5.6 Self-awareness & Self-management Skills

*Outline* ***ONE*** *example of how and where you have demonstrated the capacity to self-manage and develop personally and professionally as a result of feedback from colleagues or critical friends*

Throughout my time in Education so far, every day I learn that each day brings a different challenge. I have realised over time that self-reflection is the most important aspect of lives as teachers. Self-reflection can be achieved by one’s own thoughts and memories, but also by feedback from critical friends and colleagues. Over the years I have developed a professional and calm approach to school matters.

In my role as Guidance Counsellor, I have encountered many, many difficult situations and this approach pays huge dividends for me and the students in my care. As the professional, emotions must be left at the door, particularly when dealing with someone who is showing signs of emotional struggle. A calming presence and attitude has been the greatest defence in the face of adversity. Many of these students are used to being shouted at by family members and others in their communities and the last thing they need is to be shouted at in school by their teachers in school.

We are the people who need to be in control and if we shout at students, we’ve lost the battle. Too many teachers resort to battling with the students in the classroom rather than showing respect and engaging with them in a respectful way.

Over the last 2 years, Covid restrictions and school staggered opening along with online learning have brought a whole new level of stress to some of our parents and students. In our school, this has resulted in many teacher-parent confrontations at the school door just before classes are about to start.

One particular parent has done this to a number of teachers on several mornings, in the presence of other parents, students and guests to the school. As I had met her in my office on previous occasions, I was conscious of how she is wired and well-aware of her emotional state and volatility. I offered a calm approach and invited the parent for a walk-and-talk.  I let the parent rant and blow off the steam that had built up. I listened to their opinions, offered solace and understanding from their point of view, I then asked to see things from our perspective.  I highlighted the problems that were causing the issue and reassured that we were singing off the same hymn sheet. Time passed and offered the cooling period that was necessary for progression. Being away from the school environment eased hostilities. The situation was resolved. This was not a once off, but rather a repeated scenario for a number of occasions

**Second Example**

I am the Fifth-Year year head. A teacher reported a 5th Year student to me for using his phone on the corridor at morning break. She confiscated his phone and he became argumentative with her as he felt other teachers had passed by and ignored him while he was texting his mother.

I told the teacher that she should have ignored this phone use at break time as the student is a wonderful young man and has never been a problem in the school. I told her I had enough to do without having to address silly incidences like this. She became very upset, told me she was only implementing school policy and walked away.

I found it hard to concentrate in my next class as I thought about what she had said. She was right – it is school policy that the use of a phone by students is not permitted in the school building. If we, as teachers, were more consistent in how we implemented policies and procedures, the students would be clearer about what is important and the system would run smoother. My manner and attitude to the teacher was also poor, intemperate and unacceptable.

In my next free class, I arranged to meet the teacher at a suitable time. I thanked her for agreeing to meet me despite my disrespectful behaviour and I acknowledged that I was completely wrong in how I dealt with her. I apologised to her and thanked her for her role in helping me to see my blind spots and I assured her that I would be a better person and a better year head as a result of this interaction. I also realised that I had worked with this person for the past seven years and I didn’t realise what a beautiful person she was.

I spoke to my principal about what had happened and we both felt that there was learning in this for all of us and we are currently exploring if we can include a staff workshop on teacher/year head interactions at a future staff day.