

Managing pupil behaviour

Supporting you
to be your best



**Education
Support**
Partnership

Remember you are not alone

This practical guide aims to help teachers manage pupil behaviour by:

- ▶ addressing myths around behaviour defining low and high-level disruption
- ▶ reflecting on how you respond to inappropriate behaviour
- ▶ reflecting on your relationships with your pupils and students
- ▶ suggesting approaches and strategies
- ▶ providing advice on how to get help and support from your school or college
- ▶ giving advice on how to get further help and support

Disruptive behaviour

Disruptive pupil behaviour is a frustration for many teachers. In fact, 70% of teachers told us they had considered quitting the profession over poor behaviour*.

Poor behaviour is a barrier to learning and can easily threaten the health and wellbeing of teachers. On top of other pressures that can occur, the result is lost teaching days, unhappy teachers and failing students.

Some truths

Before we look at how you can manage pupil behaviour, keep in mind:

- ▶ all teachers experience problems with behaviour
- ▶ you are not solely responsible for pupil behaviour
- ▶ well-planned and interesting lessons do not prevent disruption
- ▶ being entirely friendly and respectful of pupils does not always diminish conflict and bring order
- ▶ whilst there is concern about a growing culture of violence among young people, such behaviour is confined to a minority of schools and colleges
- ▶ the vast majority of schools and colleges are calm and ordered places, where teachers are effective and pupils or students learn successfully
- ▶ you can improve pupil or student behaviour

“I have been a successful teacher for 16 years. It is now with regret that I am leaving the teaching profession. This has been instigated by a period of depression, brought on by several physically threatening and verbally abusive incidents by students, both in school and outside as well.”

* Teacher Support Network and Family Lives Behaviour survey 2010

Is disruption low or high level ?

Low level disruption

The most common form of poor behaviour is low level disruption.

This can be subjective as what concerns one teacher may not be of concern to another. For the purpose of this section, we are talking about behaviours which are not overtly confrontational or challenging, but which distract from teaching and learning.

There are generally five broad categories of low level disruption:

- ▶ talk
- ▶ movement
- ▶ time
- ▶ pupil-pupil relations
- ▶ teacher-pupil relationships

If these disruptions are not challenged, they can severely damage pupil learning and lead to frustrations and stress for the teacher.

They can then lead on to high level disruptions.

In our 2010 behaviour survey over 50 per cent of respondents stated that pupils deliberately distracted them verbally to disrupt teaching and learning on a daily basis. Almost 60 per cent said they had applied for a job at another school due to witnessing or being a victim of poor behaviour by a pupil.

High level disruption

High level disruptions are more serious and are overtly confrontational and challenging. These behaviour patterns include:

- ▶ challenges to authority
- ▶ refusal to obey rules
- ▶ frequent verbal abuse

Trying to manage this behaviour is extremely demanding and exhausting. If sustained over a long period, it can have a detrimental effect on a teacher or tutor's physical and mental health. It will also have adverse effects on pupil and student learning.

"...the most wearing problem is a constant degree of low level disruption in enough pupils to unsettle the whole lesson. Irrelevant comments called out, missing books, distracted by others, 'I can't do this' instrumental music lessons, new pupils arrive mid-term, changes to the timetable 'I haven't got' and general interruptions to the business of learning."



Responses to poor behaviour

Before you can decide on what strategies to employ to improve pupil or student behaviour, you first need to think about how you already respond to inappropriate behaviour.

This is often the key to deciding which changes you may (or may not) need to make and the types of strategies that would be best to use.

The choices teachers make in responding to pupils' behaviour are crucial in influencing the subsequent choices pupils or students make about how they will behave.

Managing behaviour is not just about responding to inappropriate behaviour. It is about creating conditions that encourage positive behaviour.

Using the table on this page, tick all the statements that apply to you.

Your answers here should give you a clearer idea of how you respond to poor behaviour and will be used again when considering the types of strategies to use.

When a pupil or student behaves inappropriately, I:

display anger, shout or scream, cry	
fail to react or pretend I have not seen or heard anything	
remain passive	
act inconsistently, I can be unfair	
threaten actions, but do not usually follow through	
make hurtful comments or am sarcastic	
argue or am hostile	
apply sanctions	
leave the classroom	
send for another member of staff	
send the pupil or student from the classroom	
tend to react rather than be proactive	
use a discipline plan	
follow the school or college's behaviour policy and guidelines	
manage the situation calmly	
respond according to level of inappropriate behaviour (low, medium, high)	
overreact	
use a planned, proactive, professional approach	

"I am a teacher of 27 years and feel like a novice at times due to disruptive pupils. I feel vulnerable and under valued."

In our 2010 behaviour survey over 60 per cent of respondents said that School Improvement Plans that consider staff concerns were essential to improving pupil behaviour.

Reflect on your relationships

Now that you have reflected on how you respond to inappropriate behaviour, let's think about your relationships with your pupils or students.

Which of the following best describe your relationships with students?

Dominant/assertive

- ▶ Strong sense of purpose in pursuing clear goals for learning and for class management
- ▶ Shows leadership. Tends to guide and control
- ▶ Prepared to discipline unapologetically

Too dominant/assertive

- ▶ Too controlling
- ▶ Lack of concern for pupils
- ▶ Teacher- pupil relationship damaged

Cooperative/collaborative

- ▶ Great concern for the needs and opinions of pupils
- ▶ Helpful, friendly
- ▶ Avoids strife and seeks consensus
- ▶ Working together

Too cooperative/collaborative

- ▶ Too understanding and accepting of apologies
- ▶ Waits for pupils to be ready and lets pupils dictate
- ▶ Too keen to be accepted by pupils
- ▶ Passes responsibility completely to pupils. Abdicates responsibility and leadership

Oppositional/hostile

- ▶ Treats students as the enemy
- ▶ Expresses anger and irritation
- ▶ Needs to 'win' if there is a disagreement between teacher and pupil
- ▶ Sees the classroom as a battleground

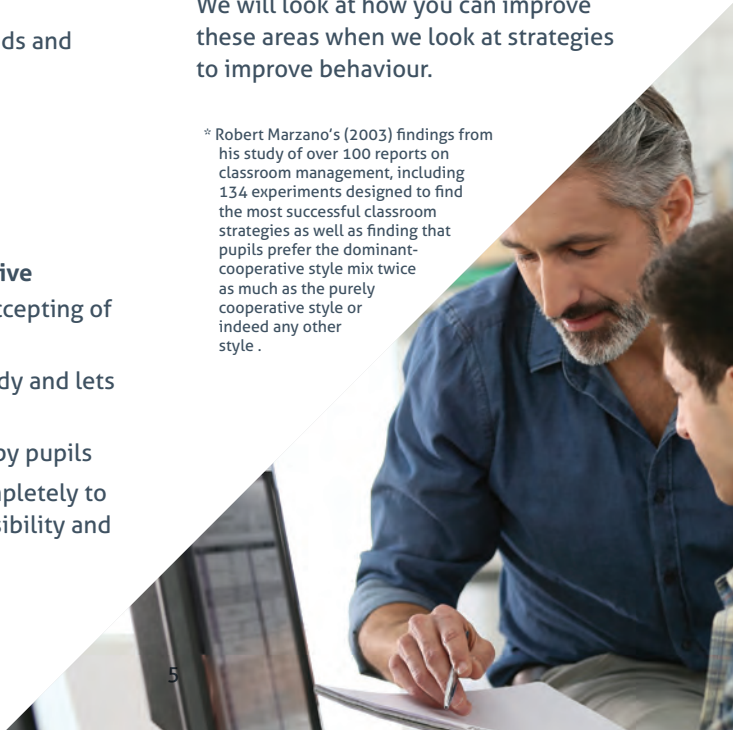
Submissive

- ▶ Lack of clarity of purpose
- ▶ Keeps a low profile
- ▶ Tendency to submit to the will of the class
- ▶ Entirely unassertive, rather glum and apologetic
- ▶ Expects difficulties

Research has found that the most effective teachers find a balance between dominance and cooperation*.

We will look at how you can improve these areas when we look at strategies to improve behaviour.

* Robert Marzano's (2003) findings from his study of over 100 reports on classroom management, including 134 experiments designed to find the most successful classroom strategies as well as finding that pupils prefer the dominant-cooperative style mix twice as much as the purely cooperative style or indeed any other style.



Behaviour improvement

There are, of course, many strategies designed to improve behaviour, but remember it is not solely your responsibility to do so.

Any strategy you choose to use will only work, if they are underpinned by the following principles:

- ▶ they are clear and robust
- ▶ they follow behaviour and discipline systems and a framework of consequences, which are understood by all (staff and pupils) and contributed to by pupils and students
- ▶ there is a whole school or college approach
- ▶ there is a focus on positive recognition of appropriate behaviour
- ▶ positive relationships are developed and maintained
- ▶ organisations work in partnership with agencies and stakeholders, including parents/carers
- ▶ there is an awareness of the adults' emotional responses to inappropriate behaviour

Improving behaviour

There are four basic approaches, which research has found to improve classroom behaviour:

- 1. Rules and procedure**
- 2. Teacher-pupil/student relationships**
- 3. Disciplinary interventions**
- 4. Mental set**

Think back to how you said you responded to inappropriate behaviour, is there anything you may want to change or improve?

Could a small change have a dramatic effect?

You are, like many teachers, concerned about behaviour, but think about it this way: if you keep doing what you are doing, you will keep getting the same responses.

1. Rules and procedures

Classrooms become more orderly places when rules are clearly stated and perform even better when rules have been negotiated, discussed and justified.

Here are 10 steps to improving rules and procedures:

1. Create rules and express them positively. It shouldn't just be a list of don'ts
2. Justify rules and rehearse them! "because I say so" is not a persuasive justification
3. Discuss rules with the class. Explain their purpose, i.e. to improve learning
4. Negotiate with the pupils to get commitment. Ask for suggestions and remember to justify and compromise. Make posters and get them to sign up!
5. Regularly review the rules together
6. Encourage pupils to devise rules and take ownership of them
7. Remind pupils of any relevant rules before a potentially disruptive activity or if you are aware of "something brewing". This kind of response can drastically reduce inappropriate behaviour
8. Encourage and develop team working (team rules for success)

9. Regularly get pupils to self-assess their own behaviour set against the rules.

10. Link the rules to the five broad areas of low level disruption

2. Teacher-pupil/student relationships

Think about the style of relationship you have with your pupils or students. Your relationship will, of course, depend on the class or group, but a balance between a dominant and cooperative style is regarded as the most effective way to improve classroom management.

How do you increase your dominance and assertiveness?


Dominance and assertiveness is about effective leadership, having a clear path to learning goals and good behaviour, pursued with vigour and enthusiasm. It should also be pupil - or student - centred. Here are a number of tips to increase dominance and assertiveness in the classroom:

For the class or group

- ▶ Negotiate ground rules
- ▶ Set goals and assessment criteria
- ▶ Set learning objectives
- ▶ Set specific behaviour objectives

For you

- ▶ Be authoritative – in your speech and in your body language
- ▶ Fake it until you make it – be absolutely confident and in control even if you don't feel it

- 
- ▶ Get out of the habit of sitting behind the desk
 - ▶ Try the PEP approach:

Proximity: Walk around the classroom, stand by a pupil that may be about to misbehave. Stand a “little too close for comfort” but don't invade personal space. A difficult judgement sometimes. You don't want to come over as aggressive or intimidating.

Eye contact: holding eye contact expresses dominance. What you say will be taken more seriously if you can maintain eye contact before, during and after speaking.

Posing questions: rather than telling a pupil off, pose a question, such as “Why have you not started your work?”

These actions are often more effective and far less exhausting than getting angry or shouting and will make you appear in control (even if you do not feel it).

Behaviour improvement

How do you increase cooperation and collaboration?

We all know how challenging it can be to cooperate with badly behaved pupils. How many times have we or our colleagues talked about that class or that year group.

Sometimes a cycle can develop between the teacher and the students that makes things even worse: the pupils misbehave more, you dislike them more, you are less positive and friendly, they dislike you and your classes more, they disrupt more and so it goes on. The cycle needs to be broken.

The next time you have a class with a particularly difficult student or a challenging group, why not try the following:

First try focusing on putting negotiated and clear rules in place. This will often require a great deal of emotional generosity and patience or restraint! The main aims are to be more positive, friendly and fair.

Then:

1. Meet and greet pupils by the door. Get off to a good start.
2. Catch them doing the right thing and comment positively in private. A lot of inappropriate behaviour is attention seeking.
3. Put the pupil in "intensive care" No it's not what you think! Smile, use their name positively, ask for their opinion, make a point at looking at their work, comment favourably about genuine effort or achievement. Talk to them, be patient and helpful, have high

expectations and keep calm. Show that you value them. But don't overdo it! Be fair, use this approach with your well-behaved pupils as well.

4. Learn their names. This is especially valuable when you are new to a school.
5. Engage pupils in an informal way. Let them know you don't just see them as pupils but as individuals with interests, hobbies, and lives outside of school.
6. Use eye contact and proximity.
7. Collaborate and problem solve together. What's the problem here? What can we do about this?
8. Build team and group work.
9. Have high expectations and let them know what those are.
10. Develop flexible responses and teaching styles.
11. Give responsibilities to particular pupils.
12. Avoid sarcasm. What you might think is light may be damaging your teacher-pupil relationship.
13. Check for understanding, reinforce learning goals and expectations.
14. Be a good role model for your pupils by acting in the way that you want them to behave.

3. Disciplinary interventions

Think back again to how you respond to inappropriate behaviour in the classroom.

- ▶ Are you reactive?
- ▶ Do you wait for problems to happen and then respond?

- ▶ Are you consistent?
- ▶ Are you fair?

A proactive approach to improving behaviour is usually much more effective. Remember managing behaviour is not just about responding to inappropriate behaviour. It is about creating conditions that encourage positive actions.

Try the following approaches:

- ▶ remind pupils of the rules before activities take place
- ▶ reinforce appropriate behaviour. Use tokens and symbols which can be used for privileges
- ▶ encourage pupils and students to self-assess their behaviour and award themselves appropriate tokens/points
- ▶ use individual, group and whole class rewards. To receive these, there needs to be very clear success criteria

In our 2010 behaviour survey over 60% of respondents said that additional training for teachers on challenging behaviour and using restraint and search powers were essential to improving pupil behaviour.

- ▶ mild punishments: what's important is the consistency and fairness of the punishment. Its success is also dependent on the assertiveness in which it is given. It means being firm, unemotional, unapologetic and confident. It does not mean being hostile or aggressive



Behaviour improvement

4 Mental set

Although, you are not solely responsible for improving pupil behaviour improving your attitude to classroom management can have dramatic effects. There are two parts to this:

Knowledge

This 'Withitness' is a term first used by Kounin (1970) meaning an awareness of what is going on in all areas of your classroom and having a quick response to actual and possible disruptions. It's a "nip in the bud" approach that stops inappropriate behaviour spreading.

Think about how you will respond to disruption and not letting your emotions lead the way.

Withitness strategies

- ▶ Invest time getting to know your classroom and pupils
- ▶ Understand the physical, social and psychological settings that you and your pupils and students find yourselves

- ▶ Find out where the "hot spots" are. Run a behaviour audit or make this part of classroom observation
- ▶ Position yourself so you can scan regularly and make eye contact with as many of the class as you can
- ▶ Intervene promptly. Make your pupils know straight away, or even before it happens that their disruptive behaviour will not be tolerated
- ▶ Combine eye contact and proximity approaches as mentioned earlier. Early identification and intervention is an essential factor in successful behaviour management
- ▶ Use of names combined with eye contact and a sharp tone
- ▶ Use a silent and still approach. Stop what you are doing and remain silent. Maintain eye contact until you get the response you want, then continue
- ▶ Non- verbal reminders and commands. These are quite traditional but are still effective e.g. finger to lips to ask for silence, standing straight with hands on hips to signal displeasure, clicking fingers to signal "stop it".
- ▶ Be organised. Prepare your classroom and have materials ready!
- ▶ Use reminders and warnings about rules before an activity
- ▶ Walk about with plenty of eye contact



Emotional objectivity

It is not always easy to remember, but bad behaviour is not an attack on you. It is not personal. If you do see it as something personal, you are more likely to get angry, upset, depressed or resentful.

Try to remain unemotional. This does not mean being distant. You should be alert and business like, but you are protecting yourself and your emotional wellbeing.

Understand yourself

Try not to show anger or frustration, you'll look and feel more in control. Remember what upset you, so that you recognise the situation next time. Practice.

Students have their own issues

Remember that your pupils or students may well be dealing with difficulties or issues themselves that may be causing the inappropriate behaviour.

Seek support

You do not need to suffer inappropriate behaviour alone. You can get support from within your school or college and outside of the workplace, but it is important to recognise your own feelings. Talk things over with a friend, family or colleague, your union or the Education Support Partnership.

The support available from each school or college will differ. The advice from unions on what staff are entitled to can vary slightly, but generally state:

- ▶ staff are entitled to work in an environment free from violence and disruption and to appropriate access to training and support on behavioural

matters. Equally importantly, pupils are entitled to a safe and orderly learning environment

- ▶ all schools should establish behaviour policies and strategies and a range of rewards and sanctions in consultation with staff and school workforce unions to promote acceptable standards of behaviour
- ▶ schools should ensure that their behaviour management policies are non-discriminatory in their scope and operation, including on the grounds of ethnic or national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexuality. Schools should collect and regularly review data on behaviour to ensure that their behaviour management policy is operating fairly and equitably

For further advice, we recommend that you contact your union directly.

“Pupil behaviour has seriously affected my health. I think behaviour can be improved by teachers being backed by management and applying consistent sanctions. Pupils who know they can get away with it, will.”

How we help

I am an NQT at a primary school and am working in a classroom with several highly disruptive pupils. I feel their behaviour is making me unable to do her job.

The pupils are frequently using highly abusive and threatening behaviour towards me and other children and I feel unable to teach the class effectively. I always find myself having to act in response to their behaviour.

I feel very disillusioned with the profession; it isn't what I had thought it would be. Although I don't feel physically threatened I do feel that I have not been trained sufficiently to deal with the possibility of violence between children or constantly threatening behaviour.

Sally decided to call the Education Support Partnership helpline and spoke to one of our trained counsellors.

The counsellor listened to Sally's concerns and reflected back to her what her thoughts and feelings were, allowing Sally the opportunity to clarify what was going on for her. The counsellor discussed with Sally about seeking support from her headteacher, looking into the schools' discipline policies and seeking advice from her colleagues. They also recommended that Sally speak to her union.

At the end of the counselling session, Sally said she felt better simply for being able to talk the problem over. She felt she had a course of action that would

help tackle the issues she was facing and that there would be no shame involved when approaching senior staff members for support and advice on school policies.

If, like Sally you need someone to talk to about the problems you are having with pupil behaviour you can call our helpline, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

*Name has been changed to maintain confidentiality

Get Support

08000 562 561

08000 855 088



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