



# First Aid Kit for Teachers

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Duncan Grey



# **First Aid Kit for Teachers**

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# LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACAS	Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service
ADHD	Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Syndrome
ALPS	Accelerated Learning in Primary Schools
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorders
ATL	Association of Teachers and Lecturers
BBFC	British Board of Film Classification
CMT or CIMT	Critical Incident Management Team
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CRB UK	Criminal Records Bureau
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DfES	Department for Education and Science
DT or D&T	Design Technology
DVD	Digital Video Disk
EiC	Excellence In Cities
EOC	Equal Opportunities Commission
G&T	Gifted and talented
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GTC	General Teaching Council
ICT	Information Communication Technology
INSET	In-Service Training
LA or LEA	Local Authority or Local Education Authority
LRC	Learning Resources Centre
NAS/UWT	The National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers
NCSL	National College for School Leadership
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headship
NRT	National (Workforce) Remodelling Team
NUT	National Union of Teachers
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PE	Physical Education
PPMR	preparation, planning, marking and recording
PSHE	Personal, Social and Health Education
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
RE	Religious Education
SATS	Standardized Assessment Tasks
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
TA	Teaching Assistant
TDA	Training and Development Agency for Schools
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment

# PREFACE

The advice in this book comes from a great deal of personal experience and many mistakes as well as successes.

I have, regrettably, sometimes failed to follow some of this advice myself and I know not all the good advice will work well for you. If it did, teaching would be a much more formulaic process than it is. In fact, pupils, groups, teaching environments and teachers' skills and moods change so much that there can never be a perfect solution to teaching.

I hope *First Aid Kit for Teachers* is a book you'll turn to for help. What happens then is in your hands.

If you are a Head you may see references to teachers consulting the Head about problems. I hope that the advice in this book can be read as being for Heads too, in which case they will have to consult other Heads or their own advisers, or even the staff they work with. Everyone needs someone to talk to.

This book is something to be read in advance of these incidents so you are prepared. It's to be by your side, if you have a moment, to help you make decisions, if you're fortunate enough to have time. It's also there to compare notes and evaluate your own actions. Did you get it right? Did you avoid the worst traps? What did you forget to do?

Whatever you do, don't read this book as a warning to avoid teaching. If we followed the advice of some health and safety experts we might never get up in the morning. We might reflect that most deaths occur in bed, and that putting our socks on is statistically a hazardous procedure. Teaching remains a noble profession and having contact with pupils is stimulating and worthwhile. Don't let the risks and pitfalls put you off – but do go armed with the *First Aid Kit*.

So, off you go, ready to stand firm, take control and say with a steady voice, 'Calm down, everyone. Go back to your seats and get on with your work. It's all right, I'm a teacher.'

Duncan Grey  
July 2006

# PRINCIPLES OF FIRST AID KIT FOR TEACHERS

## What is first aid?

First aid is the first assistance given before the arrival of a qualified expert.

It is knowledge about what to do if a problem arises.

It is also an accessible *reference* to try to avoid the problem in the first place.

## The object of first aid

The object of first aid is to:

- stabilize a situation;
- prevent a situation becoming worse;
- promote recovery.

## Format

Where possible the format of each entry is:

- Description;
- Cause;
- Action;
- Priorities;
- Alternatives;
- Avoid.

These headings echo the stages of medical first aid.

## What equipment is needed?

First aid offers advice which generally does not require specialist equipment.

It could, however, benefit from a small, portable and easily assembled kit.

More than anything it requires a clear head and some common sense.

## What makes this *First Aid Kit* useful?

Every teacher benefits from advice. Sometimes you walk into a situation where, as an adult professional among children and young people, you are expected to resolve the problem. If you don't, you could be accused of neglect. If you resolve it inappropriately, you could be accused of unprofessional behaviour. Non-teachers rarely appreciate how many personal interactions there are during a day – the vast majority of which are in public view and on which you will be judged.

*First Aid Kit* is sensible action for anyone who is on the spot when a problem occurs. It offers considered advice when you don't have the time to consider all the options. It tries to give helpful advice on preventing the problem getting worse and starting things on the road to recovery. It offers reassurance when everyone else is panicking. It may also cover your back.

Avoidance of problems and coping with them when they happen are professional skills. Make sure you are a member of an appropriate trade union or professional association. Keep up to date with the inevitable changes in your profession by reading professional journals, attending professional development opportunities and reading news and reports on websites.

And don't leave home without your *First Aid Kit!*

# ESSENTIAL TEACHING METHODS

You can teach anything with this list of essential methods. It will take skill and experience to decide which method works best in each situation – will cooperation or competition produce the best result? – but it's a starting point.

You might even evaluate your past performance and consider whether one of the other methods might have worked better.

These fundamental teaching methods are here to remind you that pupils have preferences about the way they learn. And when they are taught the way they prefer to learn they generally behave better, enjoy themselves more and think of you and your school in a more positive way. These methods and the essential learning styles which follow may head off some of the problems listed in the body of this book, preventing a situation occurring in the first place. That is truly first aid for teachers.

## **Instruction**

Although it may be true that 'I hear and I forget', some things do need to be told and accepted. Direct instruction still has its place. It conveys a lot of information quickly.

Instruction can be enhanced by note-taking and by subsequent active tasks to consolidate and test learning.

## **Example**

Give an example relevant to the pupil's own experience where possible.

Appropriate examples make an idea relevant.

Our personal example, our attitude – whether helping, being patient, bad-tempered, harsh or caring – will directly influence our pupils too. We are all role models and it makes sense to be positive.

How you say something and how you yourself do it will last longer than what you say.

## **Analogy or comparison**

Use simile and metaphor to describe things and to connect them to the pupil's experience.

Make ideas less abstract by comparing them with practical life.

Make meaningful comparisons between historical figures and modern personalities.

Provide two texts or two ideas for comparison. This generates more creativity than a single example. The examples can then serve as models for pupils' own work.

## **Experiment and discovery**

Learning by doing is practical and creative. 'I do and I understand.'

It may take longer, but the learning lasts longer too.

The delight of discovering something for yourself can lead to a lifelong fascination. Plan to give time for children to do things for themselves under your guidance. These are learning opportunities and they are very valuable.

### **Collaboration**

Working with someone else or in a small team gives many benefits which can last a lifetime. Sharing ideas and working cooperatively are skills much prized by industry and in our personal lives.

### **Competition**

At other times competition between teams brings about a creative challenge.

Success is a great incentive and failure is a valuable lesson. There does need to be control to prevent the excesses of destructive 'bare-knuckle' competition.

### **Computer-mediated learning**

Using a computer need not be a solitary activity. A computer can complement other activities and supply a team with additional powers and data.

Computers sprinkled liberally around learning areas are more likely to lead to balanced and practical use than if parked directly in front of each child. They are valuable tools, but not the only ones.

### **Mentoring**

It's not only the teacher and teaching assistant who can give help and guidance. Older pupils listening to younger children reading aloud serve as an audience, and they learn about responsibility and caring in the process. Peer support groups countering bullying can be particularly effective. Older pupils organizing games and sporting or fund-raising activities learn important skills and become role models for younger pupils.

### **Building on prior learning**

Knowing the starting point and previous experience of your learners will determine the content and the speed at which learning takes place.

Ask your pupils what they know, then start to add to it rather than landing them with new knowledge out of context. This is also a good time to find out their interests and enthusiasms.

### **Frameworks**

Use scaffolding, writing frames and prompts to suggest an overall shape into which a pupil can slot their personal answer, or provide part of a pattern to which the pupils can add.

A framework could be a model, an incomplete shape or a template. It offers somewhere to start from and an example of a possible solution.

Later, the pupil can go it alone, but in the early stages a template banishes the tyranny of the blank A4 page.

# LEARNING STYLES

As with the basic teaching methods above, appealing to pupils' preferred learning styles can help avoid the disruption caused by restless pupils.

We all learn in our own unique way, with our own preferences. Where one child prefers to talk and write, another will prefer to explore and build; one focuses alone while another is inspired by working with others. Learning styles are not what we learn but how we learn.

This is not an argument for appealing *only* to each child's preferred learning style. That would reinforce the preference and discourage the development of alternative learning methods which might help the learner. Nor does it mean entirely individualized learning for your 30+ pupils!

What it does mean is that by recognizing learning preferences you can offer a range of ways for children to learn; different routes for reaching a common goal. In addition we can provide activities which will develop each child's range of learning methods in order to enhance effective learning.

We might suggest four ways of presenting their research information or offer a choice that they either write a fact sheet or prepare and deliver a talk. We could vary group work to allow members of a team to contribute according to their strengths and take different roles from time to time.

The identification of seven learning styles is simply a convenience. There can be as many as you like, but the following seven are based on the work of Gardner and Hatch (1989) and have been enthusiastically taken up by accelerated learning programmes. The number, terminology and definitions may change but the idea remains the same – take into account pupils' preferred learning styles and both behaviour and learning will improve. That is truly personalized learning.

## **Seven learning styles**

### *Physical learners*

They fidget and can't sit still. They think better when they are moving. They enjoy sports, dancing and making things. They gain from role-play, movement exercises and touching things.

They often enjoy performing and could become dancers, athletes, surgeons or craftspeople.

### *Intrapersonal learners*

They are loners and may be shy and thoughtful. They aren't necessarily antisocial, but think better on their own, independently and reflectively.

They enjoy writing journals and diaries and exploring the Internet. They gain most from self-paced activities, independent projects and research.

They could become psychologists, novelists or computer programmers.

*Interpersonal learners*

They are sociable, helpers and team players. They like to interact with others and share ideas. They understand how people work together.

They enjoy team sports and group discussions, playing cooperative games, researching with partners or working in small groups.

They could become counsellors, teachers, politicians, entertainers or go into public relations.

*Linguistic learners*

They enjoy words, and learn through language. They express themselves through speech and writing.

They enjoy giving speeches, writing poetry and reading. They learn through storytelling, listening to lectures, taking part in interviews and by reading and writing.

They could become authors, journalists or lecturers.

*Mathematical learners*

They enjoy games, maths puzzles and rule-based activities. They think in logical ways, though they may not be neat and orderly. They relate through reasoning, numbers and patterns.

They enjoy counting, making timelines and solving puzzles.

They learn through performing scientific experiments, following step-by-step processes and using calculations.

They could become scientists, accountants, engineers or lawyers.

*Musical learners*

They enjoy humming, singing and tapping. They are not necessarily the best singers or musicians, but they respond to melody, rhythm and sound. They enjoy listening to songs, playing instruments and singing.

They learn by writing song lyrics, playing music with their work or developing multimedia projects.

They may become singers, musicians, orchestra conductors, recording engineers or Web designers.

*Visual learners*

They doodle, draw and enjoy colour. They have an artistic sense and relate through pictures and images. They enjoy painting, sculpting and creating graphs.

They learn by drawing diagrams, reading flowcharts, creating maps or designing visual Web pages.

They may become architects, pilots, designers, painters or sculptors.

If you find that more than one learning style applies to you, then this may make you a more varied learner. If you prefer one learning style for some activities and a second or third for other activities, then you are likely to be a

skilled learner who can make a conscious choice of the most effective style for the task.

This is what we should be aiming for with our pupils – to make them effective learners with a range of learning strategies at their fingertips.

That this may avoid some of the behavioural problems addressed in this book is a further great advantage of having effective and satisfied learners.

The Steer Report on behaviour notes: 'It is recognized that the most common forms of misbehaviour are incessant chatter, calling out, inattention and other forms of nuisance that irritate staff and interrupt learning.'

This is precisely the sort of underlying disruption which can be reduced by choosing appropriate teaching and learning methods.

# WHOLE-SCHOOL CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Critical incidents are defined as:

Unexpected occurrences which may suddenly have a major impact on school on a scale beyond the coping capacity of the school operating under normal conditions.

A critical incident may be:

- an arson attack or major fire;
- a pupil suicide or sudden death;
- the sudden tragic death of member of staff;
- a violent attack on a member of the school;
- an armed or violent intruder on school premises;
- a road traffic accident, with school fatalities;
- an abduction or disappearance;
- allegations or actual incidents of abuse;
- any incident causing sudden school closure.

## **Preparation**

Preparation is the best way to minimize the effects of a critical incident. This is an outline summary but your list must be complete, thorough, should conform to Local Authority (LA) policy, be approved by emergency services, rehearsed and evaluated.

## **Team**

Create a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT).

Make sure this team is known to all staff and governors.

## **Plan**

Design a plan to suit your school.

Include a strategy for communicating, for making areas of the school private, providing classroom support and counselling, an instant assembly to occupy pupils while their teachers are involved in the incident.

Create an incident log to record what should be done and what is actually done in the event of an incident.

## **Identify and describe**

Identify the range of crises or incidents that could affect your school. This is the basis for a risk assessment.

## **Base**

Establish a base from which the CIMT can operate, with appropriate facilities to contact pupils, teachers, parents, LA support services and education officers, counsellors, the media. Also identify a separate back-up base.

### **Communication**

Ensure that, in the event of a critical incident, the CIMT can communicate with each other, emergency services, members of the school community and the wider community.

Consider mobile phones, phone landlines, radios, text messaging, laptops with a variety of potential connections (network, wireless, dialup modem, broadband). Don't forget posters and news bulletins at the school gates and usual parking places.

Create an essential phone list, list of contact names and a telephone tree.

Identify and publicize rendezvous points, sources of further information (local radio, school website, recorded message, phone contact number).

### **Grab bag**

Identify an essential kit for guarding in the event of fire or using to set up the CIMT base. Make sure this will be packed, ready and retrieved in any emergency.

### **Checklist of constantly updated information**

This could be available online at a distant location, on a local back-up disk or on a laptop, but must be available, safe and up to date. The list should include:

- contact details of pupils and staff, governors, key holders;
- LA emergency contact numbers;
- bus/coach lists;
- emergency supply/support list;
- information sheet about the school providing basic details;
- site plan;
- timetables and registration data – who is where, including off-site details;
- list of school first-aiders;
- list of high-risk pupils;
- school bank details;
- copies and location of keys;
- back-up disks for all accounts.

# PART 1 DISCIPLINE AND BEHAVIOUR

*Low-level disruption is a more pervasive problem than outright refusal or violence.*

*School rules are usually very clear about absolute criteria, but only experience and professionalism from the teacher and the ethos of the school can cope with the energy-sapping attempts by pupils to ignore requests, act deaf to instructions, reel off excuses or do the minimum of work.*

## 1 SCHOOL RULES AND EXPECTATIONS

*They don't obey the school rules.*

### **Description**

School rules must be laid out clearly and agreed by all parties – teachers, pupils, school management, parents, governors, local authority.

You should know where to find these rules and make it a responsibility to bring them to the attention of pupils. This is too often done when pupils enter the school, then left and forgotten.

### **Causes**

Laying down rules requires strictness and consistency, yet implementation requires sensitivity and flexibility. It is this uneasy line that teachers defend hour by hour while pupils attack any weakness.

Meanwhile the practical expectations that the school has for its pupils and its teachers may not be so formally agreed – and even if they are, the expectations in the corridors and the classrooms may differ substantially from what is written and may vary between teachers.

All this causes a dislocation between theory and practice, the written rules and the rules on the ground. If white trainers are forbidden, what do we do about mainly black with white flashes? And how big can those flashes be? The school must together decide, explain, justify and make the decision and the penalty for disobedience clear. Individual teachers trying to stem the tide soon give up in the face of sullen lack of cooperation.

Incidentally, pupils seem to learn the informal rules of the school quickly by osmosis, though some of the formal rules and their language may not even be understood.

Distinguishing between given rules and actual expectations can be troublesome, especially for a new teacher. To reprimand a boy for walking on the