

# MAGIC CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Updated for 2009



How to get the most from  
the worst kids in school

[www.classroom-management.org](http://www.classroom-management.org)

ROB PLEVIN

**FUNDAMENTAL  
CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES**

**ROB PLEVIN**

**YOU HAVE FREE DISTRIBUTION RIGHTS TO THIS EBOOK – PASS IT ON!!**

If you know of someone who you think would benefit from reading it, please **feel free to forward it on** to them or direct them to our website here: <http://stevk.crowdpullersnee.click2sell.eu>

I also recommend this helpful site: [TIMESAVERS for TEACHERS.com](http://TIMESAVERSforTEACHERS.com)

**ANY PROBLEMS OR QUERIES, EMAIL: [Admin@behaviourneeds.com](mailto:Admin@behaviourneeds.com)**

*Rob's book has been brought to you by*

[TIMESAVERS for TEACHERS.com](http://TIMESAVERSforTEACHERS.com)

Copyright 2008/9 Rob Plevin [www.behaviourneeds.com](http://www.behaviourneeds.com)

**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.** The information in this document is protected by one or more worldwide copyright treaties and may not be reprinted, copied, redistributed, retransmitted, photocopied, displayed, or stored electronically or by any means whatsoever without the express written permission of the author.

**DISCLAIMER AND/OR LEGAL NOTICES:**

The information presented herein represents the view of the author as of the date of publication. The author reserves the right to alter and update his opinion. This report is for informational purposes only. It is not intended to provide exact or precise advice. The contents reflect the author's views acquired through his experience and knowledge on the subject under discussion. The author and publisher disclaim any liability for personal or business loss caused by the use of or misuse of or inability to use any or all of the information contained in this report. This report is a guide only, as such, use the information at your own risk.

Typesetting and Layout:  
Katherine Goodman  
KwikType Services

## Contents

---

<u>Introduction</u> .....	1
<u>Common Approaches to Behaviour Management and the reasons they fail</u> .....	2
<b><u>PART 1</u></b>	
<u>The easiest way to deal with behaviour problems is to prevent them happening in the first place</u> .....	11
<u>1.1 Features of the Best Teacher In School</u> .....	11
<u>1.2 Keep them feeling good</u> .....	12
<u>1.3 The best teachers make lessons interesting and fun</u> .....	21
<u>1.4 The best teachers catch them being good and reward their successes</u> .....	35
<u>1.5 The number one secret to getting any child to behave</u> .....	40
<u>1.6 How to make sure your instructions are followed without arguments or confrontation</u> .....	47
<u>1.7 Use routines to develop consistency</u> .....	62
<u>1.8 The best teachers are in CONTROL</u> .....	64
<b><u>PART 2</u></b>	
<u>Dealing with disruption and pupils who are off task</u> .....	77
<u>2.1 The simplest, most over-looked technique for getting any pupil to work in your lesson</u> .....	77
<u>2.2 The four steps to getting any child on task</u> .....	78
<u>2.3 The five-step script that stops disruption</u> .....	84
<u>2.4 The correct use of consequences</u> .....	87
<u>2.5 The Three Requests Technique that gives you instant control of difficult pupils</u> .....	91
<u>2.6 How to use the Three Requests Technique</u> .....	92
<u>2.7 Ten magic words to make a disruptive child behave</u> .....	94
<u>2.8 How to say 'No' to a pupil without causing an argument</u> .....	94
<u>2.9 A simple sentence that reduces disruption by 50%</u> .....	95
<b><u>PART 3</u></b>	
<u>Coping with crises, conflicts and difficult situations</u> .....	96
<u>3.1 The stages leading up to a crisis</u> .....	96
<u>3.2 Dealing with pupils in stage 1</u> .....	97
<u>3.3 What to say to a child in stage 1</u> .....	98
<u>3.4 The magic script to use when you need to find out what is bothering a child</u> ..	98
<u>3.5 Dealing with pupils in stage 2</u> .....	100
<u>3.6 What to say to a child in stage 2</u> .....	100

## Introduction

---

Children are badly behaved. It is an indisputable fact, and since you are reading this book, you already know it. Too often, the words *child* and *misbehave* are as inseparable as love and marriage, horse and carriage, Itchy and Scratchy.

You don't need to be a parent or teacher to know that, but why is it happening? Why has the behaviour in our schools, and society as a whole, deteriorated to such despairingly low levels? And what can we, as teachers, do about it?

It is far too easy to give a shrug and say 'blame the parents' because ineffective and inadequate parenting (lack of supervision, rejection, inappropriate discipline etc) undoubtedly has an effect – but they can't be seen as the only cause.

Children today are subject to more outside influences than ever before. Nobody could deny that the media is a global and ever-present force to be reckoned with, a potentially destructive influence that cannot be ignored. And one that will never, ever go away.

In today's decaying society children of all ages, races and creeds are routinely being exposed to violence, smut, foul language and pornography on a daily basis through television, print, the internet and cinema. I want to make it clear that I am *not* suggesting that exposure to suspect material will turn anyone of impressionable age (in other words, a child) into a homicidal rapist but, by way of illustration, allow me to digress for a few lines ...

One day several years ago, I happened to be in a busy public park, throwing a frisbee at a friend, and completely failing to look cool in front of the girls by fumbling catches. It was a quiet summer's day and I was only one of many people taking advantage of it. Suddenly the air around us turned blue when a piercing voice, which must have carried miles, began reciting portions of the script of 'Beverly Hills Cop'. Needless to say, it was those parts which ensure that the film is not broadcast before the watershed, and it really was not what anybody present wanted to hear. I can still remember how shocked I was to see the owner of the offending voice – a person of cheerful, angelic appearance, who stood approximately two inches taller than my kneecaps, and who could not have been more than six years old.

Broadcasting chiefs, media moguls, production companies and ultimately governments the world over should be condemned for allowing this annihilation of our social values to take place. And why? Because before long they'll be shouting 'blame the children' and it will be too late.

Whatever the causes, bad behaviour is a now huge problem faced by almost everyone who deals with children and young people. So I'll ask the question again – what can we, as teachers, do about it?

Do we just give up, throw our hands in the air and accept that the problem is out of our control? Do we leave the career that we spent so long training for and that promised so much, or we just go on blindly battling through each day, facing arguments and confrontations in almost every lesson? Should we really accept this huge amount of stress on a daily basis – for the rest of our working lives?

Before we accept defeat completely, let's have a quick look at some of the other possible approaches to behaviour management, and the reasons why they usually fail.

## ***Common Approaches to Behaviour Problems ...***

### **SOME FOCUS ON THE CHILD:**

- **Nutrition (omega oils, omission of additives etc.)** – when even the list of ingredients in a pre-packed salad sandwich can read like a toxic dump, can we really control what a child puts into his body? School meals are improving (in the UK at least, thanks to Jamie Oliver) but what about at break times, what about at home?
- **Drugs** – can we be sure they'll take their Ritalin when they're supposed to? Is Ritalin safe? Does Ritalin work?
- **Behaviour management systems** – Can we be sure the parents will follow the rules to the letter? What about when responsible adults aren't present to monitor behaviour? With so many of them to choose from, how can we be sure we're using one that works?
- **Rewarding good behaviour** – Careful with this one. We're often told to 'catch them being good' and few people will argue against a policy of positive reinforcement. The problems come from an over-reliance on tangible rewards and treats. Do we really want to breed a society which constantly has an outstretched hand and responds to requests to behave with "What will you give me if I do?"
- **Punishing bad behaviour** – The reactive, punitive, hostile approach to bad behaviour tends to work best with the more compliant pupils – those who have a general respect for authority. With very challenging, strong-willed, damaged individuals it can lead to distrust and resentment and even the desire to take revenge. A teacher who relies on fear and punishment in response to rule-breaking will usually experience very poor relationships with pupils.

## SOME FOCUS ON THE HOME:

- **Effective parenting** – do all parents have the same views on discipline? Are all parents effective role models? Can all parents understand and implement the principles of effective parenting?
- **Change their peer groups/influence** – does the child have a positive social life or is his best friend his Playstation? Which group has the greatest influence on the child – the responsible adults or the peers? Can we control who they hang around with?

## SOME FOCUS ON THE SCHOOL:

- **Alternative Curriculum** – Is adequate funding available for the duration? Is it meeting the child's changing needs? Is the child engaged?
- **Special inclusive packages** – Is funding available for the duration? Is it really meeting the child's changing needs? Are other factors threatening the child's success?
- **Behaviour Improvement Policies** – are all staff and pupils fully aware of the system? Is there total consistency across the school? Is the system effective for all pupils?

One important feature these strategies share is that they can be clearly seen as attempts to *control* the individual – they are all methods of external control and have '**what can we do to them?**' as the main underlying thought.

With the exception of positive reinforcement, external control doesn't promote or teach good behaviour; it merely says 'don't do that!' and does nothing to clarify the *how* and *why* of appropriate action. In today's society many young people simply haven't been shown 'how' to behave appropriately and have no self-motivation to do so. If we want behaviour to improve we need to develop **responsibility** in our young; external control simply takes it away from them.

Another problem with these systems is that they rely heavily on monitoring procedures which are totally outside the remit of the teacher.

In terms of diet, for example you, the teacher, cannot ensure a child doesn't eat colour and additive-laden sweets when he walks home. In terms of effective parenting you have very little day to day influence over an abusive step-father. You cannot choose who your class members hang around with at night and you can not tell their mothers which films and TV programs to stop them watching. These things are all outside *your* control.

So, if you have no power over the (ineffective) systems that are being used to control a child's behaviour, and you clearly cannot just carry on accepting the behaviour, what can you do to make positive changes?

The answer is to deal with the only thing you *do* have any direct control over ...



The way you **approach** and deal with these children, the way you **respond** to their behaviour, the way you **speak** and the way you **look**, the way you arrange and organize the **room** together with the **work** you set them is all under *your* direct control.

Everything else is not and will only cause stress if you dwell on it or try to change it. If you put your efforts solely into the things you *can* change, positive results will come. And I assure you they will come quickly.

The strategies, techniques and ideas in this book work and they will give you new skills and resources for changing the way you deal with the children and young people in your care. While I have no doubts as to the effectiveness of these ideas, it's entirely up to *you* as to whether you use them or not. I guarantee you will discover at least one new idea to get you excited and motivated in the pages that follow – but I also know that making changes in the way you work can be difficult.



**Gandhi said that in order to see a change in the world, we must first change ourselves.**

---

**If you want to see a change in your classroom and the kids you teach, the same is true.**

At this point I need to digress for a moment:

This little book was originally written long before I came up with the [Needs-Focused™ Approach](#) to behaviour management (more about that in a second) but you'll find it actually fits very well with the overall concept and provides a reasonable introduction to what has now become a very effective and complete tool for successful classroom management. In fact, we are now able to offer the whole training in a self-study format. Details are on the Behaviour needs website ([www.behaviourneeds.com](http://www.behaviourneeds.com)) and at [www.classroom-management.org](http://www.classroom-management.org).

I came up with **Needs-Focused™** because I wanted a simple recipe any teacher could follow to successfully manage behaviour in young people. I found that much of the conflicting and confusing advice regarding behaviour management was focused on 'reactions' to problems **after** they had occurred which struck me as a little like putting a **sticking plaster** on an open wound.

I've always believed that prevention is far easier than the cure so I wanted to focus initially on methods to prevent, or at least reduce, the number of problems from actually happening. Surely that is the most effective kind of behaviour management? Following on from that I wanted a clear, system that any teacher could pick up and follow for dealing with problems as and when they inevitably do occur. I believe the Needs-Focused Approach is as about as close to that as you can get.

## So what is the Needs-Focused™ Approach?

First of all let me tell you what it is not. Although, child-centred, it is **NOT a liberal, softly-softly program whereby challenging behaviour is ignored or mismanaged**. This is NOT about pandering to badly behaved young people with the excuse that they have been disadvantaged and damaged and is most certainly NOT about letting them off when they've done something wrong.

**Needs-Focused™** includes all the necessary aspects of behaviour management such as consistency, firm boundaries and rules but sees teacher attitudes and teacher-pupil relationships as important pre-cursors to intervention. It is about prevention and de-escalation within a **framework of fairness and respect**.

*The Needs-Focused™ Approach is based on the principle that if a pupil's crucial psychological needs are being met they will have little or no need to misbehave in order to find other means of satisfaction.*

There is a clear relationship between behaviour and feelings or emotions - when our mood is settled, content and positive our behaviour tends to reflect those feelings. Psychologists list a wide variety of psychological needs – from the need to achieve through the need to contribute, to the need for love and a whole host of others in between. Needs-Focused boils them down to just three to make life easy. We like things to be easy.

The first group of needs falls under the heading '**EMPOWERMENT**' and encompasses recognition, freedom, achievement, contribution, choice and competence. **If the need for empowerment isn't being met we will feel powerless and frustrated in any given situation.**

Second is the need for '**FUN**' and includes the need for curiosity, interest, growth and learning, adventure, amusement, surprise, variety. **If the need for fun goes unmet we feel bored and frustrated.**

Finally, the most important need by far, is the need for '**BELONGING**' – to be accepted, valued, appreciated, needed, related to or connected with something beyond oneself. In short, the need to be *loved*. **If the need for belonging goes unmet we feel lost, uncared for, lonely, isolated, vulnerable, let down, inferior and of course, frustrated.**

The important thing to remember here is that these needs **must be met**. They are as important to us as food and water if we are to live full and satisfying lives. So strong is the human drive to meet these needs that if opportunity for their satisfaction is not being provided by the teacher (or school), **pupils will seek their own methods for fulfilment.**

Most, if not all, of the children we teach get their basic needs for air, water, food, shelter and even safety met as a matter of course, both in the home and at school. But when we get into the higher levels of social and self-esteem needs the picture is a little different. Some of our young people are growing up in our societies without these needs being met and these youths form the more troubled members of any group. They are the difficult, the challenging, the vulnerable, the confused and the let down in every school; the mad, the bad and the sad.

Take the simple example of a teacher who doesn't consider it important to provide interesting lessons: They offer no variety of activity, they don't use (or even allow) laughter and humour, there is no sense of discovery, no choice in the seating arrangements or the activities, no movement, no challenge, no music, no colour, no adventure, no dynamism, no curious props, no energizer, no warm-up activity, no break ... no **FUN!**

## How do pupils behave in such a lesson?

We all know the answer ... Attention soon wanders. Perhaps there's something more interesting happening outside the window, or on one of the other tables in the classroom. They begin to look for ways to make their own fun. Doodling might do the trick. Passing notes under the table might entertain for a while. Sooner or later the desire for amusement will lead to increasingly disruptive activities. **Bottom line: If the teacher doesn't provide the fun through the lesson activity for a lively group, you can bet the pupils will meet their need for fun and excitement in their own ways.**

The **Needs-Focused™** Approach clearly explains strategies and resources for meeting each of the three crucial needs but doesn't just stop at prevention. It goes on to provide **intervention strategies and responses** which ensure these needs are not compromised when dealing with pupils who aren't behaving as they should.

If you want to find out more about **Needs-Focused™**, about our live and distance-learning training programs or even if you'd like to become a trainer yourself please visit [www.behaviourneeds.com](http://www.behaviourneeds.com)

Now, enough blatant marketing and on with this book...It consists of 3 parts:

### PART 1

The first part of this book focuses on the skills, attributes and environmental factors which *must* be in place *before* behaviour management can be successful. It is the heart of the book. In this section you will learn about the attributes of 'the best teacher in school' – the one who never seems to have any difficulties handling even the toughest of groups.

You'll learn to change your whole approach and move from 'reactive' strategies to preventive techniques and more effective responses. You'll learn how to make sure your instructions are followed and how to develop warm, trusting, respectful relationships with your most challenging pupils.

You will learn the key preventative skills that limit the chances of behaviour problems arising in the first place, and you will learn how to de-escalate problems before they get out of control. You will learn how to be aware of worried, anxious or unsettled pupils - and how to address any issues before minor discomforts build up and cause major incidents.

In short, Part 1 is about removing the straws **before** they become anywhere near heavy enough to break that poor camel's back.



## **PART 2**

The second part is concerned with the specific management of disruption in the classroom and how to cope with individual pupils who are off-task. In this section you will learn techniques that work with even the most 'difficult' pupils – even those with ADHD and EBD.

Again, the emphasis is on preventing situations from getting out of control. The main philosophy is that if we address the problem when it is small we can prevent situations escalating.

***As Confucius himself once said, 'It is far easier to beat a Pokémon than a Godzilla'.***

## **PART 3**

The final section prepares you for when things go wrong – because as you already know, they do and they will. It gives you a clearly defined system for dealing with behaviour crises. It explains fully how to handle and rectify difficult situations calmly and professionally - ensuring pupils are given necessary support, without compromising your professionalism in any way.

Before we start there are a few extra things I need to mention ...

### **1. Realize that you cannot get it right every time because nobody is perfect.**

I have been dealing with difficult, challenging young people for much of my professional life in various capacities. I've got one for a son and I was one myself so I have a fair amount of experience in this field. ☺

Despite this reasonable level of experience, however, I don't get it right every time. We're all human and can only do our best, but with the knowledge and resources in this book, you will be able to make your 'best' considerably *better*.

### **2. The results are dependent on your efforts.**

I am always hearing it said that there are no quick fixes or magic bullets in behaviour management because trust and respect take time to develop; and that these must be in place before we can expect young people to respond positively. There is truth in this - but we mustn't forget that *we have a great degree of control over how long it actually takes to build this trust and respect.*

If you put a concerted effort into getting to know the young people in your care and have a genuine interest in their learning, welfare and happiness, are you not going to gain their trust and respect more quickly than if you just turn up for the lesson, hand out your worksheets and sit behind your desk frowning?

Remember, it is *us* that need to make the initial changes.

### 3. You're not trying to 'make' them behave.

Regardless of how good a behaviour improvement program is, patterns of behaviour that have become entrenched since the child was very young cannot be changed overnight - particularly when those very same inappropriate patterns are reinforced in a chaotic home and social life every night when the child leaves school.

What these programs and techniques can do, however, is provide you with a method for managing their behaviour *whilst they are in your care*; and that is essential. Once they are behaving well you then have the opportunity to help them realize, for themselves, the *intrinsic benefits* of behaving responsibly. When they experience these benefits it becomes easier to encourage more good behaviour.

This program is not about merely making children behave – we do not want automatons and dancing bears. Any fool can make a child behave simply by offering a sufficiently valuable reward, just as we can make a dog roll over with the promise of a biscuit. The dog knows how to roll over because it has been taught the trick, just as almost any child knows the basics of acceptable classroom behaviour, but it is up to us to provide an appropriate incentive. If I were to offer a \$10 note to any member of my class managing to sit still for a lesson, most pupils would manage it and I would be bankrupt. But what would that achieve? What would it teach them?

The purpose of behaviour management is not to make children behave for *us*, it is to train them and help them experience and learn for *themselves* the many benefits and corresponding *intrinsic* value of responsible behaviour.

This book is about helping children to make their own lasting changes based on the benefits they experience when behaving in a responsible manner.

There is a clear benefit to this of course – it makes your job a whole lot easier and much more enjoyable - providing a tangible improvement in the quality of your working life!

### 4. It all starts with your **attitude**

If you want to see positive changes in your ability to manage difficult pupils the best place to start is with your attitude towards these young people. If you have the view that they are a 'work in progress' and are correspondingly willing to give them the time, support, guidance and patience they need they will obviously respond far more positively towards you than they will to the teacher who sees them as 'nothing but trouble'.

Teachers with negative attitudes tend to generate problems for themselves.



They wind kids up; they expect trouble – and frequently get it. Their classroom has a negative air and when behaviour problems occur, which they frequently do in this environment, they quickly escalate into serious confrontations because the teacher's response tends to be either hostile, sarcastic or dismissive.

The teacher with a positive attitude has positive expectations. Rather than expecting problems in the classroom they continually seek solutions. They communicate on every level that they are there to help the pupils rather than find fault with them and when problems do occur they respond in a manner that conveys care, fairness and consideration without compromising the need to be firm and in control.

A question I'm often asked on training courses is:

**“How do we get respect from challenging kids?”**

It's a good question with a simple answer ... You give it to them first.

Let's begin ...

## PART 1

---

### The easiest way to deal with behaviour problems is to *prevent* them happening in the first place

---

#### 1.1 *Features of 'The Best Teacher in the School'*

As part of a study I conducted many years ago, on factors effecting inappropriate behaviour in school, I asked pupils aged 11-16 what they considered to be the features of 'the best teacher in school'.

The answers to my questionnaire suggest the pupils think the best teachers have the following attributes...

- They can have a laugh and are cheerful.
- They keep things the same (they were annoyed at new teachers continually making changes).
- They're firm and fair
- They have the same rules for everyone (some pupils were annoyed that pupils in the inclusion unit didn't have to wear uniform).
- They are always in control
- They trust us
- They give out information in a fun and interesting way (i.e. their lessons are enjoyable)
- They recognize when we do something right
- They treat us in a nice, friendly manner

Ok, no surprises there, but if these are the features that students consider make a good teacher, (the best teacher in school), it stands to reason that if we intend to successfully work with these pupils, have any sort of positive influence on them and so prevent behaviour problems from happening, we need to adopt these same features. In view of this, these key characteristics are fundamental and underpin the main chapters of this book.

The chapter headings on page 2 are hyperlinks and will take you to the relevant parts of the book when you click on them. If you want to come back to the list at any time just type the number "2" into the page bar at the bottom of the screen.

## 1.2 **Keep them feeling good**

Our behaviour – good or bad – is dependent on our feelings. If we feel good, then we behave in a way that reflects that feeling. We smile, we get on with people, we are open to new ideas and generally more responsive to others.

On the other hand, when we feel miserable, we tend to be negative with others. We become argumentative, pessimistic and less responsive to suggestions or instructions.

It's very difficult to cheer someone up when they're fully engrossed in 'being miserable' and statements such as 'snap out of it' or "come on, cheer up" tend to do nothing but make the situation worse.

Indeed, when a pupil is down and in a bad mood, there's very little we can do to make them feel good again so their mood tends to manifest itself as disruption on some level. As teachers, this is a situation we find ourselves in throughout the day with pupils who feel the world is against them.

This has a detrimental effect on lessons, and on the classmates of the disaffected student. Routines are disrupted and of course, our nerves are affected every time a pupil gets into a mood and behaves poorly.

So what can we do about this? There are as many behaviour management techniques and 'solutions' as there are problems: we could, for example, make them work in isolation. We could give them a time out, give them a detention, send them to a senior teacher, send a letter home etc. etc. - depending on the severity of the behaviour being displayed.

But wouldn't it be far easier to simply minimize or even avoid altogether the bad behaviour by ... stopping them getting down in the first place?

You see, while our actions are indeed affected by our *feelings*, our feelings are driven, or caused, by our *experiences* – good experiences lead to good feelings and so on. But our experiences aren't just limited to the things we 'do'.

Our environment, the foods we eat, the weather, how safe we are and the people we meet; as well as our actual activities throughout the day, all count as 'experiences' - and so affect how we feel. So it stands to reason that the experiences a child has throughout the school day will drive their *moods* ... and in turn their behaviour!

That means if teachers can control the mood of the pupils in their lessons, they can have an impact on behaviour.

There are, of course, occasions when children come to our classrooms having *already* been put in a bad mood by some outside influence - an argument with Mum at breakfast, a difficult previous lesson, being bullied at break etc. but the fact remains, all other things being equal ...

***... a child who is in a good mood in a lesson is less likely to misbehave during that lesson.***

So it follows that by providing children with more *good* experiences in our classrooms we can sustain their positive mood - and therefore give them fewer reasons or excuses to behave badly.

The focus of this chapter is simply to look at ways to make their lesson experience with you a good one...after all, you're the one who'll really benefit!

## **1.21 Putting pupils in a good mood to minimize bad behaviour**

### **i) Transform your classroom to make them feel good.**

As highlighted by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, we all have basic requirements of nutrition, comfort, love, a sense of belonging and security in order to feel good and we have an opportunity to meet the basic needs of our pupils every lesson - by making sure the classroom environment is properly structured.

Picture these two classrooms:

#### **■ Classroom A**

One word describes the look of this room on first glance - shambolic. Displays are tatty (pupils' work isn't valued), chairs are broken and strewn about the room. Litter is everywhere. Equipment is stored haphazardly. Water isn't available.

Closer inspection reveals the situation to be far worse. There is a total lack of routine, it is chaotic. Pupils are told to sit anywhere – wherever there is a spare chair. Some have to sit where they are clearly unhappy and they clearly have no respect for this room.

#### **■ Classroom B**

The quality of the displays hits you as you walk through the door – awesome. A huge 3D cardboard model of TITANIC looms from one wall and is surrounded by carefully mounted examples of pupil's work. Other walls have similar mixes of large models and colourful work. A variety of indoor plants creates a relaxing atmosphere and this is sometimes complimented by soft background music.

At the front of the room is a class notice board – filled with photos of the pupils, posters, certificates of merit etc. Equipment is housed in clearly labelled drawers and pots. Water is made available to the class in refillable bottles.

***Which classroom would you be happiest working in?***

***Which classroom would your pupils be happiest working in?***

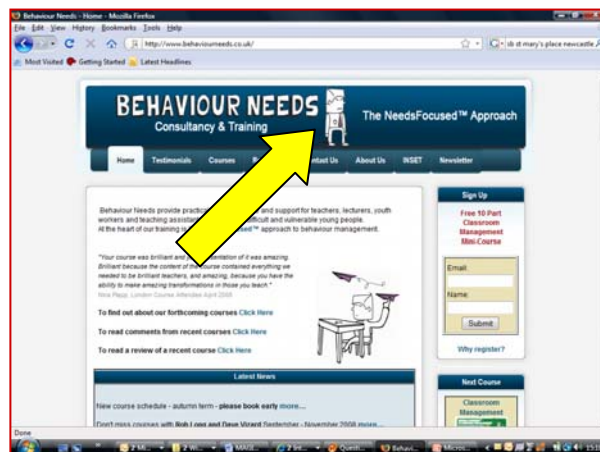
***And now the thousand dollar question...***

***Which classroom do you think would be the scene of fewer behaviour problems?***

Each of the factors in classroom B is, in itself, relatively insignificant; yet cumulatively they can make a *huge* difference to the mood and behaviour of the children.

The pupils working in this classroom feel valued - both when they see their work and photographs on display, and by being part of the routines and structure – watering the plants, putting equipment away, etc. – they have a real sense of belonging. They are happy. And students who are happy are *less likely to disrupt*.

You can get sets of humorous posters for your room at [www.behaviourneeds.com](http://www.behaviourneeds.com) (we often send out free ones so make sure you're signed up for the free newsletter).



⇒ **Just click on the 'resources' tab.**

## ii) Use humour and FUN to make them feel good

As you know, people who are having fun and feeling good are less likely to disrupt lessons, so for this reason alone, humour and fun should be integral to your teaching.

But humour also has an important part to play in making students more receptive to learning - by reducing stress and making them more relaxed. It's so easy to forget this when there is so much pressure to meet targets and deadlines but children really do learn best when they're having fun.

Being able to hold an audience and make them laugh is a very useful attribute in teaching but how many teachers do you know who have the skills of a professional entertainer or stand up comedian? Not many, so what's the point? The point is that we can still use humour – either by building our own mirth-making skills and repertoire of funnies, by delegating the task to other, more capable clowns or by relying on other sources of humour.

A lesson learned with laughter is a lesson remembered so let's look at some ways of having more fun in lessons.

You'll find additional ideas in '[Making lessons interesting and fun](#)' and you'll be able to get all kinds of practical resources for brightening lessons up including posters and various templates on our websites: [www.classroommanagement.org](http://www.classroommanagement.org) and [www.behaviourneeds.com](http://www.behaviourneeds.com).

### ***7 ways to put more humour in your lessons ...***

#### **1) First and foremost ... lighten up and learn to laugh – at yourself!**

I remember setting fire to a science lab early on in my career and learning two valuable lessons ...

The first was that you should never put a naked flame near a large balloon filled with hydrogen gas – especially when the ceiling above is decorated with large paper models of grinning teeth. I lost my fringe, my eyebrows and my notes as the fireball rolled skyward. It took the whole day to get rid of the smell.

The second lesson was that accidents and mistakes – as long as nobody gets hurt – can be absolutely hilarious.

My class was stunned for a few seconds as the shock of what I'd done sunk in. But once it had registered that the explosion hadn't actually killed me, they fell about in hysterics as I stood helplessly looking at them.

At this point I had a choice. I could have tried to regain some control by quickly adjusting my tie and barking orders to the class to calm down. Or I could collapse on my desk and join them for a few minutes of laughter therapy. I chose the latter.

In a position of authority and responsibility such as ours we are in danger of taking ourselves far too seriously. Sometimes we just need to lighten up. If you make a terrible mistake, trip up, break some equipment or have some other unplanned mishap which makes the class start to snigger – use it! Turn to them and take a bow with the biggest smile you can find. Don't stiffen up and let your pride get the better of you, berating them in an attempt to cover up your embarrassment – you'll just dig yourself into a deep hole, lose the class and end up with the reputation of a stuck up bore.

It goes without saying that accidents cease to be funny when somebody is hurt or genuinely embarrassed. With the proviso that we laugh at the mistake, as opposed to ridiculing the person making the mistake, these 'slapstick' events can be an opportunity for wonderful, side-splitting, spontaneous laughter and help generate an upbeat atmosphere. Don't always be in such a rush to quell the fun when the inevitable happens!

## 2) Jokes

Every teacher should have a few well rehearsed stories and one line gags they can draw on from time to time to add a bit of mirth to what might otherwise be a dull half hour.

### ■ Jokes and one-liners

[www.jokefile.co.uk](http://www.jokefile.co.uk)

<http://funny2.com/jokes.htm>

[www.laughlab.co.uk](http://www.laughlab.co.uk)

### ■ Funny poetry

[Poetry4Kids](http://Poetry4Kids.com)

[PoetryTeachers.com](http://PoetryTeachers.com).

### **A word of caution about joke sites:**

The content on the sites listed above (and other joke sites on the Internet) seems to change frequently and often has content which is clearly unsuitable for school use. Don't worry though, there is good stuff on them, you just have to look beyond the first page.

### 3) Let the kids provide the humour

Every class has its comedians and they're usually a lot funnier than the teachers so use them as the valuable resource that they are.

Getting pupils to tell jokes can be a great speaking and listening activity too and there's no need to prepare anything because every joke comes with its own comprehension task - if the listener laughs at the end of the joke then they have definitely understood it!

Please understand that in no way do I mean to condone or encourage inappropriate 'calling out' from pupils; what I am saying is that if a kid has a tremendous sense of humour it should be (sensibly) encouraged - as long as you can do so without losing your control, and without creating a disorderly atmosphere of 'anything goes'.

I've often found that those students who 'need' to show off and crave attention benefit from being given the opportunity to do exactly that - albeit in a controlled way.

**Here are two very different approaches to the child who is always acting silly:**

**Teacher:** *"Jonny, I'm fed up of you messing about! If it happens again you're in detention."*

(Jonny carries on behaving like an idiot to gain approval from his peers).

**Teacher:** *"Right Jonny, that's it, I warned you, you're in detention."*

**And here's the other approach...**

Teacher catches Jonny outside class before the lesson starts and says quietly ...

**Teacher:** *"Hey Jonny can I have a quick word? Listen, you've got an incredible talent. Do you know what it is?"*

**Pupil:** *"Ur?"*

**Teacher:** *"You've got an incredible talent for making people laugh - you're very lucky. It's a very worthwhile skill and will make you very popular. But we've got a bit of a problem. When you do it in the middle of the lesson or when I'm trying to get the class to work it distracts everyone because they all fall about laughing (teacher smiles). Right?"*

**Pupil:** *"Er, yeah."*

**Teacher:** *“So how about this ... I give you a set time for your comedy routines and cabaret but the rest of the time you keep quiet. How would that suit you?”*

**Pupil:** *“What do you mean?”*

**Teacher:** *“I’ll give you five minutes somewhere in the lesson – either at the beginning, the end or somewhere in the middle if we need a break and you can tell some of your jokes. But there are a couple of rules: The jokes have to be clean and non-racist; you can only start when I give you the signal; you have to stop when I give you the signal. If you can’t do that then we’ll have to go back to the detention thing and I don’t think either of us really want that. Ok?”*

**Teacher:** *“Er yeah, ok.”*

There are several reasons why this second approach works. For one thing it meets the child’s needs for **fun, belonging and power**, as in [Needs-Focused](#), but the main reason is that the teacher has the **RIGHT ATTITUDE**.

Remember, I briefly mentioned this at the start of the book. Your attitude when dealing with these kids is EVERYTHING. It can make a problem far, far worse or it can turn it into a learning opportunity and the truly magical thing about your attitude is that it is completely, totally and utterly under *your* control. It is your choice whether you lose your temper or become a role model for calmness and restraint, your choice to either jump down the kid’s throat or help him learn.

#### 4) Use the humour *they* like

Just as we all have different taste in wallpaper we all have different tastes in humour and just because we find something funny it doesn’t mean they will.

Watch the TV programs that your pupils find funny and get on their ‘humour wavelength’. Pinch jokes, quote sketches, do impersonations or draw cartoons on your board to greet them when they enter class.

This is one reason why [‘record cards’](#) are so useful. These consist of a series of fun questions that the kids fill in. They enable us to discover their interests, passions and of course... the things that make them laugh and have fun. Once you know specifically what sort of humour they’re into, making them laugh becomes much, much easier.

**5) Have a 'Funny Quote of the Week' board, a 'Joke of the Week' board or a 'Funny Photo/Caption' board**

These boards stimulate humour among your class members and add a light-hearted touch to the classroom environment. Care has to be taken not to embarrass anyone by putting up information they aren't happy about so contributing pupils must give their permission.

The funniest quote I've heard from a pupil so far has to be **"Sir, how do you spell DVD?"**

Needless to say he wouldn't have survived long if I'd put it on the wall.

■ **Funny Photos to start your photo board**

<http://www.anyfun.net/funnyphotos.php>

■ **Funny quotes to start your quote board**

<http://www.goodquotes.com/>

[http://www.indianchild.com/funny\\_quotes.htm](http://www.indianchild.com/funny_quotes.htm)

**6) In the style of ...**

You can use this to bring a touch of mirth to warm-ups, starters and plenary sessions - in fact, any part of the lesson where you want a pupil to summarise or explain a concept you've taught, or relay some findings back to the class.

It's a good idea to make the first speaker a pupil who you know will enjoy this activity - one who likes being centre of attention to break the ice and get the others involved.

**It goes something like this...**

*"John, we've spent the lesson learning about Macbeth's character and personality before he killed King Duncan. Could you please describe his character to the class and could you do it **in the style of ... a rock star?**"*

(It could of course be in the style of a Hell's Angel, a TV news reporter, a children's television presenter, a farmer, etc. etc.)

You need to come up with your own list of characters, tailored to the type of group you're working with but with the right group this is a nice, fun way of reinforcing and/or assessing learning. You could also take it a step further of course by providing a prop box, hats or even assorted costumes - some kids just love dressing up in costumes. Then again, so do some adults. 😊

## 7) **Have occasional dedicated comedy lessons**

I'm not saying you should do this all the time but now and again it's good to put together a lesson with the emphasis solely on fun. Such lessons are invaluable for building bonds and encouraging cooperation between group members and will do your reputation no end of good.

**If you want more ideas on this topic look out for our ebook ... 'Making Lessons more FUN'. It's available from our websites [www.behaviourneeds.com](http://www.behaviourneeds.com) and [www.classroom-management.org](http://www.classroom-management.org)**

### ***Four things you must do in order to use humour successfully in the classroom***

When there are younger or less mature students in the class there is, of course, a danger of things getting silly and out of control. An atmosphere the students enjoy and feel relaxed working in can quickly descend into chaos which will totally undermine your roll and make future lessons more difficult.

Children and young people sometimes have difficulty discerning appropriate humour from unacceptable silliness and nastiness so there has to be a set of rules to show a clear distinction.

- 1) **Make sure pupils are clear about what is acceptable. These things are not funny and guidelines should be written up saying so:**  
putdowns, racism, swearing, toilet humour, references to violence.
- 2) **Brainstorm with students to set additional guidelines.** Most kids already know them, some don't. Use this as a learning opportunity for everyone.
- 3) **Teach that it's ok to laugh 'about' mistakes but not at the 'people' who make them.**
- 4) **Most importantly: model positive humor yourself.**

**Here's A FANTASTIC little eBook if you want to become 'funny'. It's a strange title but I bought this and have to say it's well worth a read ...**

**[HOW TO BE FUNNY!](#)**

## 1.3 ***Make lessons 'interesting'***

Designing lessons and activities that are engaging for every individual in a class, whilst keeping within the framework of an academically-weighted, restrictive and overly-prescriptive curriculum is one of the most frustrating challenges facing teachers; but if you get it right it can be an excellent way of *avoiding* disruptive behaviour.

The pupil who is totally and wholly immersed in an activity is not interested in messing around or disrupting anyone – there is simply no need as their attention is taken up with activity in hand.

Some years ago I had an experience which made me realise the huge importance of engaging learning activities in terms of preventing problems in class...

I was working in a PRU where every minute of every day was spent focussing on addressing bad behaviour. From 8.30am until 2.45pm the attention of every member of staff was firmly focused on trying to help the pupils get through the day without either causing or being involved in a serious incident. It was very tiring and rather stressful.

On this particular day we were instructed by the head to take our respective class members to the hall as there was to be an interactive lesson provided by a company working with reptiles, large insects and assorted creepy crawlies from far off countries.

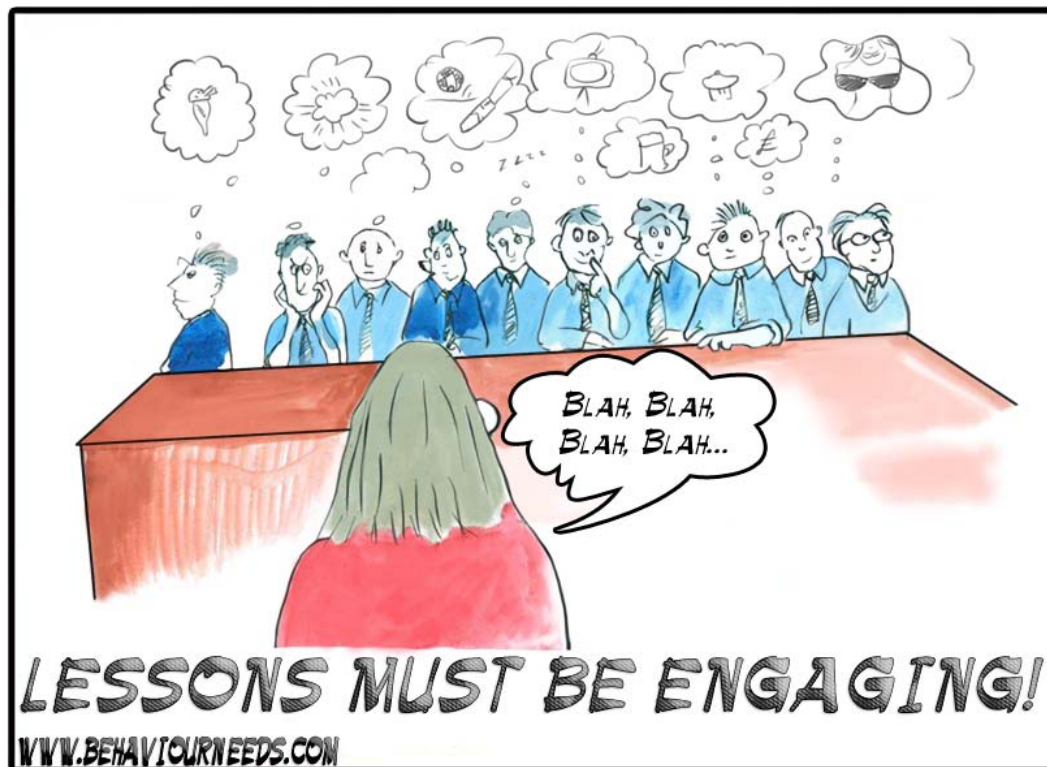
The usual response from the pupils to any outside agency was at best rude and at worst total chaos so I approached the hall with some trepidation. And then a strange thing happened.

As the pupils entered the hall the young woman in charge of the animals stood at the door to greet them warmly with a smile and one finger to her lips gesturing "please be quiet". In her other hand, close to her chest, she held a rat. Behind her were about 8 crates and boxes with lids on. Some of them were transparent and you could see 'something' moving around jerkily within. One of the boxes had a very large, hairy insect leg protruding from under the lid.

The effect on the behaviour of our pupils was miraculous. Their whole demeanour changed as soon as they entered the room. They slowed down, their eyes widened and they moved towards a row of seats in silence. Once everyone was in the room the young woman introduced herself and proceeded to talk about each of the animals in turn and allowed those that wanted to the chance to stroke them and look more closely.

Please understand that only moments earlier several of these kids had been fighting violently. These were the sorts of kids who were frequently found on the roof of the building throwing stones or screaming abuse at staff. And yet here they were sitting engrossed in a learning activity. They were absolutely transfixed and I realised then that not one member of staff was having to deal with behaviour-related issues. The kids were totally engaged – there was simply no room left on their Hard Drives for naughtiness!

I realize we can't produce a box of snakes and tarantulas every time we are presented with a difficult group but we must learn from this – If you provide them with an interesting enough activity, you will have less to do in terms of managing behaviour.



©www. Behaviourneeds.com

**BEHAVIOUR NEEDS**  
Consultancy & Training

**Keeping pupils interested and engaged is one of the easiest ways to avoid having to deal with challenging behaviour.**

In line with the pupils' requests to "Make lessons Fun" in my questionnaire all those years ago, here are some tried and tested techniques for doing just that ...

### 1.31 **Use 'Record Cards' to find your pupils' interests**

In my work I meet new pupils almost every week. Most of them have been excluded from mainstream education because, in addition to displaying varying degrees of unacceptable behaviour, they don't do much work. Whether it is the behaviour problems that get in the way of them learning or the learning difficulties that cause them to behave badly is irrelevant for the point I'm making here – the fact is that these kids are not generally known for their ability to work hard in class.

In spite of this, during the 3 month block that I teach them, I get enough out of them to cram my display boards with wonderfully creative pieces of writing, art work and projects. And one of the keys that enables me to come up with stimulating lessons that grab their attention and encourage them to work so hard is...

...an age-old salesman's tool called the '**Record Card**'.

Record cards are used by salesmen to record a client's personal information -thereby enabling him to have more to chat about on his next visit. Each time he returns to the same client and has a conversation, the client reveals a little more about his interests and life in general and this information can be recorded on the card. These tidbits gradually build up and form a library of priceless information which can be drawn on to deepen the relationship during subsequent meetings.

The huge benefit of the information on the record card is that it enables the salesman to tailor the conversation to the client's interests, needs and desires, thereby creating rapport (the principle being that we tend to like and listen to people who share our interests). When this is done, the client is far more receptive and likely to buy.

In the same way, if we tailor our lessons to a student's interests, hobbies and passions, we have a greater chance of them engaging and settling down to do the work. They will only 'buy' our lesson if it appeals to them.

We can discover the passions and interests of our pupils very quickly through our own simple version of the Record Card and then use this same information to create stimulating lessons which virtually guarantee success with even the worst pupils.

I don't mean that lightly. Once you know a person's passions and desires you literally have them in the palm of your hand. Your colleagues are going to wonder how you do it. When a fellow teacher comes in your class and sees the most difficult boy in school working away quietly in the corner, clearly engrossed in his work – they'll know you've discovered something very powerful.

### **1.32** *How to use Record Cards in Your Class*

In the 'resources' section of the Behaviour Needs Website ([www.behaviourneeds.com](http://www.behaviourneeds.com)) I've included a copy of the [Record Card Questionnaire](#) that I issue to pupils. (You can download it free). It consists of a detailed list of questions designed to get them to tell you exactly what their interests are. I've found in the past that if you ask them directly what they're into, they'll just reply "Nothin'" or a similar uninformative, dispassionate answer – particularly when you ask that question in front of the rest of the group or during a lesson. You can't expect them to open up to you in front of their peers – that wouldn't be cool, so the best way to find out their passions is to use the questionnaire.

I give the questionnaire to new pupils as soon as they enter my class or at the start of term and let them fill it in as a 'first lesson' exercise, a registration 'fill-in' or as a wet break activity. The thing to remember is to give it them when they're in a reasonably good mood and when they have enough time to think about their answers.

Once I've got their completed questionnaires I go through the answers and pick out the main themes – the 3 or 4 main things they seem to be most passionate about, and I record these in the 'Teacher's Notes' box on the first page. I then make a list of the other pupils in the group that are into similar things.

This doesn't mean you have to produce activities for the 35 or so individuals in a class – that would be silly. You usually find most kids are into more or less the same things anyway, usually the current fad or fashion. But where these things come into their own is with the 5% of pupils who cause real problems. They are the ones you need to work on and the questionnaires can often reveal a hidden talent passion or interest which can give you the vital inroad to making a difference with that particular child.

**Here are a few ideas for using the information on the Record Cards to your advantage...**

- Tailor rewards to a pupil's interests making them have more effect. (if you have a pupil who's nuts about a certain breed of dog there's no point in giving him a sticker with a car on it).
- Provide reading material – magazines, journals and books – that relate to their specific areas of interest – for break times, quiet reading sessions, registration etc.
- Plan interesting lessons! I'm talking about lessons that grab them from the word go and hold their attention all the way through. If you want your students to hang on your every word and produce work that astounds you then you have to set tasks that actually interest them. You might choose to plan a series of lessons for the whole class around a topic that several pupils are interested in, or cover a skill such as narrative writing and encourage them to write a story about their particular subject of interest.
- Use them as a relationship-building tool. They enable you to strike up conversation on a topic you know they're interested in (although I often have to do some research on the topic if it's a new band or TV program they're into) and this is crucial with 'hard to reach' kids – it shows you care about them and are interested in them as people. Being able to chat with a pupil on their level is magical and is the short-cut to having far fewer discipline problems. (See [The number one secret to getting any child to behave](#))

### **1.33 Give real-life relevance to your lessons to make them more interesting**

Lessons should have relevance to a pupil's life. If they can't see the point in learning a topic, or are totally uninterested in it, they won't sit quietly and attentively - patiently waiting to be filled with knowledge. Would you?

At the start of any topic or lesson you need to give your students as many reasons as possible for listening to what you're about to tell them. When you give them enough reasons as to *why* they need to hear something, there is more chance they will actually listen.

There's no point in just rambling on about a topic, expecting them to *want* to learn it. If your answer to the question "Sir, why do we have to learn this?" is "Because it's on the exam" or "Because I say so" then you deserve to get a barrage of verbal abuse or, at best, a disinterested class.

If they can't see the point in learning a topic they will soon switch off. They'll get bored, call out and mess around.

The way to get round this is by asking yourself the same question before you teach them...

***“What are the reasons they need to learn this? In what ways will it benefit them and how does it relate to their lives?”***

Once you've prepared a few good answers you can then put the question to the group at the start of the lesson. Don't just tell them why the information is relevant to them – get them to come up with the answers themselves. That's very important, it makes them actually search for reasons as to why this would be important to them – it switches them on to what the lesson is about.

***“John, why do you need to know this? Can you give me one example of how you can use this information in your life?”***

It's a sad fact of course that much of the information given out in schools is actually of very little practical use to a large sector of the pupil population – particularly the less academic children who are unlikely to progress into further education. For this reason you need to be able to tailor tasks to their interests and, as I've explained above, the most effective means for doing this is the information you glean from '[Record Cards](#)'.

### **1.34 *Use the power of Learning Styles to make lessons more interesting***

Whether or not you subscribe to the view that we all have a preferred modality for learning, i.e. that we all respond differently to auditory, kinaesthetic and visual stimuli, I don't think anyone could argue against the value of 'varied tasks' as a tool for effective classroom teaching.

In this section I'm going to give you a few examples of lessons which were tailored to meet not only the pupils' interests, but also their differing learning styles - by providing a broad range of activities. If we're going to grab and hold their attention we need to look outside the world of text books and worksheets and bring the curriculum to life.

The Modern Languages department of any secondary school usually has very creative teachers running fun, vibrant lessons – fashion shows to learn names for clothing and parts of the body, mock restaurants complete with real food and waiters to learn food names etc. So if you're ever stuck for fun activity ideas go and spend some time in that department and learn from them.

Most of my teaching experience is limited to science, art and English so the following activity examples are limited to those subject areas. In the 'resources' at the end of this section I've included some sites and books which I've found helpful.

This short list of sample activities is not meant to be exhaustive – It's just to give you an idea of the sort of ways we can bring the curriculum to life.

## English/Literacy

*Holes, by Louis Sachar.*

- Took class to beach to dig holes – 6 feet wide and 6 feet deep, just like the boys had to do in the story. Needless to say they didn't even manage one hole but it brought the story to life and they had real life experience of the very same punishment that the characters faced. (You can probably just make out the photograph on the wall of three of the boys and the hole they dug).
- They made life-sized Yellow Spotted Lizards from wire mesh and papier mache. (This was used as a reward at the end of a lesson – “once you've finished your written assignment you can do a little bit more on your lizard”).
- They made some of Kate Barlow's Spiced Peaches and then wrote their recipe and designed a label for the jar. This was a practical way of teaching them how to write instructions.



## Art and Design

A group of year 9 boys who wouldn't normally make a positive contribution to art lessons became my star pupils when I gave them a new task ...

They were all mad keen on motocross and trials bikes so we decorated one corner of the art room as a workshop complete with job board, chequered flag etc. and announced that they had to build a full-size model of a Suzuki trials bike – from cardboard tubes and paper!

This is a photo of the finished product (it is life-sized!). They worked like men possessed for 6 weeks to complete it!

The wonderful thing about this was that it spread to other areas of the curriculum including a trip to motorbike showrooms in math to work out the costs of equipment and the production of a full brochure in Literacy advertising the new bike.



## Science

As part of a module on renewable energy we presented the class with a huge model of a desert island and explained that they were castaways and had to use material they found on the remains of their shipwreck to produce power on the island.

It was fantastic –they used black plastic for passive solar heating and erected solar panels and wind turbines for electricity. We also had a tube connected to a tap to demonstrate hydroelectricity. A lot of work but good fun and lots of learning took place without any disruption.

During a module on Space we were stuck for a practical activity at short notice. We played some Jean-Michel-Jarre music in the back-ground, blacked out the windows and used some torches and model planets we'd made to create a 'space-come-science fiction' feel to the room. The task couldn't have been more straight-forward – a card sorting exercise where the class simply had to match information on the different planets and then draw a diagram to produce a fact sheet for each one.

Normally this would have been a relatively boring activity but with a little decoration it was quite good fun. (As any chef worth his salt and pepper will tell you, 'It's all in the presentation!')

## Some ideas to make sure you appeal to all learning styles ...

- Use real life props whenever possible to grab their attention when initially presenting a task.
- Use an interesting starter to grab their attention
- Bring in an outside speaker
- Plan your activities round their interests (See [Record Cards](#))
- Take them out on field trips and educational visits whenever possible
- Use activities that appeal to **Multiple Intelligences** ...

In our live courses we use various activities and games to illustrate how important it is to remember that we don't all learn in the same way. It's actually quite eye-opening! If all your lessons follow the same basic format and consist of similar types of activities you may well be ostracising a significant proportion of your pupils from the learning process. As such they will be either bored or frustrated and their **behaviour** will reflect that.

It is unrealistic to assume we can provide activities every lesson to meet the preferences of each and every pupil we teach. However, by 'plugging in' topics to various activities such as those listed below from time to time, you will make more progress with switched off, disinterested pupils than if you don't bother at all.

On our 'Motivating the Unmotivated' course covers learning styles in more detail but here are some of the activities you could 'plug in' or integrate into lessons...

### **For pupils with a dominant Linguistic Intelligence ...**

Lectures, debates large- and small-group discussions books, worksheets, manuals brainstorming writing activities, word games, sharing time storytelling, speeches, reading to class, creating class newspapers

### **Logical-Mathematical Intelligence**

Mathematical problems on the board, logical problem-solving exercises creating codes logic puzzles and games classifications and categorizations, quantifications and calculations, logical-sequential presentation of subject matter

### **Spatial Intelligence**

Charts, graphs, diagrams, and maps visualization photography videos, slides, and movies visual puzzles and mazes, 3-D construction kits, picture metaphors, using visual organisers like mind maps, computer graphics software visual, optical illusions, colour cues

### **Bodily-Kinaesthetic Intelligence**

Mime, hands-on thinking, field trips, competitive and cooperative games, physical awareness and relaxation exercises, all hands-on activities crafts body maps use of kinaesthetic imagery, cooking, gardening, and other "messy" activities, communicating with body language/ hand signals

### **Musical Intelligence**

Singing, humming, whistling, playing recorded music, playing live music on an instrument, group singing, mood music, playing percussion instruments, rhythms, songs, raps, chants using background music, linking old tunes with concepts,

### **Interpersonal Intelligence**

Cooperative group activities and games (See our eBook: Cooperative Games and Activities for the Classroom on [www.classroom-management.org](http://www.classroom-management.org) ), peer teaching, board games, cross-age tutoring group, brainstorming sessions, peer sharing, community involvement,

### **Intrapersonal Intelligence**

Independent study, private spaces for study, one-minute reflection periods, self-teaching programmed instruction, self-esteem activities journal keeping, goal setting.

## 1.35 ***Make sure the work is achievable and appropriate***

One of the lecturers on my PGCE Teacher Training course years ago had a novel way of highlighting a common problem facing many pupils; which many of us, as teachers, overlook ...

At the start of the afternoon session on this particular day, Mr A. announced proudly that the class was to be privy to a revolutionary new standardized science test that a private company, Prime Education, would be marketing to schools in the near future. He thought it would be a wonderful addition to our training if we were to spend half an hour or so piloting it – with us acting the part of school pupils.

He explained that we would be required to adhere to strict 'exam conditions' so the furniture was rearranged accordingly and we sat in silence awaiting the test papers. Whilst we were waiting he introduced a very stern lady wearing a smart business suit. She wore a badge indicating she represented Prime Education - the company that was marketing the new tests. After a brief introduction she indicated that the papers could be given out, satisfied that we understood the serious nature of the pilot and the importance of attempting all the questions.

Nothing could have prepared me for that test. I'm not the calmest of people in stressful situations and I must admit I found the experience of school exam conditions quite alarming - but that was nothing to how I felt when I began to read the questions. I honestly couldn't make one iota of sense of them. My mind was twisting, sweat started running from my palms and my heart was racing – I was really struggling.

I looked round the room and was relieved to see other people clearly having as much difficulty as I was. A few people were scribbling furiously but you could tell they were in a panic, jotting an answer down then scribbling it out and trying another possible solution. By the expressions on their faces, their new solution didn't work either.

Remembering my old school days, I did what I always did at the start of a test when I realized I didn't have a hope in hell of coming up with an answer to the first question – I skimmed over the rest of them, hoping to find a lifeline, that one gleaming pearl I understood and could at least attempt. But there wasn't one. Not one question on the paper I had a hope of answering confidently. They just didn't make sense. How could other people be answering these bloody stupid questions?

I started to make my frustrations heard. I pushed the paper away, slammed my pencil down and muttered an obscenity. Someone behind me sniggered.

A piece of crumpled paper – a test paper - was thrown from the back of the room. Clearly someone else had given up completely.

And then suddenly everyone seemed to have a problem. Hands went up. A girl stormed out of the room dismissively shaking her head at the frowning adjudicator. A cry of: "This is bloody stupid!" came from my direction and summed up everyone's frustration. Then the room erupted and everyone had something to say. A few people maintained exam conditions and did their best to complete the test but the majority of us were seething. We were so annoyed at the being given such a ridiculously incomprehensible task that simply didn't make sense.

In response to the pandemonium, both our lecturer, and the lady in charge of the test hurried to the front of the room and turned to face us. The room fell silent.

We waited for Mr. A to tell us what would happen next.

“Well, thank you everyone, for so willingly taking part in the pilot and may I take this opportunity to introduce you to my wife?” He gestured to the lady beside him. “She doesn’t really work for Prime Education. There is no such company to my knowledge; we made the test up a couple of days ago.”

He paused, a smile creeping onto his face, before continuing ...

***“Now you know what it feels like to be a child who is given work that is far too difficult for them!”***

I often think of that experience when I’m planning new pieces of work – particularly for children with Special Educational Needs - and I’m reminded of it whenever a lesson fails miserably!

It highlights the importance of making sure that work targets are **ACHIEVABLE** and **APPROPRIATE**.

We’ve already discussed the importance of making work interesting, as well as techniques for achieving this but it’s equally important to make sure that the work is pitched to the right ability. Too easy and they will get bored – and tell you so. Too difficult and you will encounter the situations I’ve described above.

### **Three ideas for making sure the work you give them doesn’t overwhelm them and lead to disruption ...**

#### **1. Pitch work at their ability level**

#### **2. Avoid work that is ‘text heavy’**

#### **3. Don’t feed them all at once – split work into bite-size chunks**

Particularly when working with EBD pupils, it pays to break tasks up into small, bite-size chunks. This is particularly necessary when you have to complete assessments with difficult children.

There’s nothing wrong with breaking a test up into a series of smaller tests and giving them to pupils over a series of days, rather than in one very stressful session. As long as the work gets done, where’s the problem?

Similarly, if you sense that a pupil is struggling with the work you’ve set them, take some of it away or cover it up – let them focus on an amount they feel is achievable.

Always bear in mind that those pupils who show reluctance to take part in an activity, or are intent on disrupting your lessons to avoid working, may well be doing so because of fear of failure.

**Make sure tasks are achievable and appropriate!**

## **1.36 Structure your lessons to minimize boredom**

Disruptive children can't handle unstructured time so if your lessons aren't packed with appropriate, interesting tasks, and you don't have more up your sleeve for emergencies, then you're asking for trouble.

We all know that practical subjects are generally greeted more favourably by pupils but that doesn't mean we can't structure classroom-based lessons effectively to make them more appealing.

At a recent LEA staff meeting, led by a prominent senior member of the education team, I, along with the majority of my colleagues, was appalled at what we had to sit through. Two hours of droning waffle as the speaker simply read main points from a block of text on an OHP.

### **Where was the clearly set out objective?**

We had no idea why we were there or what relevance the information was to our jobs, let alone our lives.

### **Why was there no concentration break or a change in activities?**

Believe me, sitting still on a hard chair for 30 minutes when you're bored stiff is incredibly difficult, but two hours – come on!

### **Where was the fun?**

It was boring, boring, boring!

### **Where was the interaction?**

It was a one way street – just his voice and nothing else.

### **Why was there no water on offer?**

It's a biological fact that you can't learn when you're dehydrated.

### **Why did the speaker not recognise and address the fact that certain members of his audience were becoming bored and disruptive?**

Could he have been that ignorant or did he just lack the necessary skills to deal with the problems he had created?

### **Why was there no summary?**

Why didn't he check that we had understood what he'd spent 2 hours trying to explain?

This is an extreme example of bad practice but it really happened. And it happens in virtually every school to some extent every day. We expect pupils to sit still and listen to information or perform activities that they either don't understand or have no interest in whatsoever; all because we either think we have no choice or can't be bothered to do otherwise.

It demonstrates clearly the relationship between empathy for the needs of the student and the likely quality of the responses you will receive. (And that this fundamental relationship is a mystery to some of our most experienced and exalted colleagues)!

The fact is that if a teacher were to deliver their lessons with the same lethargy and blatant disrespect for their audience as the education manager I mentioned above, then they'd fully deserve to suffer the behaviour problems and stress of frustrated, angry pupils.

They'd probably say something along the lines of...

**"That class is awful. I've never experienced such badly behaved kids!"**

## **6 things to remember about structuring lessons ...**

### ■ **Keep beginnings/endings/transitions tight**

These key times are a golden opportunity to display your control. If they're slack, your hard work throughout the lesson is wasted.

It's probably one of the first things we learn on a teaching course but how many of us can actually say we are 100% consistent in the way we dismiss pupils at the end of a lesson? Your class needs to know you're in full control – *at all times!*

### ■ **Have an attention-grabbing Starter**

(Our eBook '**Starters, Warm-ups and Fill-in Activities**' is available from [www.classroom-management.org](http://www.classroom-management.org) )

### ■ **Have a water break**

It shows you care, provides you with a chance to settle and re-task them and has the added benefit of keeping them alive.

### ■ **Keep the pace brisk**

Never allow your lessons to slump. If you sense that the class is starting to drift off task or lose interest in an activity you *must* be ready to intervene with a change of activity. A bored class will very quickly become a badly behaved class unless you do something about it so always make sure you plan/ arrange a lot of varied tasks with seamless changeovers.

**Example:**

- 5 minute 'fun' starter
- 5 minute intro
- 15 minute hands-on 'discovery' activity – reading, solving, building, sorting,
- 10 minute video clip to reinforce findings
- 10 minute writing/speaking activity
- 5 minute plenary/summary

**1.37 Put a bit of life into it - enthusiasm is catching!**

Think of any Children's TV presenter. Do they stand in front of the camera looking glum and speaking in monotone? Of course not! The very reason they are presenting to young people is because they are vibrant, interesting and fun.

You can't expect a class to respond positively to your teaching if you give the impression you don't want to be there. Remember the old saying – "You get back what you give out." Give them enthusiasm and they'll give you it back.

For a range of ebooks on cooperative learning activities, making learning active and various subject-specific teaching guides and resources (Including our excellent '**Motivating the Unmotivated**' course) see [www.behaviourneeds.com](http://www.behaviourneeds.com). (Click on the 'Resources' tab at the top of the Home page).

If you've just read that section and thought "Yeah great, but where on earth do we find TIME to do all that?!" then I can't recommend the following site highly enough...

My friend Stevan Krajnjan runs the following website and has spent countless hours producing phenomenal resources to save teachers their most precious commodity... TIME.

There is an enormous selection of helpful resources to choose from so go over now and have a quick look... (Hold CTRL and click the image).



**TIMESAVERS FOR TEACHERS.COM**

If you're a **languages teacher** looking for engaging games, activities and resources we have an ebook for you at [www.classroom-management.org/resources](http://www.classroom-management.org/resources)

## 1.4 **The best teachers catch them being good and reward their successes**

*"I consider my ability to arouse enthusiasm among my people the greatest asset I possess, and the way to develop the best that is in a person is by appreciation and encouragement."*

**Charles Schwab**

First President of the United States Steel Company:  
Bethlehem Steel Corporation

An obvious fact that we're all aware of is that a student, when recognized for positive behaviour, will feel less inclined to seek attention in inappropriate ways. Conversely, when a pupil's efforts are ignored the chances of them disrupting the lesson to gain some attention are greatly increased.

Young people need reassurance and encouragement. Without a feeling of some success, how long can you expect them to keep putting the effort in? As a trainee teacher I was required to keep a record of the frequency of positive statements I used during a lesson ...

On one side of some paper I placed a tick every time I said something positive and on the other side, a tick every time I gave a command that wasn't positive (not necessarily negative, just 'not positive'). I was amazed at the difference!

Almost everything I said was a response to pupils doing something *wrong* – **"Sit down," "Be quiet", "No, not like that", "Stop doing that", "No", "When I say so,"** etc.

My whole lesson was a continuous stream of corrections, instructions, commands and negative statements and I discovered that I hardly ever acknowledged them doing something *right*.

Positive praise statements were few and far between and when I tried to address my mistake, I struggled to find something specific worth praising and instead found myself monotonously saying those classic, weak, cheap compliments such as ...

**"Well done," and, "That's good".**

Since then I've learned a lot about giving praise. I now know that it can mean *everything* to some children, especially the victims of neglect, – but only when it's **descriptive, genuine and sincere**.

Praise is best when it is **descriptive** because it gives them opportunity to reflect on exactly what they've done. It sinks in and makes them really feel you've taken interest in them whereas weak "Well done" statements, if over-used, are easily forgotten or ignored. Praise must be **genuine** and **sincere** or it comes across as hollow, worthless and patronizing. It creates distrust. Always remember: real praise comes from the heart; flattery comes from the teeth.

### 1.41 **The 2 best ways to give praise**

#### i) **Make them feel it!**

To show them that you mean what you're saying: look them in the eye, hold their eye contact and tell them very slowly, exactly WHAT they did right... and WHY it was good, in short, make it **descriptive**.

Telling them specifically *what* they've done and *why* you like what they've done, means so much more than a vague compliment.

Taking your time, speaking to them *slowly*, gives them chance to *feel* and absorb what you're telling them - and feel good about doing something well. Such deep appreciation builds self-esteem and encourages continued progress.

True praise comes from genuinely noticing when they put effort into something or have managed to complete something they wouldn't normally manage and when you give thoughtful attention to a student's work it demonstrates your care and respect.

Rather than just saying "good work," always add a statement that tells them why the work is good.

**"Paul, stand back and look at what you've done... this is a fantastic portrait! What really impresses me is the way you've made that eye come to life by showing the light reflecting here. That really makes it come alive!"**

## ii) **Make phone calls home and send letters home for good effort**

This has such a positive impact on students – I only wish I'd started doing it earlier in my career. It can transform a previously negative child – literally overnight – into one who is motivated and eager to please. This is also one method that works well even with older pupils – right up to age 16 and beyond. It is also very effective for pupils who don't accept public praise very well – a letter home means their mates will never find out!

But there is also a further 'hidden' benefit in addition to the improvements in behaviour and work rate: It gives you an important written document to add to your written records which you can use for support when taking action over problem students.

Letters home can be 'quick-notes' or more formal, traditional letters on school headed paper. Sometimes I give them out for odd pieces of particularly good work or behaviour but I also like to make the formal letter home 'extra special' by awarding it in response to sustained effort. In this case I send a letter home after a pupil has earned 5 stickers (younger pupils) or 5 merits (older pupils).

I find generic letters a waste of time, they're just too insincere, so the best way to organize your praise letters for speed and ease is to have two copies of the following letter ready written in a file on your computer – one for girls and one for boys. It's then just a matter of filling in the name, printing it out on headed paper and either giving it to the pupil to take home or posting it.

It is time consuming producing letters and copying them onto headed paper after every lesson but it definitely has a tremendous impact on individuals as well as helping create a positive classroom atmosphere – very quickly word will spread and you'll find these little pieces of paper in great demand!

Here's a very simple example of the kind of letter I send out. Sometimes I add a little more 'flavour' depending on how much time I've got and what sort of mood I'm in!

**Date**

**Dear** \_\_\_\_\_,

I just want to inform you that \_\_\_\_\_ was a delight to teach today. He/she worked hard, and behaved well, and was a pleasure to have in the class. You should be very proud of him/her.

**Yours sincerely,**  
**Mr. Smith**  
**Teacher of (Subject)**

## 1.42 **Four Mistakes to avoid when giving praise...**

The following points are problems I've encountered whilst working in Special Education with extremely damaged young people. I'm not saying they're common problems but it's worth considering them next time you praise a pupil and they respond by throwing their work at you or pretending you're not there..

### **i) In our haste to lavishly give out praise we can end up losing respect by praising a pupil for a skill that they've already mastered.**

Praising a young child the first few times they show understanding of the difference between verbs and nouns is fine; but if they hear the same praise again and again they may start to question whether or not you really mean it. Praising a child for something they're already proficient at shows you're insincere, or haven't been interested enough in them to note their progress.

Would you expect to be praised by your spouse every time you use your knife and fork correctly at the dinner table?

**"Hey, well done Honey! You're showing great skill with your knife and fork today."**

Imagine hearing that every single day. Would it make you feel good? Probably not, but through total ignorance we give out the very same weak comments to pupils every day for skills they've already learned, and that sort of praise just doesn't work!

### **ii) Praise only works if the person giving it is respected.**

If a teacher has neither a high perceived status in school, nor the respect of their pupils, then praise from them will have little positive effect. What's the point in praising a kid if it just embarrasses them?

That means teachers need to improve their status with the pupils in order for their praise to be valued and approved. If you want to improve your status with the pupils in your school you're doing the right thing by reading this. Part 1, if you remember, is aimed at helping you develop those key characteristics that pupils want to see in their teachers ([1.1 – Features of the Best Teacher in School](#))

### **iii) Some children can't accept praise**

Some pupils - particularly older ones and those who are emotionally damaged - can't handle being praised in public. On more than one occasion I've seen lovely pieces of work being torn up and ruined by the same pupil that created them simply because a staff member has congratulated them on their efforts.

The way to avoid this is to offer praise privately at first, avoiding peer pressure – perhaps by taking the pupil to one side or catching them at the end of the lesson. Such praise is often felt to be more sincere anyway because of the extra attention the child receives.

This is all the more reason for developing your [relationship](#) with them. Get to know your pupils well in order to ensure your praise gets the response you intended.

**iv) Some children suffer from low self esteem and cannot accept approval for something they have created.**

They may find it easier to accept a comment which relates to the feelings of the staff member as opposed to a judgment about their work.

For example, saying “**I love the way you’ve painted that**” would be interpreted as a direct judgment about something *they’ve done*, whereas “**I like the way those colours go together. I wish I could buy a picture like that or create something like it myself**” relates more to the feelings of the staff member - yet still conveys appreciation of their work.



©www. Behaviourneeds.com

## 1.5 ***The number one secret to getting any child to behave***

After 15 years of working successfully with emotionally damaged and 'difficult' children I've come to the conclusion that there is just one true key to successful behaviour management. It doesn't matter how many effective teaching skills and useful behaviour strategies you have in your arsenal because without this, your efforts will eventually come unstuck.

The secret ingredient, sadly neglected by many punishment-driven, hard-nosed dragons in the world of education, is ... **the teacher-pupil relationship.**

Don't underestimate this. It is central to your success in behaviour management and if you do nothing but follow the advice given in this section alone, your skill in handling young people will improve beyond belief.

You see, when you really get to know a pupil you become aware of their triggers – the things that upset them and cause all sorts of problems in class. And when you're dealing with damaged children who carry all kinds of emotional baggage and flare up for no apparent reason, this is valuable knowledge.

**After all ... stopping behaviour problems from occurring is much easier when you know in advance what causes them!**

When you take the time to get to know a pupil, you find out what they enjoy, what they like doing and what their interests are. With this information you have the power to make all your lessons instantly appealing and your conversations stimulating.

When you reach out and get to know any child in school you show them they're valued as people. Once they learn this, their ability to take an active role in other positive relationships is improved; they fit in better and so are less likely to get into serious trouble.

The drawback of course is that I'm proposing you go out of your way to get to know people you'd probably rather have nothing to do with!

You'll no-doubt be repulsed at the thought of reaching out and getting to know some of the unsavoury characters you have to teach – the ones that ignore your instructions, swear and spit at you, laugh in your face or threaten you. But what's the alternative? If you carry on as you are the situation won't change; you'll face the same confrontational atmosphere day after day - and that's not good for you.

To be honest I've had my reservations about this route too. In my job I meet new pupils almost every week and work with them for three months at a time. In the past, at the very first meeting with a new pupil, I used to feel sick at the thought of having an aggressive, foul-mouthed child-from-hell in my care for the next three months. The last thing I wanted to do was reach out and be nice to them!



But guess what? With that attitude, our time together was *awful* – and it became a self-fulfilling prophecy of doom - a complete waste of time and energy. To them I was just another boring teacher they couldn't be bothered with; to me they were a constant source frustration and stress.

So I decided I simply couldn't go on working like this – what was the point? I was fed up of constantly battling against these kids and getting nowhere. I made a decision there and then that I would change things. It was either that or give up teaching – I really was that desperate!

I started adopting the principles I'm about to show you and very quickly things improved - dramatically. I'm not kidding when I say this: the whole situation turned around very quickly – with some pupils miraculously changing for the better overnight! And this is the key to the whole [Needs-Focused™](#) philosophy.

The two go hand in hand – when you satisfy their needs for empowerment, belonging and fun, you automatically build a trusting positive relationship with them; and when you strive to build a positive relationship with anyone, you automatically find that you often satisfy their needs (as well as your own) as part of the process.

Everyone's a winner. 😊

Once I started paying a real interest in my pupils and working on that all-important relationship... everything suddenly got better. It was as if *I* was a different teacher and *they* were different kids – we just weren't the same any more.

I realized that all kids have something to offer and even the most seemingly abhorrent brat had a good side – once I dug down to find it. The bickering and confrontation disappeared; we had more fun without things getting out of control and ... they worked harder than ever before!

Some of these kids hadn't experienced full time education for years; they'd been kicked out of one school after another and nobody had been able to get anything out of them. Yet here they were, attending every day with smiles on their faces, producing files full of creative work! Fantastic!

Once you get to know them, anything really is possible; doors are opened to a whole new world of communication, cooperation, fun and mutual respect.

**The best ways I've found to improve your relationships with students and have them eating from your hand:**

### **1.51 *Improve relationships with 'record cards'.***

A major part of getting to know your pupils is discovering their likes, dislikes, hobbies, passions and interests and this strategy works wonders in achieving this.

All children have passions and interests - things that are important to them. If we show an interest in the same things as them, respect their views and engage in conversations on their level about things they enjoy, is it not obvious that they will be more likely to listen to us and enjoy talking with us? When you think about it this is exactly how we make new friends – we gravitate to people who have something in common with us. Let's face it, if they like the same things as we do they must be nice people!

Your colleagues are going to wonder how you do it. When another teacher comes in your class and sees the most difficult boy in school sweating away quietly in the corner with his head down – they'll know you've discovered something very powerful!

In the appendix I've included a copy of the [Record Card Questionnaire](#) I issue to pupils. It consists of a detailed list of questions designed to get them to tell you exactly what their interests are.

I always used to find it difficult getting a child to open up and tell me what they liked doing in their spare time. If I asked them directly they'd usually just give me a very dispassionate, negative answer:

**“So tell me Steven, what do you do at weekends?”**

**“Nothin’.”**

And it's also difficult finding a good time to ask them - the worst thing you can do is ask them that question in front of the rest of the group or during a lesson because you can't expect them to open up to you in front of their peers – that wouldn't be cool.

By far the best way of getting round these problems and find out their passions is to use the questionnaire.

I give the questionnaire to new pupils as soon as they enter my class and let them fill it in as a 'first lesson exercise', a registration 'fill-in' or as a wet break activity. The thing to remember is to give it them when they're in a reasonably good mood.

Once I've got their completed questionnaires I go through the answers and pick out the main themes – the 3 or 4 main things they seem to be most passionate about, and I record these in their file. I then make a list of the other pupils in the group that are into similar things.

### **1.53 *Improve your relationships with the simplicity of 'dialogue'***

We seldom just 'chat' to our worst students despite the fact that having a real, sometimes 'pointless' dialogue with another person is one of the very best ways of building relationship and trust. Dialogue is a unique relationship-builder because it *evolves* over time into a "connection" - and when steps are made to form this connection, pupils relate to us *much* more positively.

We are no longer viewed from a distance – merely as a dictatorial educator; but as a person in our own right – someone who can be spoken to more openly, who can be trusted and respected.

But if we to attempt to instigate these bond-building teacher-pupil chats in class when we are in our authoritarian role we will fail miserably. Kids only really open up when they're removed from the classroom – from the demands of learning and the pressures from their peers. In the classroom they're concerned with maintaining their position in the group and keeping up appearances; but when you talk to a child away from that situation, they open up more, they talk much more freely and dialogue can begin. (Obviously, it goes without saying in today's society that you should always be within sight of other adults).

The objective here is not to force a conversation – it's to just, well, let it kind of... happen. And many times it may not happen - but that doesn't matter – there will be occasions when the sheer act of just being in the company of a pupil, without the pressure of meeting learning objectives, will induce the sort of relaxed, open dialogue that forms that all-important connection.

Walking, a relaxing pastime in itself is by far the best way to encourage this. It also relieves what can be a nervous experience for a child – having total attention focused on them by the teacher and no class members to help. Walking past different surroundings offers a change of scene, things to look at.

Obviously, you can't leave the rest of your class-members to fend for themselves whilst you go off with one pupil but there are plenty of other times throughout the day you can take advantage of.

Break times and lunch times are obvious starters – particularly if you're trying to reach pupils who come in late and are first out of the door at the end of the day, but you can't just request a child comes to meet you at the staff room and expect to get on famously. You have to make this as informal as possible and the best way to do that is to invite them to accompany you on an errand of some sort. This automatically takes the pressure off.

Getting a pupil, particularly a difficult pupil, to spend a few minutes chatting when they'd rather be away with their mates is difficult, so you have to appeal to their interests. One way might be asking their advice on some new resources that you know they'd be interested in.

That might be all that's needed to get a conversation going, and even if you only talk for a few minutes it's something to build on. Each little interaction you have outside the classroom environment will do wonders for your relationship with that child.

When the pressure of the classroom is removed you'll be surprised how much kids will tell you. They reveal a lot about their home lives, about things they enjoy (which of course gives you more information for their record cards) and things they are struggling with. In other words – they reveal to you ways of connecting with them. All kids do this given the right circumstances and enough time.

They're really crying out for our attention and this is the best way I've found of giving 100% of your undivided attention. That's why it works so well. If you watch any teacher who takes the time to talk to kids at break, walks around the school grounds, you'll find they are the staff who have the best relationships with kids and have very few problems with behaviour.

You'll also find they get the most respect from other staff. The mark of a devoted teacher is that they give up their time to walk around and spend time with the difficult kids that nobody else wants anything to do with.

## **1.54 *Improve relationships by getting into youth culture***

Get into what they're into – watch the TV programs, listen to the music, play the computer games so you can take part in their discussions and conversations and show interest in their lives.

Bring literature, web addresses, photos and anything else you can find into school to show you appreciate their interests.

Get them to explain things you don't understand – such as how to get to Level 6 on 'Revenge of the Zorbs' or why Shezny Nahbrain has left their favourite band.

## **1.55** *Improve relationships by spending time with pupils at breaks or in 'after-school clubs'*

I always remember a very popular teacher at the first school I taught in. He wasn't particularly cool, wasn't young and wasn't fortunate enough to be teaching a 'cool' subject. What he did do however was dedicate himself to the children he taught. He ran two clubs at break times and lunch times – a football session and a chess club. These two activities appealed to a variety of pupils and ensured his popularity.

If you want to get on with pupils you simply must spend time with them – in their time. That way they see that you really do care and have their interests at heart. They respect you for going the extra mile and you'll find that doing this almost instantly changes their opinions about you.

Even if you feel you don't have anything you can offer in the form of a 'club' or after-school activity, there will be lots of established activities going on that you can help out with.

## **1.56** *Improve relationships through 'Active Listening'*

Active listening is an effective way of showing that you value a person's opinion. That, in turn, shows that you value them as a person. It creates rapport.

We demonstrate we are listening by making eye contact, stopping other activities so that we concentrate fully on what is being said and respond to what is being said with nods, gestures and verbal cues.

It means that we have to fully concentrate on the person and what they are saying in order to analyze, and respond appropriately to their views so as to ensure the communication is a two-way act. We must resist the temptation to take over with our own stories and views – giving the person our time and consideration. In order to put the speaker at ease – make them relaxed and comfortable and make it easier for them to speak. Our body language can help with this, as can our expression, but most important is fighting the urge to interrupt and get our own views across.

There isn't time to go into Active Listening in any depth here in this little book but I would urge you to Google the term and pull up some resources on it. The heart of Active Listening is getting them to talk without offering any judgment or opinion on what they're saying because as soon as you start doing so it closes the conversation down. It's a valuable skill but one which takes time to practice and learn.

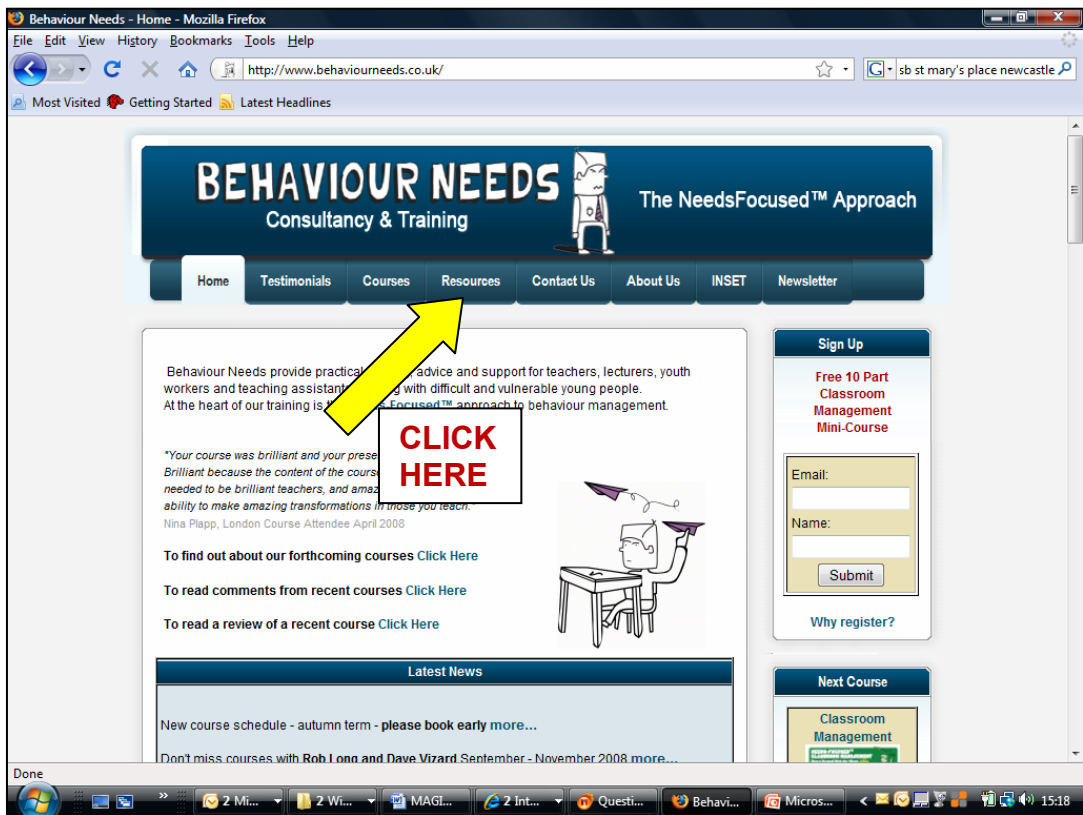
## 1.57 **Organize trips and visits to improve your relationships with pupils**

Taking your students out of the classroom environment brings a whole new dimension to your relationship. You take on a more 'nurturing' roll which can aid the development of a wide range of social skills. A trip out of school – particularly a residential - will uncover skills and characteristics that can often remain hidden in a classroom situation, the benefits of which can be seen as fundamental to the development of any child. It also gives both them and you the opportunity to try new things and gain new experiences that they would not otherwise be exposed to.

School trips also bring what the children have learnt in the classroom to life. It has been found over and over again that illustrating theoretical concepts with relevant practical examples can help accelerate the learning process for many children and encourages the idea that learning can be fun!

## 1.58 **For a whole stack of other ways of building relationships with pupils see the free reports and articles on the [www.behaviourneeds.com](http://www.behaviourneeds.com) website.**

Just click on the 'resources' tab and that should give you what you're looking for.



## 1.6 **How to make sure your instructions are followed without arguments or confrontation**

The instructions we give to our pupils are an essential part of any successful behaviour plan but why is it that some teachers are heard while others are ignored? What can we do to ensure that our instructions are followed?

### 1.61 **Ten ways to ensure your instructions are followed - without arguments or confrontation...**

#### i) **Instructions must be given in a calm, non-hostile manner**

Kids need boundaries – we all know that – but those boundaries need to be *calmly* reinforced and stated without hostile emotion. Why?

1. Shouting and ranting virtually guarantees more conflict. It also passes control of the situation over to the pupil.
2. If we expect children to behave responsibly we need to **model** good communication and behaviour for them to copy.
3. Kids absolutely hate hostile teachers who's only strategy for dealing with challenging pupils is punishment and shouting. The teacher's **ATTITUDE** must be one of support and fairness – it is the foundation on which effective classroom management and positive teacher-pupil relationships are built.

#### **Losing your temper, screaming and shouting has the effect of:**

- a) Encouraging the child to mirror our behaviour and shout back  
= **less chance of them behaving**
- b) Making them angry, less likely to pay attention and more likely to either switch off or retaliate.  
= **less chance of them behaving**
- c) Giving them an increased sense of power because they are witnessing our lack of control  
= **less chance of them behaving**
- d) Embarrassing them so they, and anyone else listening, lose respect  
= **less chance of them behaving**
- e) Providing entertainment for some children who enjoy the spectacle of the teacher getting angry.  
= **less chance of them behaving**
- f) Disrupting the work of the rest of the class inducing an unsettled, tense atmosphere.

**And here's the number one reason you should avoid shouting and losing your temper ...**

***It rewards them with the very thing they want ...  
the emotional reaction and attention that they crave!***

Some very damaged kids desperately want our attention and don't *really* care if we're giving them attention because we're angry at them – it's still our time that we're giving them and deep down that's often all they want. But add to that the fact that our shouting and yelling is actually a very *emotional* response and you can see why losing our temper can actually be quite rewarding for them.

Save the emotional outbursts for when you praise a child. Get on the table, yell and shout if that's what you want to do – but do it at the right time – when you're pleased with them and want them to repeat whatever it is they've done in future.

**Remember... give attention and emotion to good behaviour (so they'll want to repeat the experience) and let the consequence do the job of dealing with the bad behaviour by stating it calmly, without emotion. (We'll deal with consequences in a short while).**

**ii) Instructions must be *clear and specific***

It stands to reason that all pupils will benefit from instructions that are easy to follow but let's not also forget that a large proportion of pupils in our classes are either EBD, ADHD or on the autistic spectrum and, as such, have a genuine need for unambiguous, precise instructions.

The following example illustrates the importance of clear instructions and sums up the whole process of effective classroom management quite nicely:

At the first EBD centre I taught in, the pupils (11-14yrs) were allowed on the yard at break to play football.

These sessions were a living nightmare for whoever was on duty because even when the boys were given explicit instructions to "walk down to the yard quietly", they were unable to contain themselves for more than a few steps before tearing off shouting and yelling at the tops of their voices and running wild in the school grounds.

The solution to this problem came when we remembered that the same 'chunking' method used in class with these boys whereby their work was broken down into smaller, more manageable tasks, would be necessary in *all* their activities if they were to stand a better chance of succeeding.

The instructions, which sound incredibly pedantic, broke the short 200-yard journey into very small segments and went something like this ...

**“Stand silently behind your chairs.”** (wait for them to stand in silence before giving next instruction)

**“Walk across the hall to the fire door and wait in line.”**

**“Go though the doors and walk down the corridor to the outside doors. Wait in line at the doors, don’t go through them.”**

**“Now walk to the gate and wait in line.”**

.. and so on.

Notice also that we changed the word **‘quietly’** to **‘silently’**. When we give instructions we have to steer away from ambiguous words such as ‘quietly’ and ‘properly’ because they aren’t specific enough; they mean different things to different people and leave us open to arguments.

For example, **“Sit properly on your chair”** frequently gets the response ...

**“I am sitting properly!”** purely because there is no specific indication as to what ‘properly’ is.

Perhaps the following is a bit long-winded but it certainly tells the pupil EXACTLY what they have to do...

**“Sit with all four chair legs on the floor, facing the front with your hands on the desk.”**

There is obviously less room for argument with that instruction and that’s exactly what we’re trying to do with clear instructions – cut down the opportunities for confusion and confrontation.

Similarly the instruction **“Stand quietly”** also leaves us open to confrontation. What is **‘quietly’**? Does it mean talking in a whisper or just dropping your volume a little bit?

Some pupils come from homes where shouting is the norm so how can you expect them to have the same definition of ‘quietly’ as you?

Let's make it specific...

“Line up in **silence**.” Can you see how that will cut the noise right down?

‘Give them a **destination** and a **clear set of directions** and there’s more likelihood of them going where you want them to.’



OK, so instructions must be clear and specific but there’s something else that needs to be in place if you want to increase the likelihood that pupils will follow them ...

**iii) Instructions can effectively be backed up with fair, enforceable consequences.**

When we are pushed to our limits and our instructions are ignored, it’s easy to dig ourselves into a hole in an attempt to regain control and re-establish authority by issuing *unwarranted, excessive* punishments. This is the cause of a large proportion of major disruptions and violent confrontations in schools and one which is easily avoided. How? By having **FAIR consequences** in place to turn the problem into a learning opportunity.

The child needs to know “If I do **this... I will receive that consequence**.” More specifically, “If I leave the school premises...my parents **will be called**” for example. Or “If I swear at a teacher, I **will receive an immediate time out**, if I receive 3 time outs in one day, I **will be excluded**.” etc.

Such pre-arranged consequences will, together with your rules, form the basis of your '**Behaviour plan**' and will help you remain calm in challenging situations.

In our **Distance Learning Classroom Management** courses, one of the main objectives is to create your own '**Classroom Management Behaviour Plan**'.

By the end of the course you have all the information you need to create your own totally organised, systematic and highly effective behaviour plan - complete with a hefty toolbox of **preventive strategies, routines, procedures** and proven **responses** and **consequences** to cope with any incident.

As an owner of this eBook you can get a substantial discount on our regular price at:

[www.classroom-management.org/disc.html](http://www.classroom-management.org/disc.html)

When you have fair, pre-arranged consequences in place you can easily avoid losing your temper – after-all, we only lose our temper when we feel threatened or powerless.

I've lost count of the number of times I've gone over the top and given a Time Out or unwarranted punishment to a pupil who didn't really deserve it (because I was stressed through dealing with multiple disruptions), only to cause a major confrontation and more trouble for myself to deal with.

Everything is far simpler and infinitely less stressful when there is a *suitable, fair* consequence we can calmly turn to with a clear, straightforward instruction so that instead of nagging, lecturing and screaming, you simply **let the consequence do the work for you**.

Kids will always push boundaries but **once they realise that the consequence really does happen – every time, without fail**, there's a good chance they'll start to change.

In fact, you will be amazed how fast those positive changes come about sometimes. I've seen some miraculous changes come about in some very challenging young people as soon as they've been placed in an environment consisting of tight boundaries and consistent rules.

One residential school I worked in catered for ADHD boys from all over the country and I remember a staff briefing regarding the arrival of a supposedly 'un-teachable' 14 year old from Liverpool. At first, true to character, he bucked against every rule that was set in place. Yet despite the horrendous tantrums that he threw in this first week, staff continued to apply consequences and stuck rigidly to boundaries.

Within a little over a week he realised that the wrong actions resulted in undesirable consequences and became a different child.

### **Which brings me back to our example above about football at break times ...**

At every stage, if a child misbehaved in any way they were sent back to the previous door to have another go at following the instructions properly. Every step of the way the consequence (in this case – going back and repeating the journey in the correct manner) was consistently followed through.

And it worked! The boys quickly realized that they were going to get no break at all unless they followed the rules. In fact, even in the first few days they only missed out on five or six minutes of break because they were so keen to get out. Once they realized that we weren't going to bend the rules, they were actually very quick to do as we asked.

The extremely precise instructions, calmly stated and backed up with fair consequences, quickly transformed break-times from a living hell into an enjoyable activity for everyone.

The boys *appreciated* the tight boundaries because they could have a full 20 minutes of football - whereas before, they weren't even getting a game started and the staff were no longer having to spend 20 very stressful minutes chasing wild boys round the grounds, and then a further hour calming them down in class.

Now, as I said, this is a perfect example of effective classroom management...

- **They were given clear instructions**
- **There were fair, enforceable consequences in place** (If you don't follow the rules you don't get to play football at break)
- **Good behaviour was *intrinsically* rewarded with a natural positive consequence** – football at break. (We'll discuss intrinsic rewards later in the book but for now let's just say that the positive outcome in this situation taught the pupils far more about appropriate behaviour than stickers and treats ever could).
- **Pupils who did the right thing were given positive praise**
- **Consequences were CONSISTENTLY followed through. And this was essential for success.** Every step of the way the staff remained in total control of the situation. If one of the boys made a silly noise, pushed another or argued they were told to go back and try again. Peer pressure was a great motivator here too because the other boys were eager to get out and didn't like being kept waiting by the rule-breakers. If a pupil was deliberately trying to hold everyone else up we would keep him back and let the others go on. It worked like magic.
- **The whole process was managed with the focus on mutual respect and positive relationships** – Staff weren't out to make life difficult for the boys and thus create a 'them and us' culture. Through encouragement and warmth we conveyed the simple message: "There is a right way and a wrong way to behave; we're here to support you and help you behave the right way."
- **Staff maintained self control** - Whenever a child continued to play up, they were simply and calmly reminded that the consequence of their silliness was a shortened break. There was no need for shouting or over-the-top threats – THE CONSEQUENCE DID THE WORK.

Here's another example to show the importance of clear instructions and how simply stating a consequence can cut confrontation:

On the way back from the yard at break one day, Mark was deliberately lagging behind, bouncing the football.

**"Come on Mark, quick ... Hurry up Mark, lessons have started ... Mark! Break's over Mark! ... Come on ... Quickly, Mark! ... Mark! ... Stop that and hurry up!"**

After a few minutes of totally ignoring the first yells from the teacher Mark eventually complied perfectly with the final request - "Stop that and hurry up" - by standing still and bouncing the ball as fast as he could, with a sly grin!

Mark then proceeded to enjoy the undivided attention of two members of staff as they altered their approach from friendly cajoling and encouragement to aggressive shouting and frustrated threats. The incident tied up all three of them for the whole morning as Mark became more and more abusive and aggressive - incensed at the unfair punishment he believed he was receiving.

Had the teacher altered her instruction slightly at the beginning, the situation could have been very different. By giving one clear, specific direction and an explanation of the consequence for not complying, she could have remained in total control, Mark could have returned to lessons and the other member of staff would have been free to teach his lesson.

**"Mark, break is over. You need to bring the ball here now otherwise you will be paying time back next break."**

You'll see how this incident could have been resolved calmly and efficiently – even if Mark had still refused to follow the instructions when you read "[The Three Requests Technique](#)" in **Part 2**.

**Now, having raved on about the merits of consequences I need to make something very clear ...**

Even though consequences can be effective, there is an awful lot we can do BEFORE even needing to use them. If there is an over-reliance on consequences your approach can switch to punitive and hostile which will never bring out the best in challenging pupils.

Consequences have their place, they are important, but... so are de-escalation strategies, relationships, catching them being good, offering support, giving limited choices ...etc, etc ..

All these strategies come under the heading 'diffusion' or 'de-escalation' and are covered throughout this ebook and in great detail in our other training courses.

## Extra tips to ensure pupils follow your instructions...

### iv) **Involve the pupils in the production of rules**

When you have an issue with a class that needs addressing – such as older pupils who swear - or are simply setting rules and sanctions for the start of term, include the children in the process and decide on rules together!

This way, the children are included in the decision-making process that affects them, making them feel more responsible and giving them a sense of ownership in factors that affect their development. There is more chance of them following a rule, or accepting a punishment they've agreed to or instigated; rather than one we just impose on them.

### v) **Give pupils a warning to avoid arguments when giving instructions**

Whenever I need to bring an activity to a close I've found it helpful to give the class plenty of warning – particularly if it's an activity they're enjoying.

If you put yourself in their shoes for a moment you can see why this makes perfect sense. If you're having fun, being creative or have just got the hang of something that's been frustrating you for the last 30 minutes, to be suddenly told you have to stop is a little hard to stomach. For some kids it's more than they can cope with without complaint.

To prevent mild complaints escalating into more serious arguments I make a habit of giving five, three and one minute warnings before I blow the final whistle – it just cuts out yet another opportunity for them to get annoyed. And that's just as important in the classroom as it is on the yard or football pitch. Given them a warning at 5 minutes ...

**“In five minutes I'm going to ask you all to stop what you're doing.”**

...2 minutes ...

**“In two minutes you'll be packing away so be finishing off please.”**

...30 seconds ...

**“Just 30 seconds left”**

...Then start the packing away ...

**“OK, it’s time to pack away everyone look this way, this is how it’s going to happen: Gerry, books please, Rhiannon – tripod stands, Andy- boiling tubes, Simon - text books. You all need to be sat down with your equipment away in 30 seconds please.”**

Then comes the final countdown ...

**“10... You should all be sat on your own seats now with your bags away and your hands on the table... excellent Carly and Sophie, you got it straight away ...**

**9... Brilliant over here on this table let’s have the rest of you doing the same ...**

**8... You need to finish conversations, get that mess away and be sat facing me ...**

**7... All done over there at the back, well done, just waiting for a few others ...**

**6... Come on still some bags out at the back and people talking ...**

**5...**

**4...**

**3... Just waiting for one or two now. You two are sitting perfectly thank you ...**

**2... Well done everyone ...**

**1... Superb!”**

## **vi) Give them a routine to avoid confusion and confrontation**

Children hate having to do unexpected tasks. When we keep on giving them chore after chore without warning they get very frustrated.

If I spend 5 minutes at the start of a lesson to explain exactly what will be happening over the next 50 minutes – the tasks I expect them to complete, the activities they’ll be doing etc. they can cope much better than if I give them a new, unannounced task every time they finish one.

To make it even clearer for them I put a plan of the lesson on the board with a list of the activities and the time I expect to spend on each one. With this information, they have a clear understanding of what is ahead – they have a routine.

We'll be spending more time on **routines** a little later because they are an amazingly effective way of *automating* your classroom management and can cut your workload dramatically.

**viii) If you want to avoid confrontation don't nag, lecture or argue**

**You can't win an argument with a pupil!** It will escalate until either the pupil does something that will get them into deep trouble – in which case they lose all respect for you, or *you* will explode and embarrass yourself. Either way you can't win by arguing with a pupil.

I like this quote from Tom Daly in his excellent book 'How to Turn any Disruptive Child into Your Best Student' ([www.adhdsolution.com](http://www.adhdsolution.com)). It really sums up the futility of arguing with an angry child...

"Arguing with a troubled kid is like mud wrestling a pig – you both get muddy and the pig enjoys it!"

Nagging and lecturing is another approach that just *doesn't* work. Kids haven't got the time to listen to our lectures – they're just not interested. We're teachers for heaven's sake – we know that kids learn best by *doing*, or *watching!*

A Deputy Head Teacher I used to work with used to love the sound of his own voice and would take every opportunity to lecture and nag the kids about why their behaviour was unacceptable. Nice as he was, you could see them switch off as soon as he opened his mouth.

We can't win by nagging kids how to behave – we have to *show* them; and we do that by... **modelling good behaviour ourselves, by praising good behaviour when they *do* it and by having a consequence in place that makes the result of bad behaviour undesirable for them.**

## **ix) Give instructions and consequences in the correct manner to avoid confrontation**

- Speak slowly, calmly and clearly – without emotion! This gives that all-important impression of confidence and control. Let the consequence do the work for you.
- Once you've given the instruction, move swiftly on with the lesson. Don't get drawn in to further discussion.

We'll deal with this important issue in more detail in parts 2 and 3 when we look at specific techniques for coping with pupils who are becoming increasingly disruptive and refusing to follow instructions.

## **x) Be consistent to avoid confrontation**

***"Can I go to the toilet?"***

***"No."***

***"Oh, please I'm desperate?"***

***"No."***

***"Sir, that's not fair"***

***"No."***

***"Please sir, I'm really, really desperate!"***

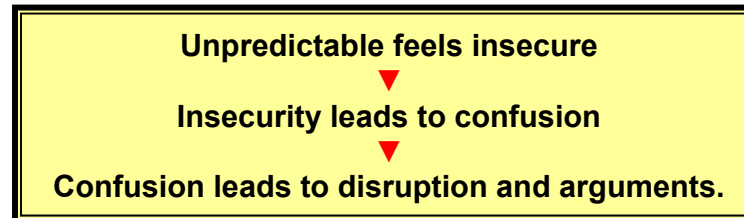
***"Oh for crying out loud ... Ok ... but come straight back!"***

Some teachers give in after only 3 requests. Some stick it out for ten. Some are like a broken fruit machine and they pay out at different times depending on how they feel. The trouble is, if they give in at all, they are reinforcing the behaviour they don't want to see through INCONSISTENCY.

This teaches the children that as long as they keep pushing they will (usually) get what they want. They just need to push and push until the wall goes over. And they will repeat this same basic technique in all manner of ways.

They know, from experience, that as long as they keep battering away with the same request, same behaviour, same action... they will eventually get what they want in the form of a satisfied desire, or much needed attention of some sort – usually a much appreciated emotional outburst.

But the problem goes deeper than that. In the example above we saw that different teachers 'pay out' or give in at different rates. Some are very strict and inflexible and will hold out for a long time – perhaps never giving in at all. Others are on various points along the 'easygoing' spectrum. These inconsistencies between staff members make school a very unpredictable place – no wonder we have behaviour problems, these kids don't know if they're coming or going!



But the problem goes deeper still. Children not only have to face inconsistencies between staff: individual teachers also give in at different rates depending on how they're feeling at the time or according to their particular likes and dislikes. Some teachers are moody and can be a great laugh one lesson but then in the next lesson they shout their heads off. Others display their inconsistencies by the way they treat groups and individuals differently – letting some get away with it and penalizing or picking on others.

An inconsistent teacher has very little chance of success simply because the pupils don't know what's expected of them – the classroom has an unstable atmosphere. They don't know where the boundaries are from one day to the next and you can't expect pupils to behave if they aren't sure where the boundaries are.

The resultant feelings of insecurity and unfairness simply make them more inclined to push the boundaries next time and argue with you further.

### **How can you stop disruptive behaviour in your lessons? One answer is obviously to be more consistent ...**

- ... in the way you respond to requests from pupils
- ... in the instructions you give to pupils
- ... in the way you give those instructions to pupils
- ... in the sanctions and punishments you give to pupils
- ... in the rewards you give to pupils
- ... in everything you do in your teaching day

That means an essential part of being consistent is knowing in advance what you're going to say and do in response to the things your pupils do and ask. This is the reason we must have a set of rules and sanctions in place that the pupils are familiar with. Without that, you're lost. They must know what the exact consequence will be for their actions at any time.

What is your rule on toilet breaks during lessons for example?

This has caught me out in the past more times than enough. Are the pupils completely clear about what happens if they don't finish their work in class? There needs to be one rule for everyone. Obviously your first port of call when putting rules together is the school behaviour policy – you must adhere to this first and foremost so that all staff are singing from the same hymn sheet.

The single best way to develop total consistency – both in your own classroom and throughout the whole school is through ROUTINES and PROCEDURES which we'll cover in a moment. A complete set of school routines on PowerPoint – fully editable and suitable for all kinds of settings from primary to post-16 - are included with our Distance Learning Course available at [www.classroom-management.org](http://www.classroom-management.org)

## **1.6.11 What to do when a pupil won't follow your instructions**

Let me repeat something I mentioned right at the start of this book because it is **PARAMOUNT** if you are going to get the pupils you teach to do as you ask.

It all starts with ... remember?... **attitude**. It is your attitude that dictates your approach when dealing with challenging behaviour and if your attitude towards these kids is... "They should do whatever I say purely and simply because I'm the adult and they should respect me no matter how I treat them"...Then you might struggle.

Actually, that's not strictly true. Some adults with that kind of aggressive, punitive, bullying attitude have good classroom control (on the surface at least) and are always the ones who disagree with me in training sessions. My answer is always the same:

"With a punitive attitude you may well have the kids under control on the surface but underneath their reluctant compliance is embarrassment, fear, hostility, and a desire to either retaliate in some way or get away from you." Certainly, it isn't the way to get the best from this type of youth.

Let's say you want to casually move a pupil away from the back of the room because he is annoying other pupils. If you jump straight in with the order "John, move down to this seat at the front" the chances are you will get a refusal – particularly if you're dealing with a rough, streetwise 15 year old who doesn't want to be in the class in the first place.

So what do you do when a child says “Nah!”?

Well, let’s take a step back. Firstly, by barking orders, you’re off to a bad start straight away - the best way to get on the wrong side of someone is to shout at them and tell them to do something they don’t want to. With a challenging pupil you can multiply the effect of this considerably. Add to that the fact that there are probably 30 other kids in the room who enjoy seeing arguments and you can see why this boy might refuse – even if only to save face.

One trick to getting kids to do as you ask without confrontation is to first **give them a fair warning.**

If you first explain exactly what they’re doing wrong, and what they should be doing instead, they then have no reason to come back at you. What’s more, the other pupils in the class will see that you are being fair and this will go in your favour in future . Pupils who are being fairly treated find it very difficult to argue with your instructions because they know that the rest of the class will view them as being in the wrong – and that’s the last thing they want.

So, our two possible requests are:

**“JOHN! MOVE! NOW!”**

Or:

**“John, you’re messing around back there and it’s spoiling my lesson. If you want to stay in your current seat you need to work quietly. If you don’t, I’ll move you to the front – OK?”**

In the second example the teacher has clearly been proactive and been able to give a clear warning rather than letting the behaviour escalate to the point where he felt the need to shout. In many cases it can be more effective to give such warnings privately – out of earshot of the rest of the class.

Of course, there are circumstances when it is not possible or practical to give a warning and you need a pupil to do as you ask immediately without question – such scenarios will be addressed in parts 2 and 3.

## 1.7 **Routines**

Routines teach the behaviour we want to see in our pupils, it gives them tracks to walk in and a map to follow. And because this map is repeated over and over again and doesn't change, it creates total consistency for both teacher and pupil.

Routines are the most effective, time-saving device any teacher can use.

**Routines automate classroom management and make rules easy to follow.**

### **How do routines work?**

Routines provide the link between the teacher's picture of good behaviour and the pupils' interpretation of that picture. They let the pupil know exactly what they have to do to succeed.

Let me show you what I mean with this simple example. Let's assume the end of a lesson is approaching ...

The teacher knows exactly what she wants the pupils to do – she wants them to get cleared away as quickly as possible. So she gives the instruction to do so.

**Question:** Which of these instructions is going to give her the greatest chance of success?

- a) **“The bell is about to go put everything away and get ready to be dismissed.”**
- b) **“The bell is going to go in 5 minutes, it's time to clear away. You know what to do.” The teacher then points to a clearly displayed routine at the front of the room ....**

### ***End of Lesson Routine***

- Put textbooks on the shelf and exercise books on my desk.
- Put all equipment where you got it from
- Clear your work area and sit silently facing the front.
- After you get permission to leave, push in your chair and leave in silence.
- If it is the last period of the day, stack the chairs by the back wall.

The answer is obvious I hope. The first command is going to lead to chaos. Pupils hearing this type of vague instruction often don't give the teacher what she wants because they don't *know* what she wants – **she hasn't given them a clear enough map.**

Some of the pupils will be mature enough to act appropriately and do their best to clear away and wait quietly to be dismissed. Others will take advantage and waste time, fool around or stand chatting.

The end result will see the teacher becoming increasingly frustrated as time ticks by and pupils don't do what she wants. She will find herself repeating instructions, shouting, yelling and having to deal with progressively more problems from pupils who are not engaged.

When our more energetic or challenging pupils aren't given specific instructions or tasks to do, they wander, play dumb and find something else to occupy them. This makes the simple task of 'clearing away' at the end of a lesson suddenly turn into the time-consuming and stressful task of dealing with multiple behaviour issues.

The second command works because this teacher has spent time teaching a routine for 'end of the lesson'. There is no need for confusion or wasted time. No need to repeat instructions, no need to check that everyone has understood and give extra prompts to those who haven't – **everyone knows exactly what to do.**

### **How do you set up routines?**

The short answer is that you teach them one at a time until they become habitual and the key to their success lies in that last word. You have to spend time teaching routines – possibly a couple of weeks on each one depending on the class. And you have to continually re-visit them, practice them and reinforce them. A little two minute reminder on three or four of your routines is all that's needed at the start of a lesson but it still must be done to keep your routines fresh in their minds.

Yes, there is effort involved, but when you compare that with the alternative – spending every lesson getting stressed out continually having to tell pupils what to do – its time well spent

So, think of all the transitions and activities and hotspots which cause you problems throughout your teaching day, in fact, don't bother, we know what they are:

- Entering classroom
- Distributing materials
- Clearing materials
- Asking for help
- Transition between activities or tasks
- What to do when you've finished your task
- What to do when you're late
- Using certain equipment
- Group work
- Answering questions
- Handing in work
- Leaving classroom

How much easier would your teaching day be if you had routines in place for all those difficult times? How much smoother would the lesson be if pupils knew exactly what to do in each of those circumstances?

The key is to make LOTS of routines – as many as you need. Teach them, practice them, make them habitual and post them up on the walls as reminders. One of the benefits of this is that that next time a pupil isn't doing as he should you can calmly say ...

**“What should you be doing?”** and point at the routine. There is no excuse they can give you because when routines are in place, they *KNOW exactly* what they should be doing. 😊

## **1.8** *The best teachers are always in control*

Problems, arguments and disruptions don't suddenly just happen without something causing them; there is always a trigger that sets them off and we, as classroom managers have to be aware of all potential triggers.

We have to remove these triggers or prevent them from taking root and the first way were going to look at achieving that is by projecting an aura of total control. If we give the impression that nothing escapes our perception and that we have a concrete hold over any situation, few pupils are going to test us and run the risk of humiliating themselves in front of their peers.

So how do you project this aura of control, this total awareness?

The way you look and move, the way you use and hold your body, has a profound effect on those around you and with whom you come into contact – it gives a clear, sometimes subconscious, message to others as to how you're feeling.

In times of stress, for example, we all have a range of comfort gestures which we resort to such as touching our noses, rubbing our necks or tugging at clothes. When our temper is wearing thin we may clench our fists, tighten our jaw, avoid eye contact or blink rapidly.

While quite natural, these actions, which are usually carried out subconsciously, are a clear indication that we are no longer in full control.

In his book *Positive Classroom Discipline*, 1987, Frederick Jones studied thousands of primary and secondary lessons and concluded that behaviour management was largely *non-verbal* and depended on the teacher's effective body language. In fact, psychologists now believe that between 70 and 90 percent of *all* communication is non-verbal!

So, one way we can project total control is by mastering our body language ...

## **1.81** *Six non-verbal methods you can use to project control*

### **i) Move round the room to show you're in charge.**

Moving around the room not only keeps students on their guard, preventing secret plans being hatched in isolated corners of the room; it also gives a subtle but powerful message that you are in control of the *whole* room.

Invading their personal space (within 2-3 feet) is an effective way of highlighting your confidence and authority. I'm not saying you have to threaten them or scare them – just use your presence to get down to their level when you're chatting to them/helping them with their work to show that you're happy, comfortable and confident in their territory. Remember, it is *your* room so you dictate what happens there.

### **ii) Use your body language to show you're in charge**

Pupils are experts at noticing when our limits are being reached and some will take advantage of a teacher they feel is 'losing it'.

Standing limply, head on one side or looking towards the floor with one leg curled behind the other, hands clasped together will appear as an open invitation for many pupils to walk all over you. Other tell-tale signs that we aren't in control include touching our faces or wringing our hands.

An upright, symmetrical stance suggests tension, while an asymmetrical stance – leaning against the wall etc. – gives the impression that you are more relaxed. The effectiveness of these two positions has been researched, testing the time it takes for a class to fall silent when instructions are given from each stance. In every case, the more relaxed person i.e. more comfortable and in control, as portrayed by the asymmetrical stance, got the best results.

But this isn't just about signalling control. When explaining sanctions to pupils or giving instructions the wrong body language can drown out the message you're trying to convey and create additional tension which exacerbates an already fragile situation.

Bulging eyes, stern frowns and pointing fingers obviously aren't conducive to effective communication and a threatening stance - legs apart, chest out and hands on hips or behind the back will be viewed as an aggressive threat.

If we habitually adopt postures which could be perceived as threatening we need to be aware of this and practice other ways of sitting, standing and interacting in order to convey absolute composure and lessen the chances of stimulating an aggressive response.

### **iii) Use eye contact to show you're in charge**

Maintaining appropriate eye contact can be uncomfortable for young people who lack social skills but it is essential that pupils are looking at us when we give praise and instructions. Avoiding eye contact can betray a lack of confidence, interest and/or respect.

A few seconds of eye contact can trigger powerful feelings and whether we're trying to show our pleasure through praise; encouragement through a quiet word or our displeasure through a strict instruction, eye contact is essential if the real meaning behind the words is to be conveyed effectively.

Remember also that it is natural behaviour for males to stare at each other in challenging situations they perceive as threatening so we have to be careful not to illicit the same behaviour by prolonging eye contact.

Keep a roving eye – sweep the room and show that everything is noticed, but don't provoke an aggressive response.

### **iv) Use 'Withitness' to project control**

"Withitness" is a term which describes a teacher's awareness of what is going on in *all* parts of the classroom at *all* times. We commonly refer to this as "having eyes in the back of your head."

To be effective, your pupils must perceive that you really do know exactly what is going on in all areas of the room. If any pupils are off-task and fooling around, you need to stamp it out straight away and send a clear message that you have seen them and that they need to get back to work.

This awareness improves with practice and every time you catch a pupil, or group of pupils off task, whispering etc. your [reputation](#) and credibility is improved. Pupils are always impressed by a teacher who is in total control and the more you display this 'withitness', the more control you will appear to have. Students are more likely to stay on-task if they know you are aware of what they are doing at all times – perhaps just because they think there's a good chance they'll get caught. 😊

By systematically scanning the room, and keeping your "back to the wall" as you move throughout the class you will be more aware of what is going on and able to pinpoint trouble.

#### **v) Make sure Transitions are tight to maintain control.**

Student behaviour is influenced by the smoothness and effectiveness of transitions between tasks in a lesson. Failure to gain the students attention, unclear and confusing directions, using lengthy explanations, dwelling too much on the details rather than focusing on key points, and allowing students to take too much time moving from one task to the next contribute to student misbehaviour.

Smooth and effective transitions are one of the most important techniques in maintaining student involvement and class control and one of the best ways I've found to achieve this is to have a lesson plan up on the wall/board with a list of the activities the pupils will be doing.

At the start of the lesson I spend 2 minutes going through this list and then write up suggested timings for each individual activity ...

**“Ok this is the plan for today's lesson ...**

- **Intro (me talking) – 5 minutes**
- **Practical Demonstration – 10 minutes**
- **Video clip/reinforcement/scaffolding exercise – 10 minutes**
- **Independent or group learning – 20 minutes**
- **Review/feedback to class/plenary – 10 minutes**”(This is usually some sort of 'fun' review activity or simple quiz game).

The types of activities will vary from lesson to lesson and subject to subject but I like to ensure I have a variety of tasks most in lessons. Once you have gone over this list you can then direct the pupils to their next activity as and when they finish a preceding task. When they know what is coming next, the transition is much smoother.

Write the list up on or near the board and then wipe off or cross out each stage once it has been completed. They benefit from seeing the lesson 'chunked up' in this way – it is less daunting – and knowing exactly where they are at any time in terms of the lesson plan helps keep them settled.

## **vi) If you maintain their interest you keep control**

When students experience boredom bad behaviour starts to emerge. Their attention wanders, they start to work mechanically without giving much thought to what they're doing, or they try to create some excitement through fooling around with a classmate or engaging in other forms of misbehaviour.

You can reduce boredom by providing pupils with a feeling of progress, offering them challenges throughout the lesson, and being enthusiastic. Variety reduces and alleviates boredom. Changing the level of challenges, restructuring groups, extending the task, and using different teaching styles add variety to the lesson.

This is covered in more detail in [The best teachers make lessons interesting and fun](#) but for a huge range of energizers, exciting fill-ins, lesson activities and ideas for engaging reluctant learners you really need our course: **Needs-Focused Motivation: Motivating the Unmotivated** (available in 'live' and 'distance-learning' format'. Full details are at [www.classroom-management.com](http://www.classroom-management.com)

## **1.82 Use your voice to show you're in control**

The way we use our voices has a large effect on the way our message is interpreted and in that respect at least, children are very like dogs. Some are like dogs in many other ways but let's stick with this.

If you were to *shout* aggressively and forcefully at my dog, saying the words: "I love you, you're such a gorgeous little dog!" she would cower and shrink away fearing it she was being berated yet again for chewing my mobile phone charger.

Conversely, if you were to gently tell her "You're a nasty, horrible little hound", in a warm, soothing voice she would lick you enthusiastically and clamber all over you thinking you were her new best friend. She's very fickle.

A dog doesn't understand the actual *words* we are using but it does tune in to the **tone** of voice we use, the **pace** and the **volume**. Basically, it reacts to the *way* we are speaking.

The way we speak is referred to as '**para-verbal**' and it must be considered when we are teaching.

Some people have screeching, piercing voices which serve only to wind kids up and others have very timid 'mousey' voices which lend themselves to being ignored or abused.

If we are to remove all potential triggers to bad behaviour, we must pay attention to, and alter if necessary, the *way* in which we speak.

## **2 verbal methods of projecting an aura of control**

### **i) Pay attention to the way you speak**

When **giving instructions** or **explaining consequences**, drop your volume...drop the tone... and s-l-o-w... the... voice... right... down. It works wonders in getting your message across. This way we can be sure we're not saying anything to wind them up or giving instructions that could be misconstrued.

### **ii) Use frequent questioning to show you're in charge**

Don't ever fall into the trap of didactic teaching – the process of spewing fact after fact out from the front of the class and expecting your pupils to take it all in. This is by far the worst form of teaching (even worse than handing out boring worksheets every lesson) and if your lessons are dominated by this teaching method you will almost certainly find yourself having to deal with more behaviour problems than average.

There are obviously times when we need to explain things to the class but try to make teacher-talk time *interactive* and use it as yet another chance to show you're in command of the group by constantly directing questions at different individuals. It keeps them on their toes and paying attention because they quickly catch on that they could be asked a question at any time...

## **1.83 Four essential factors to improve question and answer sessions and show you're in control...**

### **i) Don't always ask pupils who have their hands up**

Pick on the ones who are obviously not paying attention. Eventually they will sit up and take part.

**ii) If a pupil can't answer your question don't just ask someone else**

Keep asking it in **simpler and simpler terms** until they can give you an answer. **THIS IS ESSENTIAL** if you are to stop pupils from getting into the habit of opting out. They give the excuse that they don't understand so you have to **help them understand** by rephrasing the question until they do. Your pupils need to understand that they must take part in the lesson and that taking part is a pain-free exercise. **If you allow them to get away with not giving an answer, other pupils will follow this trend.**

**"Describe the process through which plants produce their own food please David"**

*Blank stare*

**"OK, tell me what a plant must have in order to produce food."**

*Blank stare*

**"Right, a plant produces its own food but it needs to take in certain raw materials. First of all, tell me the name of the substance it takes in through its roots."**

**"Water"**

**"Well done, now tell me the name of the gas that they take in through their leaves."**

... and so on.

**iii) Always say the pupil's name after the question.**

If you say **"Daniel, how do we know the water is boiling?"** the other pupils will relax and switch off before you've even finished asking the question because they know you are directing it at Daniel. The correct way to ask the question would be **"How do we know the water is boiling?"** Pause, look round the room, and then name the pupil you wish to answer.

**iv) Ask questions REGULARLY and FREQUENTLY – don't just give lectures to the class**

When you are giving information to your class remember that children and young people have a short attention span and that, because of differing Learning Styles, many of them simply can't take in much information that is dished out to them purely through 'talk'.

For these reasons you should frequently question your pupils to see how much of this new information you've given them they have actually stored and can use. Questions such as:

- “How would you feel if you were in that situation?”
- “Give me more examples of that in real life”
- “Can you explain that to me again in your own words?”
- “How do you know this?”
- “What do think might happen next?”

## **1.84** *How to put an end to inappropriate comments and questions from pupils and show you're in control...*

There is always a possibility that some pupils will try to discover a little too much about us or make us feel uncomfortable by asking increasingly personal, inappropriate, silly questions. This is especially common when we get a new class to teach – whether it's the start of term or a cover lesson and it is a scenario which must be dealt with swiftly – otherwise your control over the class can be severely eroded.

- “Why are you late Sir?”
- “Were you out last night Sir?”
- “Where did you go Sir?”
- “Do you drink Sir?”
- “Were you drinking last night Sir?”
- “Is that why you're late Sir?”
- “Did you pull Sir?”
- “Does your wife know Sir?”
- “Have you got a wife Sir?”
- “Is she nice looking Sir?”

...and so on.

They do this to gain attention, hold up lessons and look good in front of their friends; to try and find our weaknesses, to embarrass us and ultimately wind us up. Sometimes they try to shock us in front of their peers as a way of displaying or increasing their status and sometimes they just want to have a laugh. Other times it may be because they feel they have known us long enough to warrant being over-familiar.

The fact is, at some stage, you're going to be a victim of it and need to deal with it.

Such situations, harmless as they may first seem, need to be cut early before they get out of hand. If you go along with the first few questions more and more pupils will get drawn in, and once that happens the comments get worse; becoming sillier, ruder and more personal until the situation becomes difficult to control. Often, we lose our tempers at this point.

The result is, at best, a very annoyed and embarrassed member of staff, a loss of respect, damaged relationships and a class of very excited pupils – some of whom are likely to be given sanctions they will consider unfair and that could have been avoided.

I like to use the fishing analogy to understand this.

When kids are taunting you with questions or verbal abuse they are fishing – trying to wind you up and make you snap - trying to catch you.

Just like a seasoned fisherman, skilled in the art of hooking his prey, they will add colourful lures and fancy tackle in the form of increasingly personal questions and insults... probing continuously until you take the bait and snap.

The way to deal with this type of questioning and verbal abuse is to immediately take the attention away from the child. The following techniques are excellent for doing just that and should be used whenever you are faced with inappropriate questions or insults from a pupil. Believe me, they work!

#### **4 techniques to stop inappropriate comments and questions from pupils**

**i) Simply and sharply state that the conversation is inappropriate and must stop:**

***“That comment is inappropriate/unacceptable. You need to think before saying things like that.”***

***“We’ll talk about these comments later.”***

Simply make the statement without emotion and then move on with the lesson. It should be a complete brush off. Don’t get drawn into a conversation with this person and don’t answer any more of their comments – you’ve dealt with them and they deserve no more of your attention.

**ii) Create a diversion such as a quick demonstration, introducing a new topic/game etc.**

*“Look this way everyone please, I set this up earlier.”*

*“OK, for this game you need a blue pen and a piece of scrap paper...”*

Once again, the secret is to move on from their questions straight away and change the focus of attention. In order to be able to do this on your toes and not get caught out trying to think of suitable alternative activities you really should have a resource file (either in your head or hard copy) of fun, interesting and engaging games and fill-in activities.

To see our range of downloadable ebooks of ‘Fun starters, games, tricks and fill-ins’ for a variety of subjects visit: [www.classroom-management.org](http://www.classroom-management.org)

**iii) When you’re faced with a pupil who is threatening you or verbally abusing you, simply take a pen and paper and say:**

*“I’m writing your comments down; I’m recording what you say so that I don’t make a mistake when I explain your behaviour to other people.”*

This works – every time.

**iv) Use Humour:**

While you should avoid hitting out with sarcasm and personal slights, stealing the attention with *correct* use of humour can be a nice way of diverting attention.

**“Do you believe in freedom, because if you keep making comments like that you’re going to lose yours at break-time.”**

**”Three simple instructions ... Shut Up, Sit Down and Hold your breath until you are a uniform shade of red.”**

## **1.85** | ***How to gain immediate control over any class – yes, even the ‘worst’ class in school***

Why is it that some teachers get immediate respect from any group and any pupil? How is it that some teachers have the seemingly magical ability of being able to settle and engage even the most intolerant class – even a class they’ve never taught before?

This puzzled me for years. I just couldn’t understand what these people had, or what they were doing. It was as if they projected some invisible force in front of them that completely altered the atmosphere as they walked in a room. A room could be in total chaos, kids everywhere, rowdy as hell and then as soon as they walked in the room, the whole class would sit silently with their pens out ready to start work.

What makes this type of event more surprising is that some teachers get these results without being intimidating or oppressive. The really good ones don’t need to resort to scare tactics or bullying.

A teacher like that has total control over school children – regardless of whether they are in a chaotic dinner queue or their own cosy classroom. They have magical relationships with pupils and always manage to get the best work out of the worst class. And the children actually enjoy spending time with them – their break time conversations often mention how much fun they’ve just had in their lessons.

They have total and utter composure with all groups; nothing gets past them and you always know where you are with them – they treat everyone firmly but fairly. In any confrontation, the idea of resistance just doesn’t enter their head and they seem to be able to placate any dispute with ease and without arousing resentment. They can make more headway in two minutes with the most difficult pupil in school than other staff could do in a whole term.

They know the school rules and policies inside out and are always aware of all current school activities. They know what the kids are up to. They pay an interest in them and consequently are privy to allsorts of current ‘news’ from the playground - who’s mates with who, who’s going out with who and what the current fashions and fads are.

Lastly, humour is a huge part of their make-up. They always have a smile and enjoy a good laugh.

Obviously when someone is this good they get talked about – by staff and pupils alike – and pupils throughout the whole school know exactly what to expect from them. They know they can look forward to having an entertaining, interesting lesson but that they won’t be able to get away with anything.

And there lies the secret ... The reason some teachers can walk into a class they've never even taught before and perform magic – commanding *immediate* respect and attention from even the worst groups is simply because the children *know in advance* what to expect from this particular member of staff.

It's not so much what they do at a particular moment that guarantees their success – rather, it's because their **reputation** precedes them.

If you want to gain immediate control over any group you need to work hard on your own reputation. Your reputation dictates the amount of respect you will have in school – from staff and pupils alike. The more you commit to building your skills and awareness, the better your reputation will become!

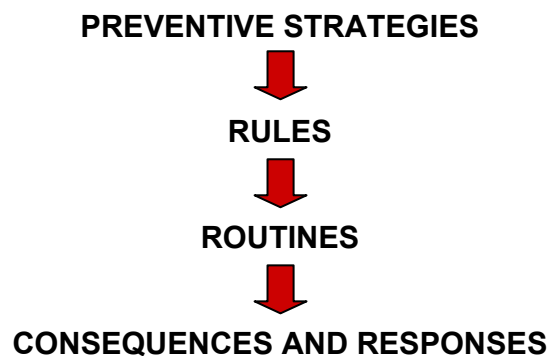
## Part 1 – Summary

---

In part 1 we've been focusing on PREVENTION. Let's summarize what we've covered so far...

Preventive Strategies, together with Rules and Routines form the main part of the [Needs-Focused™ Classroom Management](#) plan (and indeed most successful classroom management plans). That means there are an awful lot of things we can (and should) put in place before we start thinking about consequences, punishments and sanctions.

Being proactive and seeking to prevent and minimize classroom behaviour problems is far easier and more efficient than the reactive approach, also known as 'crisis management' where you wait for a problem to occur and then fumble around for a strategy to deal with it.



### **Our preventive strategies are:**

- Positive, supportive attitude
- Positive environment
- Clear, congruent, respectful communication
- Positive teacher/pupil relationships
- Descriptive, high-quality praise
- Engaging Lessons

When these are in place there is less likelihood of misbehaviour.

## PART 2

---

**Dealing with mild disruption and pupils who are off task**

---

We've discussed the features you need to have in place to minimize the occurrence of bad behaviour (and I promise that if you adopt those principles, the incidents will decrease) but, as we all know, there are still going to be plenty of occasions when a pupils become disruptive. Now let's look at techniques for dealing with bad behaviour as and when it occurs.

Before we get into the step-by-step response to disruption I want to give you a wonderful tip I use in my teaching every day. It has an amazing effect on students who are just on the verge of disrupting a lesson and often helps me get them through to the end without needing further intervention.

**2.1 *The simplest, most over-looked technique for getting any pupil to work in your lesson ... Targets.***

Targets are so important for re-engaging a pupil who is just starting to waver. Let's say you have a pupil who's messing around, off task being mildly disruptive. It may well be that he's just not clear about what he's supposed to be doing, he may be confused, he may have misheard or he may just be a bit bored. An excellent tip for getting this pupil back on task is to define a very clear work target for him to achieve, and a set time in which to do so...

**“Tony, this is your target – I want you to get to number 6 by half past ten.”**

(This is said very quietly so as not to disrupt the pace of the lesson or raise the attention of other pupils).

The target gives them something to work towards and reminds them you're supporting them – it shows them that you're interested in them and care about their progress. It gives them very clear instructions as to *how to succeed in your lesson*.

Boys in particular, work much better when they know exactly what is expected of them and some pupils can only cope with small chunks of work at a time. Target setting is perfect for achieving both these aims and can have a magical calming effect on most pupils who are starting to play up.

I use this method with all my classes. Once I've given them their tasks I go round and put a pencil mark where I expect them to get to in a set time.

**“By ten past 11 Sarah you need to have completed the work to this mark – that’s your target.”**

It’s best to do this quietly because some pupils are self conscious about having smaller targets than others and for others, the fact that I give them more work as their target can lead to quarrels.

Once you’ve done this a few times they get used to it and accept their individual targets quite happily. In fact, most lessons I have pupils actually *asking me* to give them a target!

In every class there are very badly behaved pupils who are, in fact very capable. With such children I explain, in private, that I’ll be giving them a bigger target (more work) than anyone else. If I did this without explanation there would be an uproar, but by taking the pupil to one side before the lesson and quietly saying something along the lines of ...

**“Shaun, I’m going to set you a high target today because I know you can excel at this. I wouldn’t be doing my job right if I didn’t give you the chance to show me what you can do. – OK?”**

I normally get a focused, hard-working lesson from that student! They seldom let you down when you do that.

The bottom line is – set individual targets, they work wonders!

## **2.2** *The 6 steps to getting any child on task*

I must stress at this point that the following 4 steps are for minor disruptions – pupils who are interrupting, passing notes, tapping pencils, throwing bits of rubber etc. – the kind of minor yet annoying little games that disturb lessons if left unchecked.

The aim here is to jump on these minor infractions and address them before they have time to escalate to more serious incidents. I probably don’t need to mention that the steps are a progressive solution: i.e. some ‘minor’ incidents are more serious than others and so consequently we would only start at step one for the least invasive behaviours.

### **Important:**

*Your **response** to disruption must always be **less intrusive** for the rest of your class than whatever is causing the **initial disruption**. Some teachers react to minor infractions with all guns blazing and create more disruption than the pupil caused in the first place, which obviously makes no sense whatsoever and invariably leads to classroom chaos.*

Besides, if your first answer to a minor incident is to yell your head off, what do you do next when the problem continues? You've already jumped in with both feet and haven't got many options left with which to sort the problem out. You can always move up a gear if you start with the least invasive, but it's more difficult to take a step back if you start by shouting at the top of your voice.

When dealing with minor disruptions and pupils who are just starting to go off task always use the least invasive technique first...

And you can't get any less-invasive than this first technique...

## **STEP 1: IGNORE THE BEHAVIOUR!**

### **Planned Ignoring**

I'm not saying let things go *unnoticed* but there are times when the best thing to do is completely ignore very obvious attention-seeking behaviour.

At a residential special school I was working in I remember a huge commotion one break time. A boy had somehow managed to climb up onto a wall of the car park and was threatening to throw bricks at the cars below. This obviously gained the attention of a lot of the other pupils as well as 6 or 7 members of staff.

After a few minutes the pupils were duly herded off to classrooms but the astonishing thing was that 5 of the staff remained and this obviously continued to give the boy the audience he wanted. He continued his threatening behaviour. Eventually, all but one of the staff went inside and the remaining teacher feigned disinterest. The boy climbed down when the thrill of playing up to the crowd had been removed.

Ignoring challenging behaviour does not come naturally. It is difficult to do because it's the opposite to what we believe we should do; after-all, isn't the aim of this book to tackle bad behaviour? Are we not supposed to 'do' something about the bad behaviour we face on a daily basis?

We automatically respond to any behaviour that captures our attention, causes us stress or threatens us in some way – usually by shouting, giving a 'good telling off' or giving lengthy lectures about proper conduct. But this is exactly the wrong thing to do.

When we give our attention to a child who is misbehaving or has caused us stress, we are effectively giving them exactly what they want – our attention. We are giving the message: **“When you act like this, I get all emotional and give you lots of attention. Do it again if you want some more attention from me.”**

A far more effective way of dealing with these attempts to gain our attention is the act of Planned Ignoring. Simply put, this means totally withdrawing attention from the child- acting neutral, looking away from them, not speaking and generally feigning total disinterest in them.

Switching your attention to other members of the class who are behaving appropriately, verbally praising them and showing interest in their work can often put an end to instances of attention-seeking silliness.

If that fails, then you need to move to step 2.

## **STEP 2: USE NON-VERBAL SIGNALS**

Non-verbal communication in the classroom allows you to signal your authority and deal with pupils silently, without disturbing the flow of a lesson.

If a member of your class is disrupting a class-teaching session, or is becoming disinterested, it is far more effective to deal with that one person without attracting the attention of the other members of the class as this would affect the pace of your lesson.

As soon as you use your voice to a level audible to the rest of the class, you've lost momentum. As soon as you stop, mid flow, to address a problem pupil, you've lost momentum. Once this happens there is a real chance of a small disruption ruining a whole lesson.

A frown, or shake of the head, the discreet wagging of a finger, a finger to lips or raised palm is far less likely to lead to conflict and disruption than a verbal reprimand which attracts the attention of the rest of the class.

**And here's another good reason to use Non-verbal gestures and eye signals...** They not only keep distractions to a minimum – they also build into a kind of private dialogue which can strengthen relationships with your worst pupils. There is nothing like making a child feel special if you want to improve your relationship with them and what could be more special than having a silent, secret exchange which the rest of the class are unaware of?

If pupils don't respond to non-verbal signals, your physical presence is the next tool to use.

### **STEP 3: GET CLOSE UP**

Walking around the class or next to an 'off-task' pupil is the next logical step. Again, this must be done without detracting from the lesson activity – it needs to be a smooth, seamless interaction.

You might pull up a chair at the back of the room next to a rowdy table and continue your lesson from this position for a while. I often spend part of my lesson sitting close to my most challenging pupils. I can give them the extra support they need and we occasionally have little breaks and a quick chat which strengthen our relationships.

If your close proximity fails to deter a disruptive pupil, it's time to have words...

### **STEP 4: USE VERBAL SIGNALS – OFFER SUPPORT**

When under pressure we can be pushed to the limit by some pupils - our reaction is often to speak in a louder and louder voice or jump straight in with threats of punishment. This has the opposite effect to the one we desire. It shows a lack of control and unfortunately, many pupils come from undisciplined, chaotic homes where shouting is the norm so it has little effect. Raising our voices is often a source of great amusement to bolder pupils who know they have succeeded in winding you up. And going straight into 'punishment mode' will usually lead to pupils putting their 'barriers up'. Once they are on the defensive it is difficult to make progress with them.

Thankfully there are a couple of other ways to get reluctant learners back on task (even if all our preventive measures have failed).

Let's say Brian isn't getting on with his work. Our usual first response might be something along the lines of "Brian, get on with your work." If that doesn't work (you never know) we would probably increase the severity in the form of a louder voice, harsher tone, perhaps even threatening a consequence of some sort but the overall message is the same... "Brian, get on with your work."

But Brian doesn't want to work. So no matter how many times we tell him to do the same thing, it's not likely to have the desired effect – at least not until a sufficiently inconvenient consequence is brought into the picture. We'll deal with consequences later in the book but for now let's look at a couple of alternative approaches to getting Brian out of his stubborn cycle of refusal.

Offering support can never be seen as confrontational by a pupil no matter how wound up they are. If we offer help and support there is more chance they will listen to us than if we start reading the riot act.

You don't have to jump straight into the straight-laced authoritarian mode and bark instructions like sergeant major; sometimes a bit of humour to lighten and deflate a situation is all that's needed to get a class back on track.

And don't always assume that they're messing around just to annoy you either. Remember that there is always a *reason* for their bad behaviour and it may well be that they are confused or upset about something. Therefore, your first verbal response to a pupil who is misbehaving might be ...

**“What’s the matter? You seem to be distracted, tell me what’s wrong so I can help you get on.”**

Or

**“Have I not explained the task properly? What do you want me to do to help you?”**

Or

**“Is something wrong with the work? Tell me how to help you get on.”**

Through this supportive questioning you very clearly show that you are there for the pupil, you show that you care; but you also show that you're fully aware that they are not doing as they should be - without actually criticizing them for their behaviour. This simple questioning alone can quickly prevent a pupil from becoming more disruptive.

**“Are you managing with those questions Anthony? Do you need some help?”**

**“Can you see the board from there Simon? Do you want to move a bit closer?”**

**“Have you got everything you need? Just ask if there's something you need to borrow.”**

## **STEP 5: OFFER LIMITED CHOICES ...**

In line with the Needs-Focused™ philosophy, offering choices is an incredibly powerful means to getting compliance from pupils. This is basically because it is far nicer to be given a choice than to be cornered into making a decision you don't want to. Limited choices are questions we give to pupils to 'sweeten' our instructions. It is far less hostile and therefore invites fewer arguments from pupils.

**“Do you want to use a blue pen or a black pen to do the work?”**

**“Do you want me to help you or Jason to help you do the work?”**

**“Do you want to sit here or over there?”**

**“Do you want to try this question or that question first?”**

These limited choices still convey the message “You’re going to do the work” but because they allow a certain amount of autonomy they are easier for the pupil to accept. Nobody likes being told what to do and when you’re an angry pupil, being seen to be under the total control of the teacher can be too much for them to stomach. Giving them limited choices gives some control back to them – being able to make a choice for themselves, however small or controlled that choice is, often allows them to save face.

**STEP 6: USE PRAISE – PRAISE OTHER PUPILS WHO ARE DOING THE RIGHT THING AND BE READY TO PRAISE THE PUPIL IN QUESTION THE MOMENT THEIR BEHAVIOUR CHANGES**

An important part of these four steps is to be vigilant for opportunities to praise positive behaviour and be ready to give your attention to the pupil, should he start to behave appropriately. This can turn a negative situation around very quickly.

**“John what you did then was perfect. That was exactly what I was asking for. I know how difficult it can be doing the right thing when you’re wound up – so well done!”**

Similarly, heaping praise on other pupils in the room who are already doing what is expected, (proximity praise) can alter the whole atmosphere in your classroom and create what is called the **Ripple Effect**.

The "ripple effect" occurs when you praise good behaviour in one student, and this in turn positively influences the behaviour of other students. The ripple effect is influenced by the sincerity of the praise.

Most people respond positively to praise, we all know that, so if you foster an atmosphere of high expectation, where those who are following your instructions are rightly given the attention they deserve, there is a good chance that other members of the class will strive to achieve the same recognition.

**Just to re-cap, these are the 6 steps to get them on task – the techniques for dealing with minor disruption ...**

- 1. Ignore it**
- 2. Use hand gestures and eye signals**
- 3. Move in close**
- 4. Offer Support**
- 5. Offer limited choices**
- 6. Use proximity and personal praise**

## **2.3 *The five-step script that stops disruption***

### **i) State what you want them to do calmly and clearly.**

The first thing to do is state very clearly what they are doing wrong and what they have to do to put it right. You need to make their choices as simple as possible and leave no room for misunderstanding. As usual there's no need to get annoyed or raise your voice to show you're in charge – just calmly make the statement in short, clear sentences.

You also need to explain *why* they should do what you're asking – i.e. tell them what will happen once they've followed your instructions. By doing this you show that you're not just getting on their backs for the sake of it. This of course, gives them fewer reasons to complain or argue against your instructions.

**“John you're not doing your work. You need to pick your pen up and finish your target so that you don't have to get it finished in your own time.”**

Finally notice how the requests are phrased in a positive, not negative way. For example “Stop wandering” or “Stop talking” are both negative commands and should be phrased as “sit down properly please” or “Get on with you work quietly.”

If they don't immediately start doing as you've asked or if they answer you with a promise to do it soon, you should move on to stage 2.

(A promise that they will do as you ask “in a minute” or “later” is their way of controlling the situation – treat it as if they have ignored you).

**ii) Explain exactly what will happen to them if they continue to misbehave.**

Tell them very clearly what the sanction will be if they continue to defy you. Use a matter-of-fact tone.

Remember not to get angry or raise your voice – you don't want to reward this behaviour with emotion - you need to convey total and utter control. For that reason, once you get to this stage there is no longer a place for humour.

Also, under no circumstances should you get drawn in to an argument as this gives the impression that you haven't fully made up your mind. If you start to discuss the matter then the pupil will think there must be a chance you'll change your mind and once they see an opening, they will try to exploit it with more and more arguing.

**“If you don't manage to get the work that I've set for you finished, you will end up losing 5 minutes of break.”**

**“If you don't stop throwing the bits of eraser you'll have to spend your break clearing the floor.”**

**iii) Now you need to give them time to think about your instruction.**

Immediately follow on by giving them a time limit *and then back off to give them some space.*

**“Do that now, please.”**

**“Tom, I'm going to give you ten seconds to think about it.”**

**“I'll be back in about 30 seconds – you need to think about what you're going to do.”**

With a clear choice spelled out to them like this you'll be surprised how easy it is for them to do the right thing. Once they have had it clearly spelled out to them exactly where the boundary is and that continuing their misbehaviour will result in a specific sanction, they soon change.

By clearly explaining exactly what they are doing wrong, exactly what they must do to put it right and exactly what will happen if they continue the behaviour, you are also being completely fair. You are still maintaining total control but by giving them a clear, limited choice you make it easy for them to do the right thing.

And by backing off – walking to another part of the room or going to help another pupil, you're giving them a chance to back down without losing face; you're giving them an escape route. When a child has backed themselves into a corner it's difficult for them to back down in front of their classmates if you're standing over them. If you say your piece and then stand there staring at them they will become intimidated in front of their friends and react accordingly – usually with more defiance. By walking away you take pressure off them so there is more chance of them doing the right thing.

How much more sensible is this than losing your temper and screaming, giving them lots of attention and confusing them with idle threats that you won't follow up? Or worse – really losing your temper and looking a fool in front of the rest of the class. What will that do for your [reputation](#)?

**iv) If they do as you've asked, acknowledge it!**

It's a big step they've just taken. Don't lecture them about how they should follow instructions faster next time - just give them a sincere smile and some quiet private praise.

**"I'm impressed John – well done."**

That's all that's needed to let them know they did the right thing and to encourage them to do it in future. With younger pupils the compliance can be rewarded more formally – perhaps by getting them to place a sticker on a chart for meeting the behaviour target "Follow teacher's instructions".

**If they won't comply then you can simply state the sanction or consequence that they must now face:**

**"Ok you've chosen to carry on doing..... That's fine. You'll be staying in at break for 5 minutes. Now get on with your work so that you don't lose any more of your time."**

Once again, give them a few moments to think and settle.

What's of paramount importance is that you follow up on your consequence. This will have a very positive effect on the other lively members of your group because it shows you have total control but also that you are totally fair. It's important for other children in the group to witness that.

**v) If the consequence has little or no effect...**

If the pupil resumes the behaviour after a few minutes respite, repeat the procedure with a tougher consequence. This is why you should always start off with a small consequence so that you can increase it if necessary. In the example above, if the teacher had told John that he would miss ALL his break, what would be the next step if John continued to misbehave?

## **2.4 The correct use of consequences**

There should be a stepped discipline procedure in place as part of the school's behaviour policy but I find there is often space to include some smaller consequences of your own within your own classroom before you need to get further up the ladder into detentions etc. In my first 7 years of teaching I never once had the need to give a detention. Only when I made the move into Special Education, in a school where short after-school detentions formed a key element in the school behaviour plan did I start using them. There is a lot we can do before having to resort to consequences and punishments – don't forget that.

Pupils need to know exactly what will happen to them when they don't follow the rules so keep your consequences simple so that there's no confusion.

Consequences given for small scale disruption need to be correspondingly very small. When the consequences are small you can keep increasing them if necessary. When you give large sanctions in response to minor problems you will be met with an indignant pupil who feels he has been unfairly treated - and the situation will quickly escalate.

### **Don't use your big guns straight away**

When I first started teaching, like most of us, I didn't have a clue how to control a rowdy class or an individual who ignored my instructions. My immediate response was to repeat the same instructions or threats in a louder voice; and when that didn't work I shouted even louder. It's fair to say my skills were limited.

If I was really flustered and caught off guard I would dish out report cards and send pupils to a senior member of staff for the most ridiculously minor misdemeanours – in a pathetic attempt to assert my authority. Often the rest of the class would be so surprised and annoyed at my inappropriate punishments that they would all join in against me.

Before long I was sending kids out of the room left, right and centre, making threats I didn't have a hope of following through and generally getting myself in a mess. It soon became clear to me that I couldn't keep sending children out of my class and clog up the senior teacher's office – except in extreme circumstances. These weren't extreme circumstances, of course, it was just an average class of 14 year old children who wouldn't do their work.

Clearly I had a lot to learn.

The turning point came when a more experienced colleague told me that the only way to use sanctions effectively was to step them ...

**“If you start off by shouting and sending kids to the Head for relatively minor incidents, what are you going to do when the child continues to misbehave? What do you use when you've already used the big guns?”**

Since that day, I can honestly say that my classroom management changed dramatically for the better. It was one of those 'Aha' moments where you realize the error of your ways. By being fair to pupils and giving a punishment that fits the crime, you maintain control and win the respect of the class.

**Here are the two rules which ensure your consequences work without causing resentment...**

**i) Consequences must be stepped and must fit the crime:**

Always start small so that you can add to the punishment if the bad behaviour continues. If a child is being mildly disruptive – just a bit chatty say, you wouldn't want to send them out of the class or give them a detention – it would be unfair and would arouse resentment from the pupil as well as the rest of the class.

Punishments such as loss of break, being kept back after school, being kept in before lunch are great because you can start off with quite small increments of time to get your point across and then keep adding to them. You don't have to take a child's whole break away if they are chatting in your lesson – start by taking 5 minutes and if that has no effect you can move up from there.

**“John, if you don’t stop talking I’m going to keep you behind for five minutes at break.”**

**“You’ve already lost 5 minutes of your break, if you don’t want to lose another 5 minutes you need to pick up the rubber you just threw.”**

**“John, that’s your whole break gone, I warned you. Unless you want me to keep you behind after school I suggest you settle down and get the work finished.”**

## **ii) Consequences must *always, always, always* be followed through**

Issuing threats you can’t carry through is the quickest way to ruin your reputation in school and wreck your chances of controlling difficult groups. If a child gets away with something once, they will expect to get away with it again so if you threaten a punishment and then back down on it you very clearly give the message that your rules are like the weather – very changeable.

This will obviously have a dire effect on your [reputation](#) and you will very soon become known as a pushover, a teacher who has no chance of commanding respect or getting pupils to do as they are asked. You are actually training them NOT to follow your instructions. You don’t want that do you?

### **A Note about Punishments, Consequences and Sanctions**

I’ve worked in several special schools catering for ADHD and EBD pupils and have been shocked at what many policy-making senior staff feel constitutes an effective sanction.

For example, many schools now operate some sort of Time Out or Internal Exclusion program as part of the school Behaviour Policy but the way in which some of these are operated is frankly absurd. Let me explain...

The idea of a punishment or sanction is that it should be inconvenient for the pupil – not cruel or abusive, just inconvenient – or at least less appealing than classroom activities. In many of the schools I’ve worked however, this has not been the case. Badly behaved pupils have been removed from their lessons and taken to either a Time Out area or a withdrawal group as a supposed punishment only to be placed in exciting, stimulating environments.

At one school, all the worst pupils were herded into one room and 2 burly support workers stood guard on the door preventing the pupils from leaving. Think about this: there were up to 5 of the most extreme, anti-social 14 year old boys in this one room at any one time. As you can imagine, they were very excited and saw this is a tremendous opportunity to gang together and be very abusive – both verbally and physically towards any staff in close proximity to the room.

How could anyone in their right mind see this as a punishment? These boys loved going in that room! It gave them Carte Blanche to behave exactly as they wanted – WITH A CAPTIVE AUDIENCE! Each boy would try and outdo the other by hurling abuse at the support staff, making threats, lashing out and damaging the furniture.

This is an extreme example of a pathetic attempt at sanctioning bad behaviour but it happens in schools all over the world to some extent every day.

We all know of situations where pupils are sent out to work in a busy corridor where there is near-constant stimulation. What is clearly overlooked is that they disrupted the lesson and had to be removed for a reason - because they were either bored stiff or unable to understand what was going on.

In a bid to punish them for their insolence they get sent from what they perceive to be a thoroughly boring, uncomfortable and unpleasant environment (the lesson) into an exciting and stimulating environment (a busy corridor with no pressure from the teacher).

Whenever you send a pupil to 'Time Out' or whenever you make a child stay in to pay back wasted time, remember these rules ...

- i) Make sure the Time Out area is free from interruptions and stimulation. Definitely never designate your Time Out area as a busy corridor. Preferably use a cubicle or room with nothing in it apart from a table and chair.
- ii) Never put more than one pupil in a Time Out area or detention at any one time – they will only interact with each other and turn your 'punishment' into a fun way to pass the time.

***and above all ...***

...Make your lesson activities exciting, interesting, relevant to their lives and FUN!

## 2.5 **The 3 Requests Technique that gives you instant control of difficult pupils**

Would you like to know how to keep your temper when dealing with the most demanding pupils? Wouldn't it be amazing to be able to remain calm in even the most frustrating, anxiety-ridden situations – to never shout, or display a lack of control of any kind?

How would it feel to be able to say a couple of sentences to a child and have them immediately do as you ask? No more battle of wills, no more confrontation. It would be like suddenly gaining 50 years of experience in one fell swoop; like becoming a Zen master of behaviour management overnight.

The **3 Requests Technique** is a stepped response that leads to a *known* punishment such a time out, phone call home, detention etc. and can dramatically reduce pressure in any confrontational situation. The beauty of this is that the child knows exactly where they are in terms of boundaries.

The three Requests technique gives you total control in any confrontational situation. It prevents irritation and frustration escalating to rage, as is often the case when pupils refuse to follow our instructions. And it also prevents us, as staff, from issuing sanctions and punishments which the pupils would consider unfair.

Indeed, the success of this method lies in its fairness on the pupil. It gives them a very clear warning that their behaviour is unacceptable, and gives them the opportunity to address it.

They know, because of the very clear, succinct instructions, exactly what will happen to them next. It gives them a clear warning that their behaviour will definitely result in the known sanction if they continue.

Pupils become enraged if they are given a sanction with no apparent warning but this technique gives them a clear choice of whether to accept the consequence of their action or change their behaviour to avoid it.

Finally it gives them a definite deadline by which to make that choice. Add to this the fact that it is totally non-confrontational and in my opinion, you have the perfect strategy for gaining compliance from disobedient children.

## 2.6 **How to use the 3 requests technique**

Basically it's an almost fool-proof, non-confrontational way of getting your instructions followed but the best way of explaining it is by way of an example ...

Let's consider the following response to a pupil who keeps getting out of his chair and walking round the room...

The teacher, on recognizing that Joe is agitated about something first tries offering more support – she asks him if anything's wrong or offers him more help with the work . She gives him a work target, offers him a different seat, tries humour etc. etc. but Joe continues to get out of his chair and bother other pupils.

The teacher says (in a very calm tone) ...

**“Joe, you're out of your chair. Please return to your seat and get on with your work.”**

*[Pause]*

**“If you want to get in the lunch queue on time with everyone else you need to go back to your seat now - otherwise I'll have to keep you back for five minutes after the lesson.”**

The teacher turns away for a few moments to look at another pupil's work and give Joe time to concede defeat without looking a fool.

Joe continues to walk round the room.

At this point the teacher moves within close proximity of the child and repeats her instruction in a calm, non-confrontational manner...

**“Joe, I'm asking you for the *second time* to return to your seat.”**

At this stage it is crucial to maintain a calm voice – the teacher doesn't need to raise her voice or get angry – she just lets the script do the work.

If Joe complied at this point the teacher would reinforce the fact that he had followed instructions by immediately verbally rewarding his appropriate behaviour.

She wouldn't berate him for not following instructions earlier and she wouldn't ignore his compliance. She would acknowledge it and immediately reward it before moving on with the lesson. Why? Because she wants him to follow her instructions next lesson too - and the best way to make this happen is by convincing him that doing so is a rewarding experience for him.

If Joe still didn't do as he was asked at this stage the teacher would ensure she had his attention and the instructions would be repeated one last time...

**“Joe this is the *third and final time* I'm going to ask you to sit down and get on with your work.”**

It is important that the instruction is brief and direct, but again, that the voice isn't raised or accompanied by an emotional reaction of any sort. The teacher remains calm and lets the script do the work. She doesn't get drawn into debates, arguments or explanations. The child knows exactly what he has to do to avoid a consequence; there is no need to provide any further reasoning.

If Joe finally managed to follow the request, he would be praised as above.

If he still persisted in behaving inappropriately he would then be notified of the sanction.

**“Joe you were asked 3 times to sit down. You haven't done as I said. Go to time out.”**

**“Joe you haven't followed instructions. You must go to see Mr. Blakey.”**

**“Joe you haven't followed instructions. You've got yourself a detention.”**

Following the sanction the teacher must then be vigilant for any demonstration of positive behaviour by the child which she can then praise.

Always the approach must be to give attention to the right behaviour whenever possible.

If the child still refuses to follow instructions and return to work after the sanction has been given or if the behaviour escalates then further management is clearly required.

If the pupil remains calm but defiant then the strategy would be to return to the early stages of the stepped approach – concentrating on giving support to the pupil, talking with them, perhaps withdrawing them to a quiet area for a while to try and find out the reason for the behaviour.

If the pupil starts to get angry and becomes verbally or physically abusive then we would need to adopt strategies from [Part 3](#).

## 2.7 **Ten Magic words to make a disruptive child behave**

I have found an excellent phrase for making children really think about their behaviour and enabling them to choose more sensible alternatives. I add this phrase once I've explained what the consequence will be.

***“Is that what you want to happen? It's your choice”***

So our new statement would be ...

***“If you don't manage to get the work that I've set for you finished, you will end up losing 5 minutes of break. Is that what you want to happen? It's your choice.”***

By adding this phrase you're doing two very important things here – making them really think about where their behaviour is leading them – “is that what you want to happen?” and then reminding them that the way out is completely within their control – that they have a clear choice – “It's your choice.”

In effect this helps them out of the hole they've dug for themselves – it gives them a ladder - and it helps them take responsibility for their behaviour.

## 2.8 **How to say 'no' to a pupil without causing an argument**

When a student makes an unreasonable demand it's difficult to know what to say. Some children – particularly those with limited social skills and behavioural difficulties find it very difficult to accept a categorical “No”.

One way round this is to say 'yes' instead – but to also add a condition. I call this the '**Conditional Yes**'.

**“Sir, can we do a poster this lesson?”**

**“NO.”**

**“Why not? We did one last lesson! I'm doing a poster!”**

And on and on and on.

The conditional yes is an answer to their question consisting of three parts:

- **“That sounds great.”**
- **“The only drawback is...”**
- **“So how about this as an alternative ...?”**

“Sir, can we do a poster?”

“Hey what a good idea Brian – especially after the fantastic job you made of the last ones.” **(That sounds great.)**

“The thing is, we’ve got to get this English task done as part of your coursework.” **(The only drawback is ...)**

“How about you illustrate your coursework when you’ve finished?”

or

“Get your coursework finished and then you can do a poster about it.” **(Here’s an alternative ...)**

It works almost every time as long as you’re firm about the drawback and offer a reasonable alternative. Kids know the rules – they just like pushing them so we need to show that we will accommodate their desires (on our terms) whilst remaining in total control.

## 2.9 ***A simple sentence that reduces disruption by 50%***

In their book, ‘You Can ... You know you can.’ (2001), Maines and Robinson found a 50% reduction in disruptive behaviours following the introduction of a structured script for teachers for use when giving directions.

They state that communication can be improved and a situation can be de-personalized when staff begin their instructions with “**When you ...** (*state behaviour*)” and ends with an explanation of the resulting effect “**then I ...** (*state what the behaviour causes*).”

For example, rather than saying “You need to stop interrupting” or “You’re holding up the lesson”, we would say ...

“Vicky, **when you** shout across the room **it disturbs other people**. Please get on with your work without shouting.”

Or:

“**Greg, when you interrupt me, it makes it difficult for people to hear and I can’t teach the lesson properly. Please listen quietly**”.

Following a tight script like this makes you focus on what you’re saying and you’re then less likely to lose your temper.

## PART 3

### Coping with crises, conflicts and difficult situations

The following steps are a progressive approach to dealing with major disruptions and crises.

Whatever you feel constitutes a crisis – be it a fight between pupils, or a whole class riot, the fact is that such events don't just happen out of the blue without build-up or warning.

***A crisis situation doesn't just happen without build-up or warning.  
There is always a trigger.***

It is up to us to recognize these triggers, remove or reduce them where possible and respond early enough to prevent a problem getting out of control.

There are 3 clear stages leading up to a crisis or major outburst and our job is to try and prevent the event escalating from one stage to the next. The key to remember here is that if we allow a preceding stage to go unchecked, we are allowing the possibility for extreme and often quite frightening incidents to happen.

If you try to sort out a crisis once it is fully underway, you have far less chance of calming it down than you would of if you'd responded earlier to the warning signs.

#### **3.1 *The stages leading up to a crisis***

##### **Stage 1: Response to a trigger**

###### **What to look for ...**

Trigger experiences often don't happen when you're actually present. It may be that a child was upset by something that happened last night at home, it may have happened on the bus, it may have happened during break time or it may be an on-going bullying issue.

But, while we may not see the trigger event actually happen; the after-effects will be apparent in the pupil's mood and actions. As people become angry or anxious they give clear signals and it is in recognizing these signs of discomfort that enable us to prevent discomfort from bubbling into rage. Vigilance is the key!

Restlessness and fidgeting for example are sure signs of distress and anxiety, and should not be misconstrued as mere boredom or lack of application.

When a child who is normally placid becomes more agitated, it's easy to see that something's wrong; but equally telling might be a person who is normally animated becoming atypically passive and withdrawn.

If you know your pupils well enough (that's why [positive teacher-pupil relationships](#) are so important) they may show other signs that you have come to recognize as a sign that something is wrong; such as not answering you when you greet them.

Typical signs that a child may be experiencing distress include:

- **Agitated behaviour such as pacing**
- **Refusal to take outdoor jacket/coat off**
- **Rigid body and crossed arms**
- **Repeated phrases**
- **Withdrawn, sulky and non-compliant**
- **Posturing – jutting jaw and/or chest stuck out**

All these are signs that a child is distressed, angry or worried about something and unless you do something about it, that situation will only get worse.

### **3.2** *Dealing with pupils in stage 1*

At this very early stage all the techniques from [Part 2](#) are equally valid.

In addition, **diversion and diffusion** tactics are particularly useful – so be ready with changes of activity or anything that can engage them and take their mind away from whatever is causing distress.

It may be a good idea to send the child on an errand in some circumstances to give them an escape route from circumstances that they're finding difficult without losing face ...

**“David, could you go to the office and ask them for some board pens for me, please?”**

**Humour**, as I've already mentioned, can be a terrific diffuser at stressful times and teachers who can react to threats in a light-hearted manner tend to quickly regain control. For example, responding to a child who has raised a chair to throw at someone else with something like ...

**“Put my favourite chair down please – it can't stand heights”** or

**“Right, weapons down, books out”**

... may be all that's needed to take the sting out of a fraught situation.

The aim of using humour in these circumstances is to change the internal state of the person as soon as possible – once you've broken their aggressive or anxious state, you can then work quietly with them to find out what was wrong and address the problem so it doesn't flare up again.

### **3.3 *What to say to a child in Stage 1***

Only by finding out what is causing a child distress can we actually do anything about it and the following script has proved an excellent, non-invasive form of questioning to reach that goal.

When pupils are wound up, they find it very difficult to convey their feelings through words, so their behaviour is actually a very definite cry for help. To calmly explain what it is that's bothering them is beyond the average angry teenager, and nagging them or pestering them for answers and reasons for their anger will often make matters worse.

The following script has proved very effective in getting even the most distressed pupils to 'open up' and explain the reasons for their irritation – without arousing further anger or distress. From here, we can then address the practical matters to help that child.

### **3.4 *The magic script to use when you need to find out what is bothering a child***

There are times when we need to find out what is bothering a child because it is interfering with their learning and/or disrupting the progress of your lesson and it is amazing just how effective the following script is for achieving that aim. I've seen some very distressed pupils who are refusing to speak to anyone, respond magically to this.

Remember, at the bottom of their hearts they want to be heard, they want to tell you what's on their mind, they want your attention and they want your help. Their problem is that they just don't possess the social skills to be able to voluntarily offload to you and they will only do so when they feel secure and are approached in the correct manner.

This short script shows pupils that you are aware they are bothered about something and through focused repetition shows that your sole intention is to help them.

It gives them the attention they need and helps them offload because there is no blame attached. You tell them very clearly and simply that you are only there to listen to them – not to judge them. It offers them the chance to have someone hear their whole story without being criticized.

Obviously, this script can only be used if you have a [positive teacher-pupil relationship](#) with the child you're trying to help; after-all, a child will only want to talk with someone they feel at ease with.

In order for it to work you first need to put some distance between the pupil and the rest of the class – it's unlikely they'll tell you what's wrong if their classmates are listening, especially if it involves them 'grassing' on another pupil.

**“David ...”**

(Use the pupil's name to gain their attention)

**“David ... I can see that something is wrong”**

(This acknowledges there is a problem and that you are aware of it without actually blaming them for something).

**“Talk to me, tell me what's wrong and I'll listen.”**

**“Tell me what's wrong and I may be able to help.”**

**“Talk to me and I'll try and help.”**

**“Talk to me, I'll listen.”**

In each case our words are clear and simple so as not to be misunderstood and are without blame or threat of consequence so as not to provoke an argument. The message is clear – we are simply there for them to talk to, to give their side of the story.

The trick with this script is that it must be repeated, repeated, repeated. As many times as is necessary until the child eventually tells you what is wrong.

And that's all there is to it. It may be simple, but it works...like magic.

## **Stage 2: Heightened distress and anxiety**

### **What to look for...**

- **Verbal abuse, targeted offensive language, shouting.**
- **Aggressive body language such as clenched fists.**
- **Low level destruction of resources and property.**
- **Maybe becoming increasingly withdrawn and refusing to speak; younger children may hide under tables.**

### **3.5 *Dealing with pupils in stage 2***

Diversion tactics may still work at this stage but it is likely that the behaviour will continue to get worse without additional support in the form of clear reminders of limits, boundaries, choices and consequences.

The aim must be to take the pressure out of the situation – not to add to it, even though it is very easy to lose your temper at this stage - so it is imperative that you remain calm and try to reduce the anxiety of the pupil. By becoming argumentative or overly authoritarian you risk becoming the target and making the situation worse.

Instructions should be given in a calm but firm manner, remembering the guidelines from:

[1.6 How to make sure your instructions are followed without argument or confrontation.](#)

### **3.6 *What to say to a child in stage 2***

When a child is in a heightened state of anxiety care has to be taken not to nag or say anything that will wind them up further. Getting drawn into a discussion or an argument must also be avoided because you will quickly become the target of their attack and render yourself unable to calm them down.

The best things to say at this stage are very simple instructions together with reminders that you are there to help them. One way of doing this is to offer them a set of clear, limited choices.

Being given a choice when you're wound up is a tremendous relief whereas being given orders or told you can't do this and that is very frustrating and simply fuels the feeling of anxiety and anger.

**“Paul, I want to help you calm down so that you don’t end up in trouble. I have two choices for you to help you. You can come and sit at the front away from everyone else until you feel better or you can take 2 minutes outside the door if it will help. Which do you want to do?”**

You can also use the [3 requests technique](#) as this is a perfect method of reminding a pupil how far they have pushed things and what the consequences will be. It also helps you keep calm. The only thing I would say is that you have to be very careful about the way you phrase it. You must convey total detachment and refrain from being cynical, aggressive or provocative.

At this stage it may be necessary to remove the child from the classroom or activity area for reasons of safety and you should be very clear about your school’s policy regarding this.

In a mainstream setting this situation is unfortunately becoming more common and without training in positive handling strategies, staff and the pupils themselves are increasingly at risk.

Many schools now have ‘on call’ staff who will remove a dangerous pupil from the classroom if necessary and you should be clear as to your school’s behaviour policy regarding such incidents.

**The main thing to remember is that if our approach is one of support rather than purely punishment, we have more chance of diffusing a situation. As renowned expert on behaviour management, Rob Long, says ... “You can’t fire with fire.”**

---

On that note, I’m going to wrap things up and sign off. I hope you’ve enjoyed the ebook and gained some use from it.

## Next Steps

---

If you have a question about any of the information covered or classroom management in general, please don't hesitate to contact me at ...

[Rob@behaviourneeds.com](mailto:Rob@behaviourneeds.com)

Likewise, if you have any suggestions for improvements I want to hear them. It is, after all, the only way I can improve this free service.

As I said at the start of this little book, you are free to give it away to as many people as you like. If you found it useful and think your colleagues might also find it useful please PASS IT ON ☺ or send them to:

[www.classroom-management.org](http://www.classroom-management.org) where they can get their own or make them a copy.

### **FURTHER TRAINING:**

If you would like to further your skills in classroom management I would like to recommend our Needs-Focused™ courses and tailored INSET.

For INSET please visit [www.behaviourneeds.com](http://www.behaviourneeds.com) and click on INSET or email [admin@behaviourneeds.com](mailto:admin@behaviourneeds.com).

We currently train teachers internationally via e-mentoring and live courses.

The new **Distance-Learning** format means you'll be able to access our training course in your own time and learn some fantastic new ways to really get the best from your most challenging pupils



As creators of compelling, highly engaging, results-driven training courses, we have recently designed a course specifically for education professionals who want to take control and create calm classrooms where teaching and learning naturally take priority. Classrooms where behaviour problems are the exception rather than the norm. Classrooms where challenging pupils are dealt with swiftly and effectively without leading to further confrontation. Classrooms where ALL pupils feel valued and supported and so less inclined to cause problems in the first place.

There is a whole mass of information, downloads and resources designed with one goal in mind...

...By the end of the course you will have created your own **totally organised, systematic and highly effective behaviour plan** in a ring-bound file - complete with a **hefty toolbox of preventive strategies, routines and procedures** and **proven responses** to cope with every incident you're likely to face.

If you would like to know more about our distance learning courses, live training courses, tailored INSET, long-term projects, e-mentoring, coaching or would simply like to ask a few questions...

Please visit [www.behaviourneeds.com](http://www.behaviourneeds.com) and [www.classroom-management.org](http://www.classroom-management.org)

Wishing you success,

**Rob Plevin**

[www.behaviourneeds.com](http://www.behaviourneeds.com)  
[www.classroom-management.org](http://www.classroom-management.org)



And now...

A **note** from Stevan Krajncjan, founder of [www.TimesaversForTeachers.com](http://www.TimesaversForTeachers.com)

I have brought to your attention Rob's Classroom Management e-book because it is a **gem**! If you are serious about TRANSFORMING your teaching, adding fun to lessons, eliminating student behavior problems, complaints and negative attitudes, you simply must check out Rob's revolutionary new program for teachers here:

<http://stevk.crowdpullersnee.click2sell.eu>

You will be very glad you did!



Dear Teacher,

**IF YOU LIKE WHAT YOU HAVE SEEN** in this book, would you mind also having a look at my other resources at [www.TimesaversForTeachers.com](http://www.TimesaversForTeachers.com)? For your convenience, direct links have been added for you below.

Several of the books are “**interactive**” which means that you can actually TYPE the information directly onto the forms and SAVE your work, but to do this you need to have Adobe Acrobat installed on your computer (*older versions are ok*).

**The Teacher’s Binder:** World’s largest collection of often used classroom forms.

*Non-interactive version:* [http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index\\_page0006.htm](http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index_page0006.htm)

*Interactive version:* [http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index\\_page0006.htm](http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index_page0006.htm)

**Report Card and IEP Comments:** 1830 ready-to-use comments, logically organized for ease of use.

*Direct link:* [http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index\\_page0072.htm](http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index_page0072.htm)

**1000 Quick Writing Ideas:** Motivate students to begin writing by giving them **1000** writing ideas and prompts!

*Direct link:* [http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index\\_page0005.htm](http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index_page0005.htm) (*language forms included*)

**Substitute Teacher Instructions Kit:** Organize substitute teacher instructions effectively and thoroughly!

*None-Interactive:* [http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index\\_page0007.htm](http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index_page0007.htm)

*Interactive version:* [http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index\\_page0007.htm](http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index_page0007.htm)

**The Essay Writing Kit:** Helps make common essay planning and writing tasks simpler and far less frustrating for students.

*Printable:* [http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index\\_page0084.htm](http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index_page0084.htm)

*Interactive:* [http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index\\_page0084.htm](http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index_page0084.htm)

**Spelling Activities for Spelling Lists:** printable, visually attractive spelling activities, ready for use.

*Direct link, click here:* [http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index\\_page0074.htm](http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index_page0074.htm)

**Classroom Awards, Certificates and Passes:**

*Printable:* [http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index\\_page0061.htm](http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index_page0061.htm)

*Interactive:* [http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index\\_page0061.htm](http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index_page0061.htm)

**Math Timesavers:** collection of difficult-to-find, often-used forms, masters and reproducible sheets for a K-8 class.

*Direct link:* [http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index\\_page0020.htm](http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index_page0020.htm)

**Just Multiply It:** Teach your students the multiplication facts in a fun, quick, organized, and visually appealing way!

*Direct link:* [http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index\\_page0031.htm](http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index_page0031.htm)

**Just Teach It:** Fun end-of-the-year language unit - students research, prepare and teach classmates - very popular.

*Direct Link:* [http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index\\_page0052.htm](http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/index_page0052.htm)