

## More Than Just Obedience: Behaviour Management for Holistic Growth

Walking into the grade 4 *Patang* class in The Heritage School, Vasant Kunj, one is struck by the discipline on display. All the students, as well as their teacher Mrs. Urmila Boora, are focussed on the task at hand and rarely deviate from the day's plan. And this is not blindly regimented discipline born from fear of the teacher; the students are engaged with what's going on in class, and there's regular back and forth with the teacher regarding doubts.



This is especially remarkable given that we're talking about a group of 9-11 year olds, sitting in a 1.5-hour long remedial class *after a full eight-hour school day*.

Behaviour management is an important plank for any teacher, and Urmila ma'am believes that it has much greater significance than simply helping control the students' innate exuberance. She holds that behaviour management is essential to the growth of a student, it teaches skills and builds values like listening to and respecting other people, self-control, and measured thought, among many others. Apart

from that, it also has a natural impact on their academic performance, as students who are focussed on the task at hand will internalise concepts better.

So how has she managed this in her classroom? Urmila ma'am notes that, '*they are actually a great group to work with, they make it easy to teach them,*' but concedes that '*it wasn't always such a settled classroom*'. She began by establishing her role in the class – '*I'm there to be their teacher first, not their best friend*'. While this pronouncement is made gravely, it's clear that her students love her none the less for it.

'Urmila ma'am is very nice, and doesn't scold us. She's my favourite teacher' says Bobby. However, her role of 'teacher first' is definitely at play in her classroom, with every student from her class talking about how they love *Patang* classes because it helps them learn things better.



She also works with the students on understanding the *need* for regulated behaviour, not just the processes to ensure it. All the students participate in the classroom's behaviour, they don't just respond to it. It's come to a point where if a student is misbehaving at all, or isn't paying attention, even words aren't required to remedy the situation; Urmila ma'am simply needs to look at them for a second longer than is normal, or lightly tap their shoulder or desk as she's walking past.

Even among the strategies that are regularly used in class, there is a deeper purpose than a simple quick fix for silence. For instance, grade 4 regularly meditates in class, which they say helps them settle down and focus.

Today, this classroom is an excellent example of how a good, holistic behaviour management strategy can have a powerful positive effect on individual students as well as the learning in the whole class.