Information sheet:

Proactively preventing challenging behaviours

> **He oranga ngākau, he pikinga waiora.**
> Positive feelings in your heart will enhance your sense of self-worth.
> —

The quality of the relationship with their teacher is key. Ākonga who have a good relationship with their teachers tend to be motivated, successful learners.

Show learners you care, believe in them, and trust them.

Simple acts can go a long way.

- Correctly pronouncing their names.
- Finding out from parents or caregivers what the learners do well.
- Acknowledging their efforts.
- Inviting them to assist with tasks.
- Encouraging them to help others.

Playing with ākonga is another way to extend care, belief, and trust. Playing equalises the relationship, even if it is just in that moment.

Through play, you can build trust and promote cooperation. For example, follow the child's lead in play rather than instructing them.

For younger children, use descriptive comments rather than questions while playing. For example, you could say, "You're painting that a bright, colourful purple," rather than, "What colour is that?"

Facilitate positive peer interactions

> **Mā te tuakana ka tōtika te teina, Mā te teina, ka tōtika te tuakana.**
> The older sibling keeps the younger one on track, and the younger sibling keeps the older one on track.
> —

Teaching students how to support and respond to those stuck in challenging behaviour is one way to facilitate positive peer interactions.

Encourage children or young people experiencing challenging behaviour to work with peers who have the skills to help and include them in their activities and learning.

Share with the peer mentors some strategies for:

- rewards, encouragement, and praise
- setting clear time limits
- ignoring and distracting
- self-regulating
- problem-solving.

Make positive behaviour thrive in your classroom

> **He moana pupuke ka ekengia e te waka.**
> A choppy sea can be navigated.
> —

Do what you can to make your classroom or centre a stimulating, supportive, well-managed learning space where positive behaviour can thrive.

- Build caring relationships with ākonga.
- Respect what each one brings to the class or centre (from home, their culture and peers).
- Allow the experiences of ākonga to be recognised in the classroom or centre.
- Have high expectations – ones that are achievable – for all ākonga
- Be flexible, adjust the programme and use a range of learning strategies.

- Use a range of interactions – instruction, monitoring, coaching, recognition, feedback, feed-forward, and individual and group interactions.
- Anticipate issues, plan, improvise.
- Have belief and faith that ākonga can grow and learn new strategies and behaviour.

Remember, teaching any new skill or behaviour involves lots of:

- opportunity to practise
- opportunity to get it right and modelling patience and support when they get it wrong
- positive feedback when they get it right
- support when learning a new skill.

Rewards, encouragement, and praise

While all children need rewards, encouragement, and praise, they do not all respond to the same type of acknowledgement. Carefully select and personalise rewards, encouragement, and praise to suit the learner age and praise preference. and the age.

Children with challenging behaviour need extra amounts of praise and encouragement – they need it more often than most.

You might also need to provide them with motivators, such as stamps or stickers. They are likely to have a negative self-evaluation and low self-worth. They may not trust adults. They are also more likely to miss praise, particularly when it is delivered in a neutral tone or is vague or infrequent.

- Aim for a 4:1 ratio of positive to negative attention. Give more attention and praise to positive behaviours than to unwanted behaviours.
- Compliant and be specific in your praise – "You've done a good job of … " rather than, "Good job." Praise the effort, too, rather than the perfection of the behaviour.
- Praise often and early – especially when the child is first learning a new skill or behaviour.
- Promote child self-praise, for example, "You must feel proud of yourself for … ".
- Find the balance – praise academic, social, personality traits (such as kindness or perseverance), and simple aspects (such as, "It's fun working with you.").
- Keep your praise pure – avoid combining praise with put-downs, for example, "You picked up the toys like I asked but next time how about doing it before I have to ask."
- Plan ahead – for a particularly challenging situation, have a plan for the child. Use praise and encouragement strategically to support your goals for that child.

Reward ideas

Special awards (give occasionally) and celebrations such as super star, cool dude, playground power, feather in your cap, citizen of the week, award bear to take home for the night, special button or ribbon.

Special privileges (give intermittently) such as lunch with the teacher, choosing a special DVD for the class to watch, line leader, homework pass, computer time, being the teacher's helper, sitting at the teacher's desk, choosing their seat for the day.

Inexpensive items (give frequently) such as stamps, play dough, stickers, pencils, surprise notes, points.

Reward versus bribe

You need to be careful that you reward positive behaviour rather than bribe children and young people to behave. Rewards promote prosocial behaviour; bribes yield antisocial behaviour.

Rewards are given for positive behaviours after they have occurred.

For example, "Tom, when you have finished your writing assignment then you can choose the story for me to read".

Bribes are given before the behaviour occurs.

For example, "Tom you can choose the story for me to read now if you promise to finish your writing assignment straight after we have read the book".

How to use incentives to promote positive behaviour and learning

First, identify small steps towards goals and begin by choosing only one or two behaviours to work on. Then, plan with the children the specific reinforcement menu. Choose choose inexpensive rewards.

Be aware tangible rewards are a temporary measure to help children learn new behaviours. To enable you to phase out the tangible rewards, you mush accompany them with social rewards, such as labelled praise and encouragement.

Give the reward after the behaviour occurs (first-then).

As you carry out the plan, gradually increase the criteria for the reward (make it challenging).

Write on the board the names of children who make a special achievement – either academic or social. This reinforces good behaviour and is a reminder to all of the children of the expected behaviour. Rotate the names so that every child gets mentioned and no-one misses out.

Finally, be sure to fulfil your end of the agreement.

1. Identify one or two positive behaviours you want to see more of. These can be either contracted to the whole class or centre or set up as individual goals according to children's particular needs.
2. Explain to the class or child which behaviours will result in reward.
3. Select the incentives.
   - Stars and stickers are good motivators for 3 to 5-year-old children.
   - Older children like to earn points, tickets, or chips they can in for something they have chosen from a reinforcement menu.

Setting clear limits

- Communicate expectations positively and clearly. Use word and non-verbal cues, for example, pictures demonstrating expectations.
- Use "when-then" and "first-then" commands.
- Refrain from negative commands, corrections, demands, and yelling.
- Redirect a disengaged learners – call out by calling out their names with a question, stand next to them, make up interesting games, use non-verbal signals.
- State requests or give directions with brief descriptions of positive behaviours you want to see.

Distracting and ignoring

Redirect the child to other activities when they are frustrated.

Identify which behaviours you can ignore while keeping the other children safe. Once you have established the behaviour that needs changing, do the following.

- Maintain a neutral stance and tone.
- Avoid eye contact, verbal comments, and physical touch.
- Immediately return your attention and encouragement to the child when they are behaving appropriately again.

Teaching children to self-regulate and problem-solve

Self-regulation is a developmental skill that evolves over time. It requires the right environment and the right support.

Essentially, self-regulation is dependent on people's understanding of their own emotions and other people's intent.

Teaching children to self-regulate

Help children to know when to avoid certain situations.

Assist them to recognise emotions, sensations, and their meanings. Point out frustration when it arises and encourage children to seek a calming technique for this.

Teach them to self-regulate through specific techniques such as deep breathing and positive self-talk. Coach them in patience, persistence, trying hard, sticking with it, concentrating, staying calm, waiting for a turn, using words to express feelings.

To help children understand how peers feel, point out facial expressions, voice tone, body language, or words.

Teach emotional literacy words by labelling feelings and responses when the child shares, trades, waits, or helps.

Teaching children to problem-solve

Teach problem-solving by helping children to follow the sequence of:

1. define the problem
2. think of solutions
3. ask what would happen next
4. evaluate the best choice
5. choose the best solution to try out.

Use books and stories of problem-solving to practise the problem-solving steps.

Self-monitoring and self-reinforcement

Self-monitoring and self-reinforcement work well with five-year-olds and possibly younger children.

Use them to address behavioural, social, and academic needs.

The child, the teacher, and/or the parents choose standard for performance, participation, or behaviour. Make sure the child has a clear understanding of the required behaviour.

Develop a form for recording performance – use icons and pictures to illustrate behaviours

After working towards the standard, the child compare their actions to what was set for their standard of performance, participation, or behaviour.

Note that the child can assess and record their own behaviour and may select and administer awards to themselves.

Cooperative learning

Cooperative learning, ko te akoranga mahi tahi, reduces the competitiveness and failure that contributes to challenging behaviour. Peers reinforce each other rather than the teacher reinforcing children.

You might need to coach children and young people in their roles.

* Ensure each child has a specific task that contributes to the group's goals.
* If a child lacks the skills for small group work, teach the prerequisite skills.
* Review the skills that children need for working together, such as, listening carefully to each other's ideas, providing feedback in a respectful way, asking for clarification.
* Encourage children to self-monitor their levels of participation so they make sufficient but not excessive contribution.

Other tools for promoting positive behaviour

Behaviour contract

A behaviour contract is an agreement between a child and their teacher, parents, family, or whānau.

It sets out the desired behaviours and unwanted behaviours that are not acceptable. It establishes the benefits or rewards for improving behaviour. It makes clear what actions or responses will be used when the unwanted behaviours arise.

Shown to work well with a range of behaviours (attendance, on-task behaviour, playground behaviour, work accuracy), behaviour contracts are effective for children of primary, intermediate, and secondary school age.

Creating a behaviour contract

* Include who, what, when and how well.
* Make sure the desired behaviours are in the child's skill set.
* Behaviour contracts are for "won't do" problems rather than "can't do" problems.
* Consider the child's developmental level.
* Note that younger children and children with disabilities can respond to symbols and other graphics.

Social stories

Social stories are a simple, easy way to help children interpret social cues and respond appropriately.

Proven to work well to reduce aggressive behaviour, inappropriate vocalisations, obsessive behaviours and tantrums, social stories can be presented in words, pictures, video, or voice recording.

Creating social stories

* Define the problem behaviour
* Create a story that details the appropriate behaviours for the child.
* Include picture cues and text, meanings for social cues, the desired social responses, and thoughts and feelings for the characters involved in the story.
* Be descriptive in the story rather than directive.
* Rehearse desired behaviours through modelling, role play, and feedback.
* Write at the comprehension level of the child.

Notebooks

Notebooks can promote communication and collaboration between teachers and parents and whānau to improve a child's academic and social behaviour.

They on positive feedback that will encourage teachers and parents to focus on building skills and reinforcing appropriate behaviours.

Notebooks:

* can be stored at home, at school, or at the centre
* are useful for ages three to sixteen
* work for children who you believe are capable of performing the behaviours you would like to see

They are ineffective with:

* children and young people who are depressed
* those who are poorly managed at home.

Caution: There are no quick fixes. Single, unplanned interventions on their own may not be effective.

Experiment. Often it takes time and numerous adjustments to get it right for ākonga.

You may also need to:

* understand the purpose of the behaviour (for example, to avoid or obtain)
* address what is contributing to the behaviour
* teach new behaviours or positively reinforce what a child or young person already knows
* make changes to the environment around a child or young person
* decide how you will discourage unwanted behaviours

- provide extra helpings of rewards, encouragement, and praise for positive behaviour.

Positive **Behaviour** *for Learnir*