



Conscious discipline at Cravenwood Primary Academy

Jancie Garratt-Simpson, Head of Cravenwood Primary Academy, put conscious discipline in place at the school several years ago to address challenging behaviour and to empower pupils to take responsibility for themselves. The approach aims to create for children a feeling of safety and connectedness with others through which they can engage effectively with learning and solve challenges they encounter themselves. It complements the coaching-based approach used throughout the school with staff. In much the same way as staff coach one another, conscious discipline is about coaching pupils to find solutions for themselves. Instead of thinking 'how do I stop them [a child] doing that', staff instead think 'how do I help them to be successful'.

As Jancie reflects, 'we practise skills with them [the children] and get them to use their big voices, and train them how to articulate things and what actually is it that you want to happen. So that's coaching.'

Below are some of the key features and principles of conscious discipline, which is now used across many United Learning primary schools to support pupils' social and emotional development and wellbeing.

The seven skills of discipline

The '[seven skills of discipline](#)' are a key part of the conscious discipline approach. These are the responses that teachers aim to model, teach and bring out in children so that they become more conscious and in control of their reactions and responses to different situations. They stem from the '[seven powers for conscious adults](#)' that teachers need to embrace as part of this approach.

The brain state model

The approach provides a simplified [brain model](#) as a means for increasing self-awareness so staff are able to respond consciously to children's needs at specific moments. It aims to empower adults to be conscious of different brain and body states and to provide them with the skills they need to manage their own thoughts, feelings and actions and to teach children to do the same.

The school family and smart start activities

The below features of conscious discipline are aimed at creating a sense of family within a school and connectedness with others:

- *The school family:* This is built on a healthy family model, created through routines, rituals and structures with the aim of reducing stress and establishing an atmosphere of care, encouragement and meaningful contributions. An example of this being exemplified at Cravenwood is staff greeting all pupils at the gate every morning, having good eye contact when doing this and asking them how they are. Pupils will go past at least four adults, all of whom will have spoken to them. This is a way of connecting with the pupils and observing whether they seem worried about something or not themselves. This helps pupils transition from home to school for the day ahead.
- *Smart start activities:* These are used to engage students at the beginning of the day. At Cravenwood, pupils follow a routine that helps them to feel safe, to know what to expect, and to connect with each other and their teacher: an activity the whole class does together; a breathing activity (teaching techniques to use when they are finding something difficult); a connection activity (something fun and playful, involving eye contact and touch); and a 'wishing well' activity (creating a sense of support and kindness).

- *Intrinsic motivation:* Conscious discipline involves no rewards system; being a nice person is an expectation rather than something that is rewarded. At Cravenwood, pupils are acknowledged and celebrated when they go above and beyond or try something new. The emphasis is on creating a feeling of pride and motivation within children for something they have done themselves, rather than being motivated to do things for external praise or to please adults.