehaviours</p>		
<p>Classroom Behaviour Statement</p> <p>Statement can be recited to begin and finish the class peer education sessions</p>	<p>A brief statement to be recited periodically by students agreeing to adhere to standards of behaviour set for the classroom. Students may be asked to find creative ways to present the statement (e.g. as a poem, a song or in pictures)</p>	<p>Step 1. Draft statement at a school wide level</p> <p>Step 2. Clearly explain statement to students</p> <p>Step 3. Ask students to recite the statement in class</p> <p>Step 4. Post statement on classroom notice board for future reference</p>
LEVEL TWO – EARLY DETECTION/INTERVENTION		
<p>Explanation</p>	<p>The teacher would take time to explain to the child why a certain behaviour he/she has exhibited is unacceptable</p>	<p>Step 1. Set an appropriate time for both the student and teacher to have the conversation (e.g. Just before/after class or at the beginning/end of the day)</p> <p>Step 2. Explain to the student the behaviour you have observed him/her exhibit and offer</p>

		advice on how and why he/she should do otherwise
Caution	Teacher points out to the student that he/she has gone against the laid out rules and reminds the student of possible consequences of repeating such behaviour	<p>Step 1. Ask the student if he/she is aware of the consequence of the offence they have committed</p> <p>Step 2. If the student says yes ask him/her to state what they know it to be (correct the child if the answer is wrong) If he/she says no refer to the classroom rules and tell the student what the consequence will be</p>
Agreement	The teacher agrees with the child that a particular behaviour should not be repeated and also agree on what the consequence of breaking the agreement should be	<p>Optional – Develop a template for written agreements/bond between the teacher and students</p> <p>Step 1. Clearly explain the misbehaviour observed to the student</p> <p>Step 2. Discuss the consequences of repeating it</p> <p>Step 3. Agree with the student verbally or by signing a written document that repeating such behaviour will be followed by the sanction discussed with him/her</p>
Interview	The teacher creates a safe environment	Step 1. Set an appropriate time for both the

	outside the classroom to try and find out what some of the underlying issues resulting in the child's misbehaviour may be	student and teacher to have the conversation Step 2. Relax the student by assuring him/her that there is nothing to worry about Step 3. Ask questions that will help to identify the source of the behaviour being exhibited by the student (e.g. for a student that is consistently late – Who brings you to school? What time do you leave the house? What is your mode of transportation?)
Student Behaviour Log	Involves entering infractions into a log book. Repeated entries for the same offence will bear a consequence. This will serve as a deterrent as the child would have to opportunity to alter his/her behaviour in order to avoid reaching the threshold number of entries.	Step 1. Introduce the behaviour log to the class by clearly explaining what it will be used for and how it will be used Optional – Delegate the entering of infractions into the log book to a student (e.g. class prefect) Step 2. Register infractions into the log book
LEVEL THREE– CORRECTIVE MEASURES		
Reflection period	The student would be required to report to a designated room at a particular time for a specified amount of time. Ideally this time should be used for an activity	Step 1. Clearly explain the misbehaviour observed to the student Step 2. Inform the student that he/she will be required to participate in a reflection period

	that will encourage a transformative reflection on the infraction committed.	as a result of the misbehaviour Step 3. Determine the appropriate time for the child to have the reflection period Step 4. Develop an activity for the child to carry out during the reflection period that will prompt him/her to ponder on their behaviour and will also encourage positive change
Writing Lines	The child is given a sentence to write several times over. The sentence should positively reinforce that child's need and ability to adhere to the recommended forms of behaviour	Step 1. Clearly explain the misbehaviour observed to the student Step 2. Identify the availability of the necessary logistics for writing lines Step 3. Inform the student that he/she will have to write lines as a result of the misbehaviour Step 4. Draft the sentence the student would have to write and give him/her a deadline for submission of the lines
Cleaning (e.g. picking litter, arranging seats in the classroom)	Involves students being asked to undertake some form of community service such as picking litter or cleaning some particular area in the school. But certainly not the toilets	Step 1. Clearly explain the misbehaviour observed to the student Step 2. Inform the student that he/she will clean (e.g. pick rubbish) as a result of the misbehaviour

		<p>Step 3. Determine the appropriate time for the child to perform the task</p> <p>Step 4. Ensure that the child carries out the sanction</p>
Designated Seating Position	Involves seating the student right in front of or beside the teacher in order to keep an eye on him/her or to move the student from a position that encourages him/her to engage in disruptive behaviour	<p>Step 1. Clearly explain the misbehaviour observed to the student</p> <p>Step 2. Inform the student that he/she will be asked to sit at a particular location as a result of the misbehaviour</p> <p>Step 3. Ask the student to move to the specified location</p>
Counselling	With the consent of student, refer him/her to the school counsellor along with background on the students behaviour over time to be counselled	<p>Step 1. Check log book for all entries on infractions committed by the student</p> <p>Step 2. Discuss the behaviour of the student and infractions recorded with the counsellor</p> <p>Step 3. Clearly explain the purpose of the counselling to the student</p> <p>Step 4. Set appropriate meeting time for the student to meet with the counsellor</p>
Agreement	The teacher agrees with the child that a particular behaviour should not be repeated and also agree on what the	Optional – Develop a template for written agreements/bond between the teacher and students

	consequence of breaking the agreement should be	<p>Step 1. Clearly explain the misbehaviour observed to the student</p> <p>Step 2. Discuss the consequences of repeating it</p> <p>Step 3. Agree with the student verbally or by signing a written document that repeating such behaviour will be followed by the sanction discussed with him/her</p>
Extra Tasks	Involves giving the child extra tasks (e.g. extra homework)	<p>Step 1. Clearly explain the misbehaviour observed to the student</p> <p>Step 2. Inform the child about the extra task he/she would be expected to do</p> <p>Step 3. Follow up to ensure the task is completed</p>
LEVEL FOUR – REHABILITATIVE MEASURES		
Withdrawing a Responsibility	Leadership positions and other responsibilities can be temporarily or permanently withdrawn from the child (e.g. position on the school soccer team or prefectship)	<p>Step 1. Clearly explain the implications of the infraction and its consequences to the student</p> <p>Step 2. Inform the child and other affected/concerned parties about withdrawal of the responsibility (including whether it will be permanent or temporary)</p>

Letter to parents	Involves writing to the child's parents to inform them about the infraction or chronic behaviour exhibited by the child	Optional – Draft template letter for communicating level four infractions to parents Step 1. Clearly explain the implications of the infraction and its consequences to the student Step 2. Write letter and deliver it to the students guardian
Parent teacher meeting	Meeting with the child's parent's to assess the child's behaviour and determine what steps need to be taken to reform his/her behaviour	Step 1. Clearly explain the implications of the infraction and its consequences to the student Step 2. Determine appropriate time to meet with the parents and send out an invitation to them
Counselling	Refer the student to the school counsellor along with background on the students behaviour over time to be counselled	Step 1. Check log book for all entries on infractions committed by the student Step 2. Discuss the behaviour of the student and infractions recorded with the counsellor Step 3. Clearly explain the purpose of the counselling to the student Step 4. Set appropriate meeting time for the student to meet with the counsellor

<p>Daily Report</p>	<p>Involves intensive monitoring of the child's behaviour. The child would be given a form to be signed by his/her teacher after every class and submitted to the school counsellor at the end of the day</p>	<p>Step 1. Clearly explain the implications of the infraction and its consequences to the student</p> <p>Step 2. Determine an appropriate observation period suitable for monitoring the misbehaviour</p> <p>Step 3. Inform the students teacher that he/she has been placed on daily report</p>
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