

# Transforming a “difficult” class: a case study



VisionWorks teaching programmes equip young people with the self-awareness and skills to make more positive choices about their learning.

Completely aligned with SEAL, our programmes are written by teachers for teachers and based on the same 5 key domains of Emotional Intelligence. Teaching students to recognise how their behaviour is driven by their emotions, we show them how to exercise the power of positive choice in that process.

<b>My World</b>	emotional literacy for KS2
<b>It's OK Being Me</b>	emotional literacy for KS3
<b>Discovering Me</b>	emotional literacy for units outside mainstream education
<b>Insight Series</b>	short programmes for KS3

Available from:

[www.vision-works.net](http://www.vision-works.net)

01249 409001

[info@vision-works.net](mailto:info@vision-works.net)

## Transforming a “difficult” class

I used this recently and have been delighted with the result. I hope it works for you.

I have been struggling for months with a lower set Y8 RE class. Many of them are constantly attention seeking and disruptive. It's impossible to separate them because wherever I move one disruptive child, there's always another one to with whom to collaborate. My perception of the group was that they were: Loud Rude Naughty and Lazy. I came to dread teaching them. My teaching became: Loud Angry Punitive Frustrated. We were locked in battle.



It was a long time before I had the courage to look at the feeling that was underlying my anger. When I eventually did so, I realised that I felt a failure. After all my years of teaching, I had a Y8 class running rings round me. How humiliating!

If this was how I was feeling, what were they feeling, this motley, low ability group? These are students who, however hard we or they try, consider themselves academic failures; they will never be in the top set. On top of this, many have them have other problems to deal with too. Their low self-esteem was glaring me in the face.

## Transforming a “difficult” class *continued*

So I tried the following:

1. As the students came in, I welcomed them at the door as usual and asked them to sit in a circle. Their interest was aroused.
2. When all were seated I explained that we would do the register differently today. Instead of answering “Yes, Miss” when I said their names, I told them, I was going to tell each person one thing that I really admired about them. (I had written this in the register in advance – I didn’t want awkward gaps while I desperately thought of something to say.)
3. At first the most vocal student followed my positive comment with a put down. Calmly and quietly I moved him to sit next to me. I explained to him and the group that this was a group activity and there were to be no put downs. Indeed, if anyone wanted to talk they were to raise their hands. Whenever the vocal student began to speak, I was able to stop him quietly before 2 syllables were out. Quite quickly he was silent.
4. Each student was a little embarrassed to be a focus person but also they were longing for their turn and pinkly pleased with what I said to them.
5. One boy was so happy that he squirmed in his seat saying, “Can we stay in a circle for the WHOLE lesson?” We did. We focused on discussion work, taking turns and listening to each other with respect.

At the end of the lesson we were ALL happy.

The following week I was a little nervous, wondering whether or not this new found peace would last. However I needn’t have worried; the students were a pleasure to teach. They hadn’t turned into saints but they were so much more positive and cooperative. And I was more relaxed which must have made it easier for them. When I taught them again the following week, the shift felt embedded. Hooray!

It’s worth a try and good luck.

Janet Grant