



CLASSMATES  
EXTRA

# MANAGING YOUR CLASSROOM

*2nd edition*

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GERERD DIXIE



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## Introduction

Teachers very rarely get the chance to sit back and think about what their job is all about. In the thirty years I have been teaching, it is fair to say that I have had very little time or space to reflect in any depth on the diverse nature of my role as a teacher. The processes involved in carrying out the academic research for my degrees, and in writing this book, have provided me with opportunities to do just this and have allowed me to think about a whole range of issues relating to my job. One of these issues forms the basis of this publication. In this book I intend to focus entirely on what Zimpher and Howey (1987, p104) refer to as a teacher's 'Technical Competence' in the classroom. In other words, I want to concentrate on what experienced teachers refer to as 'tactical control'. Tactical control involves a teacher adopting a pragmatic and systematic approach to classroom management and setting up an infrastructure whereby pupil indiscipline and poor behaviour are less likely to occur. There is a whole range of practical things teachers can do to prevent indiscipline among their pupils and to facilitate real learning. It is an exploration of these issues that forms the basis of this publication.

Guidance will, therefore, be offered in response to the following questions:

- Why is the 'establishment' phase so important to class control and discipline?
- Why is body language such an important aspect of class control?

- How can ‘questioning’ be used as an effective classroom management tool?
- What is the role of ‘tension’ in helping to establish good class control?
- How important is the physical environment of the classroom in establishing effective class control?

From the outset, the thing to make very clear is that I intend to focus on those aspects of classroom management that help to prevent pupil indiscipline from happening in the first place. It is, therefore, a book that focuses on preventative classroom management techniques. I like to call it ‘control by anticipation’. In other words, anticipate what could possibly go wrong in a lesson and plan for it. What exactly do I mean by the term ‘class control’? For the purposes of this book I view it as:

- being able to command the full attention of the pupils in the class when and where you require it;
- having confidence that in ‘free learning’ situations, your authority will not be diminished;
- being able to maintain good *informal* relations with the pupils within the class, yet still maintain the ability to revert to a more controlled, formal situation whenever necessary;
- being able to control by ‘proxy’ – this effectively means being able to successfully set up an infrastructure whereby the colleagues who cover your lessons feel fully supported by your discipline plan.

So, who exactly is this book for? Primarily it is aimed at those teachers who are in the dawn of their careers – ITT students, NQTs and teachers with one or two years’ experience. I call this group of teachers ‘beginning teachers’. Accepting the premise that ‘one is never too old’ to learn, I would also strongly suggest

that the book will prove extremely useful to those teachers of all ages and experience who might be experiencing difficulties with their whole-class discipline. Finally, I would like to add another target group to my list; those Initial Teacher Training Tutors, NQT Professional Development Tutors and subject tutors responsible for the mentoring of ‘beginning teachers’. In my numerous conversations with colleagues in my school and with teachers in other schools, I have received many comments about how useful the book has been. They tell me it helps them to articulate the notion of good practice to their ‘beginning teachers’.

## What is the establishment phase and why is it important?

As part of the induction scheme in my school, NQTs are given the opportunity to observe more experienced colleagues at work in the classroom. During the subsequent observation feedback meetings, many of these NQTs express their amazement and bewilderment as to how effortlessly these experienced teachers *appear* to control the pupils in their classes. Being quite inexperienced in the field of reflective practice themselves, they struggle to articulate exactly what it is that allows these teachers to maintain a calm, purposeful working atmosphere in their classes, sometimes with the very same pupils they are having problems with! Some of the NQTs put this down to the high status of the teacher being observed but were at a loss, however, to explain the success of those experienced, but low status, members of staff. Others put the control down to the charismatic nature of the teacher under scrutiny. While I agree that the ‘charisma’ of the teacher can often play a significant role in controlling and motivating pupils, I am convinced that, on its own, it is not enough to maintain good discipline and a well-oiled classroom machine on a consistent basis. Throughout my career, I have witnessed some very senior and charismatic staff who have struggled to manage their classes efficiently and effectively. These teachers have become over-reliant on their ‘personal competence’ to get them through the school day instead of managing to strike a balance between the four teaching domains described in the introductory chapter. Something more is needed! So exactly what is this missing ingredient? Well, it’s not rocket science! It’s all down to the way these teachers have established

their rules and routines with their classes in the initial stages of the year. This socialization process is called the 'establishment phase' and its implementation is a vital ingredient of effective teaching and learning. Whether you are a student, an NQT or an experienced teacher, planning for the establishment phase should occur well before you meet your first class. What is certain is that your first meeting with your classes is absolutely crucial in setting up the expectations of behaviour and work ethic among your pupils.

### Why is that first meeting with your class so important?

No matter how experienced a teacher is, when they stand up in front of a class for the first time, a culture of learning and behaviour is being established for the rest of the working relationship. Wragg (1995, p115) writes about the need for teachers to be skilled in the area of 'impression management'. Goffman (1971) cited in Wragg (p115) describes the process of impression management which commences at first meetings and continues through subsequent encounters:

The individual's initial projection commits him to what he is proposing to be and requires him to drop all pretences of being other things. As the interaction among the participants progresses, additions and modifications in this informational state will, of course, occur but it is essential that these later developments be related without contradiction to, and even built up from the initial positions taken up by several participants.

What does this mean in practical terms? It is important for teachers of all ages and experience to be clear about exactly who they are, what they believe in and what they expect from their pupils. Consistency in the way you present yourself to the pupils

### What is the establishment phase and why is it important?

is important, at least until you become fully established with your classes when you can perhaps deviate slightly when you deem necessary.

This reflective process may prompt you to ask yourself some searching questions about your personality and teaching behaviours. Are you arrogant, pompous, sarcastic, conceited, insensitive, dogmatic, over fussy, bad-tempered, inflexible or inconsistent? You may also have to be quite soul-searching when it comes to analysing your teaching behaviours. For example:

- Do you enter the room in a confident, purposeful and assertive manner?
- Do you use assertive body language when speaking to the pupils? (Head up, chin tilted slightly forward, shoulders back and easy, confident pose.)
- Do you avoid constant hesitations such as 'er', 'um', etc.?
- Do you use an assertive and decisive tone of voice, changing the pitch of your voice to stimulate interest in what you are saying?
- Do you stand in full view of the class to allow yourself the opportunity to scan the class?
- Do you make full eye contact with your pupils in order to (a) personally engage them in the lesson, (b) make sure they are on task and not messing about?
- Do you avoid making too much hand and body movement? (This tends to distract pupils' attention from what you are actually saying.)
- Do you smile at the pupils?
- Do you have annoying characteristics such as fiddling with your hair, stroking your beard?

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- Do you give the impression you know what you are talking about?
- Are you boring?

I'll never cease to be amazed at how quickly individuals make up their minds about other people. As a sociology teacher, I am interested in the processing of 'labelling' in schools. Much of my reading has focused on the labelling of pupils carried out by their teachers. However, it is equally important to explore the ways in which pupils impose labels on their teachers. In a recent discussion with my Year 11 classes, I asked the pupils about the length of time it takes for them to draw firm conclusions about their new teachers. Their response was staggering! The majority of pupils in these classes gave a new teacher between three and ten minutes to initially prove themselves! When asked whether they were prepared to renegotiate these initial impressions, very few of them admitted to changing their minds about their teachers in any significant way. Although this evidence is purely anecdotal you will, nevertheless, appreciate how important it is to make that early positive impression on your pupils.

If you stay in the same school for any length of time you will certainly find the establishment phase far easier to cope with. The reputations of well-established teachers often precede them so it is worth putting a lot of work into this process in your early years at the school. If you move to another school, however, do not expect the transition to be smooth. Wragg (1995, p115) describes how even experienced teachers express their surprise about how difficult it is to establish their routines, rules and authority in their new schools. We need to have a great deal of sympathy, therefore, for supply teachers who experience numerous 'first encounters' with pupils throughout the course of their working lives. These are often traumatic experiences that many of them would wish to forget. I can, therefore, really empathize with Wragg's view that this is a very personal time for teachers

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and I am not surprised at his assertion that there has been limited research into these extremely intimate first moments between teacher and pupil.

I have long held the belief that the degree to which teachers are able to understand and control their emotions during these early encounters with their classes, can have a correlation with the quality of relationships with their pupils and, as a consequence, the quality of their class control and discipline. With this view in mind I asked a number of teachers with varying degrees of experience to describe how they felt before they encountered their first classes at the beginning of the academic year. In order to gain the perspectives of staff with varying degrees of experience, status and responsibilities, I sought responses from a range of staff. A selection of these responses has been included below. This following response comes from a very competent head of department of six years' experience who writes extremely honestly about her feelings before she meets her classes for the first time.

'I am always very apprehensive at the start of the term in September, with butterflies not being unusual. I have a feeling of fear that my classes will not be controllable, that I will have to struggle with them for the whole year. This never happens, but it does motivate me to ensure that my lessons incorporate as many routines as possible. I try to put emphasis on routines and standards as the main priority of the lessons, rather than content, to ensure that they (and I) know where we stand.'

Readers may be surprised to read this next response which comes from a very capable and highly respected assistant head of department of 24 years of experience:

'The night before we return in September I know I am going to sleep badly. I wake up every hour and get up very early even though I know I have got everything ready the night before. I have to force myself to eat and drink as I always feel sick. Once I am in school I feel even sicker. When my classes arrive my mouth goes dry – I never sit down

for the first lessons, I suppose I need to look more menacing and, as I am only small, standing when they are sitting, seems to make a difference. I go over what they do when arriving to the lesson, what equipment I expect them to have and my expectations of how they should behave, etc. I try to get them to give me reasons for rules, etc. and I probably talk for too long! I've had nightmares about arriving a day late for school and about my classes having no teacher for that first day! The end of the first day and I am truly exhausted. I've used up my nervous energy for the next month in one go.'

Students and NQTs can take heart from this next response which comes from an extremely efficient and well-respected senior teacher with 25 years of experience who was, nevertheless, still prepared to expose her vulnerabilities in writing.

'I always feel really nervous before the first day in September. I never sleep well the night before and I don't feel confident when the day arrives. . . . I always try to stand in the foyer early in the morning to meet the students as they arrive just to get into the swing of things! When I meet my classes for the first time I feel nervous and unsure of myself. I always go through my routines and what is expected of them but I always try to get a bit of maths in there too so that I get to know their names as soon as possible. Something they can succeed at – nothing too difficult – so that they can go away looking forward to coming back.'

The final contribution comes from a highly experienced and well thought of senior teacher to whom countless numbers of staff turn to for advice and guidance on pastoral issues in the school.

'Taking a new class is always a slightly worrying experience even after all these years! "Here we go again!" A time to make sure they know who I am and what I stand for. I never fully relax with a form until I'm sure I can do so. So many times in the past if you let them go too early, you realize you have misjudged the extent to which they've got the point. Obviously depending on the group this can take a long time – but believe me it will happen. Just before I meet a new class I feel anxious (still!). Routines start day one and need constant reinforcing.'

## What is the establishment phase and why is it important?

What should 'beginning teachers' glean from these responses? First, it is important to admit to your vulnerabilities. You will have noted that teachers who appear to others to be highly confident and 'in control' do not necessarily feel like that on the 'inside'. It is to their credit, therefore, that they have been prepared to share their feelings. I would strongly advise you to share your experiences, fears and vulnerabilities either formally with your induction tutor and/or informally with colleagues. By doing this, you will begin to realize that you are not on your own and, hopefully, you will begin to feel less isolated. Perhaps one of the best times for you to carry out this 'emotional audit' is on the eve of your first teaching day in your new school at a time when your emotions are likely to be 'red raw'.

As part of my ITT/Induction programme, I ask my NQTs to complete a 'free-response' questionnaire, requiring them to describe their thoughts and feelings prior to teaching their first classes. At our celebratory meal at the end of the year, I present these teachers with a framed copy of their responses. The notion behind doing this is for them to see how far they have come during their first year of teaching. Virtually all of these 'beginning teachers' are amazed at how much more confident and self-assured they are once they have had a year's teaching experience 'under their belt'. A copy of the questionnaire has been provided here.

Although I do not intend to provide an in-depth analysis of the responses to these questionnaires, I would like to provide you with a general flavour of the research findings from one particular cohort of NQTs in the school.

All of the NQTs described their anticipation, excitement and exhilaration at the thought of starting with their new classes. A substantial number of the respondents wrote about how they were looking forward to the 'challenge' ahead. Some respondents took this further by saying how much they were 'raring to go' and how they now simply wanted to get on with it. A couple of NQTs

**Name:**

**An investigation into the feelings and emotions experienced by NQTs on the eve of their first formal teaching experiences.**

A number of contemporary authors (Tickle (1991), Veenman (1984), for example) have focused their research on the feelings and emotions experienced by newly qualified teachers before, during and immediately after their first year of teaching. They believe, as I do, that this is an important but, nevertheless, neglected, dimension of teaching of the professional lives of NQTs. I am interested in finding out exactly how you feel about commencing your first teaching post here in the school. It is important for me as your Professional Development Tutor, to gain an understanding of your emotions during the time immediately prior to you taking over your new classes. I realize that we don't know each other very well at present, but I am asking you to trust me and to be as honest as you can in your written responses, whether they be 'positive', 'negative' or 'mixed' in nature. I am very much looking for your 'gut reaction' rather than any measured and well-thought out responses, so please feel free to write down individual words and phrases which indicate how you are thinking at present.

wrote about the 'adrenalin rush' they were feeling at the thought of the experiences that lay before them.

However, as you would expect, the positive emotions were counterbalanced by a substantial number of negative feelings. Virtually all of the respondents revealed their fears and anxieties about having to face their classes for the first time. A

**What is the establishment phase and why is it important?**

number of NQTs mentioned that they were having difficulty in sleeping during the nights leading up to their first teaching day. These fears, concerns and anxieties tended to manifest themselves in the reflective nature of the questions the respondents asked of themselves. I have listed some typical responses below:

- Will I be able to control my classes?
- What if something goes wrong?
- Have I done enough to prepare for this first meeting with my pupils?
- Will I be able to live up to the pupils' expectations?
- Will the pupils ask questions that I will be unable to answer?
- Will the pupils respond positively to me?
- Will the pupils compare me to their previous teachers?
- Will I remember everything?
- Will I meet all the pupils' needs?
- Will I let my pupils down?
- Will the pupils like me?

Subsequent discussions with these NQTs reinforced my belief that the 'cathartic' nature of this process has allowed them to fully understand their thoughts and feelings and to show them that they are not alone in thinking as they do.

However, understanding your emotions is simply not enough on its own. The one thing in common among those experienced teachers covered by my research was that, despite having these feelings of inadequacy and insecurity, they managed to 'get to grips with them' knowing that failure to do so would result in a breakdown in their classroom control and discipline. They were

experienced enough to understand that these emotions can be controlled and that they are temporary, at least until the next cohort of pupils arrived in the following September. It is worth steeling yourself, remaining strong and trying hard to ‘bluff it out’.

What should you do when you meet your new classes? Certainly you need to start the year off as you mean to go on. Maintain positive body language and a confident tone of voice and state your expectations clearly and assertively to the pupils. We’ll discuss these issues in more detail later in Chapter 6. It is also very important, however, not to simply go into the classroom and issue the pupils with a list of expectations without giving them the rationale behind your demands. Try to get across the notion that teaching and learning is very much a partnership and that both parties have to ‘give and take’ if they are going to be successful. Discuss the notion of ‘rights’ and ‘responsibilities’. I provide you with the ‘rights and responsibilities’ Pupil/Teacher contract I use for my classes. I show this contract to the pupils as an overhead transparency sheet before they place their signed copies into their logbooks. What is important to note is that this contract is revisited on a regular basis throughout the academic year.

Having extolled the virtue of a working partnership with the pupils, I need to make the point that the teacher should, nevertheless, be the one in control of the learning/teaching situation. In my opinion, it is important for teachers and pupils to accept the following principles:

- The teacher should decide where pupils sit.
- The teacher should know pupils by name.
- The pupils should give their *full* attention when required.
- The pupils should realize that any level of disruption is unacceptable.

What is the establishment phase and why is it important?

### Pupil/Teacher Contract

#### What do I expect from you?

- I expect you to be courteous to me and to the other pupils in the class.
- I expect your full attention when I ask for it. This will help you to learn.
- I expect you to be honest about yourself and to admit when you are in the wrong. (This is all part of the learning process)
- I expect you to meet assignment deadlines. (This helps me to help you)
- I expect you to do your very best. It is very important that you are able to look back at your efforts over the year with pride.
- I expect you to accept the following consequences of not doing the above.

I will speak to you in private

If you persist then I will give you a detention

I will contact your H.O.Y.

I will contact your parents

However, as learning and teaching is a ‘partnership’ there are certain things that you have a right to expect from me.

#### What can you expect from me?

- You can expect me to be courteous and respectful even when I am telling you off.
- You can expect my full efforts in helping you to progress and/or helping through your difficulties.
- You can expect me to mark your work on a regular basis and to provide you with constructive feedback.
- You can expect me to apologize to you or the class when I get things wrong.
- You can expect me to treat you fairly and consistently for misbehaviour or poor work ethic.

Signed ..... (Teacher)

..... (Pupil)

## Managing Your Classroom

- There should be mutual respect between staff and pupils.
- Each pupil should feel valued and fully involved in the learning process.

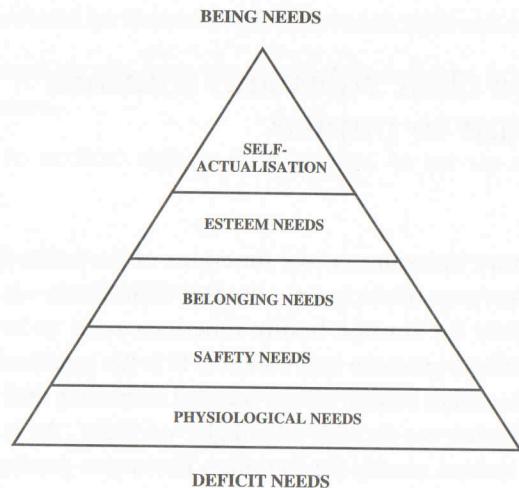
In order to achieve this, it is important to set up rules and routines.

2

### Why are clear rules and routines important to pupils?

Contemporary literature on the functions of the brain describes how the lower part of the brain – the Reptilian Brain – is primarily responsible for routine bodily functions such as breathing, heartbeat, blood pressure and balance. It is the primeval part of the brain that takes charge of our survival responses and helps us to judge whether we should ‘take flight’ or ‘fight’. As is also the case in the animal world, the Reptilian Brain also predisposes us to a system of social conformity, of being able to know one’s place in the pecking order and of possessing the need to respond to ritualistic rules. One of the hindrances to pupil learning is ‘insecurity’. Giving clear ground rules and expectations and being fair and consistent are essential in reducing this insecurity among pupils. Despite the overt resistance of many youngsters to rules and routines, I am convinced that there is a large part of them that subconsciously demands these boundaries and this level of structure within their lessons. By providing our pupils with a system of well-defined rules, routines and sanctions you will be providing these youngsters with the security they need at this crucial stage of their lives, and in doing so, you will be providing a firm foundation for learning.

Don’t just take my word for it. One of the many psychologists who explored this issue was Abraham Maslow who is well renowned for creating his ‘hierarchy of human needs’ (see Figure 2.1). Beyond the details of air, water, food and sex, he laid out five needs in the following order: the physiological, safety and security, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualization. For a brief overview of Maslow’s needs refer to Appendix 1.



**Figure 2.1** Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Adapted from the website [www.ship.edu/~cgboeree/maslow.html](http://www.ship.edu/~cgboeree/maslow.html))

Although I believe that teachers should have a basic understanding of all human needs, for the purpose of this publication I want you to focus your attention on the second set of needs in the hierarchy – ‘Safety Needs’. When the physiological needs have been catered for, this second layer of needs comes into play. In this stage, human beings become increasingly interested in finding safe circumstances, stability and protection. By doing so, they develop the need for structure, order and some degree of limit in their lives. In the classroom this would manifest itself in the need for rules, routines and sanctions. In other words, well-defined boundaries designed to govern pupil behaviour.

Carrying out these simple measures on a *consistent basis* will certainly help to prevent that irritating, low-level, disruptive behaviour which is detrimental to effective teaching and learning. It is worth spending time thinking about the sorts of rules and routines you will need to set up in your classes.

How clear, for example, are you in your own mind that you have well-defined routines for some/all of the following teaching scenarios?

- When you are taking the register.
- When pupils are working in small groups.
- When the class is having a discussion.
- When pupils are taking a test.
- When pupils are making presentations.
- When pupils enter or leave a classroom.
- When pupils are in transition from one activity to another.
- When pupils are carrying out independent work.
- When pupils are clearing up.
- When you are giving a directed lesson in front of the class.

I have included examples of some of my classroom routines for you to have a look at. However, remember that simply taking someone else’s routines and trying to make them work for you doesn’t always work. You need to give the system your own mark.

#### Routine for when I take the register

- Step 1** I count down loudly and slowly from 3 to 1. Doing this provides the pupils with a warning that I expect silence soon and allows them that extra couple of seconds to finish what they have to say.
- Step 2** I scan the room to make sure pupils are seated and facing me at the front.
- Step 3** I call out the names of the individual pupils.
- Step 4** I read out school notices to the pupils.
- Step 5** I allow pupils to talk quietly.

**When pupils enter my classroom I expect the pupils to:**

- Step 1** Walk into the class *quietly*. (It is important to be precise about your requirements – don't use a phrase like 'behave appropriately')
- Step 2** Collect resources for the lesson off the back desks.
- Step 3** Collect their exercise books from the appropriate pigeon-hole.
- Step 4** Sit down and get their equipment out ready for the lesson.
- Step 5** Attempt the 'holding' task that may be displayed on the board.

**When the class is about to carry out some group work I issue the following instructions to the pupils. They read as follows:**

I expect you to:

- Work together as a group. This means you will have to plan your work together and complete your poster together. Remember, a chain is only as strong as its weakest link!
- Appoint a group coordinator. This is someone who is well organized, good with people and someone who can motivate the group to get the work done properly.
- Tell your group coordinator where you will be working and exactly what you are doing.
- Keep your group coordinator up to date with the work that is being done.

- Avoid taking work home.
- Make a full contribution.
- Work to your strengths.
- Get telephone numbers and/or email addresses of the other group members.
- Meet every now and then to review progress.

Not only do you need to be clear about your routines and rules in these situations but it is also absolutely vital that your pupils understand exactly why they are expected to comply. In the cases described above, the prime reason for adopting this approach is in order for *learning to take place efficiently and as soon as possible*. Each rule and/or routine should be instrumental in making this happen.

Let me illustrate what I mean by using my rules for group work as an example. When launching this list of rules, I take the opportunity to elicit from the pupils the precise rationale behind each of the rules. When instructing the pupils to work as a cohesive group, I tell them that I am encouraging them to use teamwork and communication skills. When I ask the group to appoint a coordinator, I am getting them to think about the skills and qualities required for a person to carry out a leadership role successfully. Through the medium of a question/answer session the pupils soon come to understand the need for the group coordinator to know exactly what each group member is doing and where they are working, i.e. in order to ensure maximum use of learning time. So that I can keep track of things and ensure everybody is making a full contribution, I ask each pupil to pencil their initials on to each piece of work they do. With a bit of prompting, the pupils begin to understand the rationale behind me asking them to exchange telephone numbers and email addresses. They

understand that swift and efficient communication between group members is absolutely vital if they are going to meet the assignment deadlines. This system also allows group members to forewarn the coordinator of any relevant issues that crop up during the course of their work. Whatever rules or routines you set up with your groups, you must always be prepared to share the reasons behind your instructions. If pupils fail to understand the rationale behind your requirements, they are more likely to be unwilling to comply with your demands. Have a look below at my list of suggested rules, routines and sanctions for when pupils are working on computers in an ICT suite. See if you would be able to justify the following rules to your pupils. (My own justification of those rules can be found in Appendix 2.)

Whenever I talk to NQTs, students and experienced staff about their use of routines, virtually all of them tell me that they

- You are to walk quietly to the ICT suite and queue quietly outside the door.
- When I give you instructions, you are to go into the room and log on to the system.
- As soon as you have logged on to the system, you must turn your monitors off and place the mouse on top of the computer.
- You are then to lift your chairs up and turn them so that they are facing the front.
- You are then to put all of your equipment down and sit facing me at the front of the room.
- At no time should you turn away from me or attempt to use your computer.

#### **How did you do?**

do not write these down for the pupils. To me this is a cardinal sin. It is important not to forget that many pupils are visual rather than auditory learners. They certainly need something written down in front of them if you want to stand any chance of them learning your rules and routines. In addition to this textual version of your rules and routines, you could support this with illustrations for the classroom wall (see Figure 2.2). You could, for example, also discuss these routines with the class and ask your pupils to design illustrated flow diagrams/posters for each of the above routines and put them on display in your classroom. This will give them a sense of ownership of the process. This ownership is vital if your strategies are to succeed.

#### **Sharing expectations and sanctions with parents**

Perhaps the most under-utilized resources in the classroom discipline plan are the parents of the youngsters in your classes. Of course, parental support does depend upon what type of school you teach in as well as upon the socio-economic characteristics of the school's catchment area. Please don't get me wrong here. I am not saying that parental support will not be forthcoming from parents from lower socio-economic groupings. However, research indicates that middle-class parents are more likely to be in sympathy with the aims and objectives of the school which, itself, is predominantly a middle-class establishment. Whichever type of school you teach in, you should do your best to involve parents in your behaviour plan. You could do this in a number of ways:

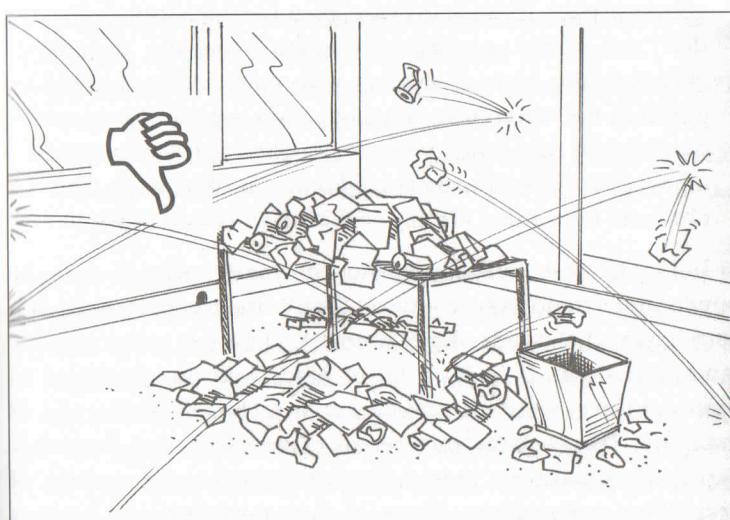
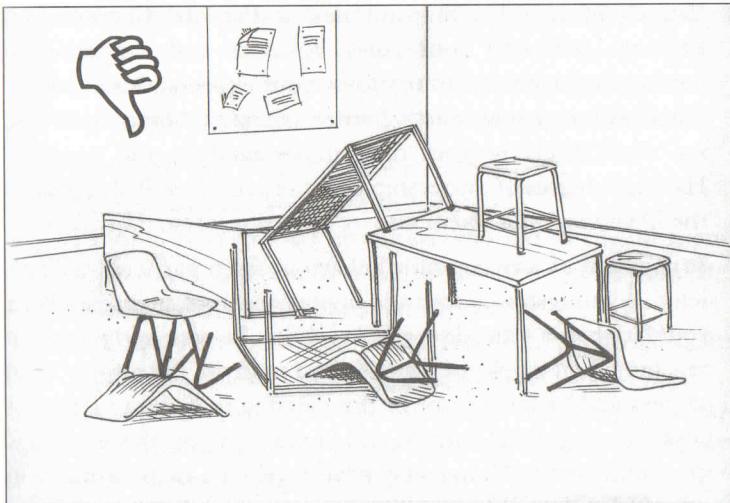
- When you issue your 'rules, routines and sanctions' checklist at the beginning of the term, you could ask the parents to show their support by signing this document before getting the pupils to stick the sheet into their exercise books.

## Managing Your Classroom



**Figure 2.2** Some examples of rules displayed in a visual form (Roy Fitzsimmonds)

## Rules and routines



**Figure 2.2** cont.

- You could spend a few minutes at Parents' Consultation evenings outlining your rules, routines and sanctions to parents and ask them to reinforce your expectations at home. Once parents know exactly 'where you are coming from' you are more likely to gain their understanding and support. Having a degree of ownership over the process will also reduce the likelihood of a 'them and us' situation occurring.
- In the light of unacceptable behaviour from particularly challenging youngsters, you could invite parents in to discuss their son/daughter's attitude towards school. In your early years of teaching, you would be well advised to invite the pupil's head of year and/or form tutor to the meeting in order to lend the session a degree of gravitas and to support you should things go slightly awry. Things may have reached a point where you may feel the need to produce an individual 'behaviour management' plan. If this is the case, then I would strongly suggest that you obtain a parental signature on the document. Although the issue of dealing with particularly challenging pupils is not covered in this book, you need to know which direction to take when your whole-class behaviour management plan fails. Further guidance on this issue can be obtained by reading *Getting on With Kids* (Dixie 2005).

It is vital that you check, and constantly recheck that the pupils understand your routines. Don't assume that, once you have given the pupils these routines, they will automatically remember them. It needs a lot of hard work on your part! In some low-level research carried out with NQTs at the end of their first year, a large number of them mentioned how they wished they had been more stringent in the implementation of their rules and routines. Some of their responses can be seen below:

*Written comments from three History NQTs after their first year of teaching*

*Teacher A*

'What would I change with regard to rules and routines?

In my NQT year I should have been ...

More consistent with punishments.

I should have chased up pupils who did not hand homework in on time, made a list of late homeworks and then issued detentions for three late homeworks.

I should have penalized more rigorously perpetual disorganization, missing books and equipment.

I would have benefited from using the red and yellow card system, although I did use it, it was infrequent – again consistency was needed.

I should have made more effort to send home postcards/letters praising excellent work and levels of effort.

More awarding of raffle tickets in Year 10–11.

I did use games, competitions, prizes as incentives and this worked and continues to work very well.

With my form I should have made more effort to really clamp down on lateness, and also uniform, trainers in particular.

To be honest, I was so busy and concerned with good teaching that rules and routines were something I didn't consciously set out to *do!* It was the natural or instinctive way of organizing my pupils. Rules and routines are a very good way of exerting, consolidating control but also the children *need* some consistency. They need guidelines, rules and routines in their everyday life, especially as many will not get this stability at home. *But I am a strong believer that rules are meant to be broken and routines should not be cast in stone.* Healthy tension can be created and used through the breaking or changing of established teaching patterns and mundane

day-to-day routines. Change is definitely a good way to keep pupils on their toes and leaving them excited or intrigued as to what to expect. Routines have their place but no-one should get stuck in a rut. If you are bored with it, you can guarantee the pupils will be.'

*Teacher B*

'Rules and routines are like a spine – every lesson needs a backbone.'

*Teacher C*

'At the beginning of my NQT year I was very hung up on making the right impression and making sure pupils knew I was in total control. So ... over the summer, I wrote out my classroom rules as instructed at college. September came and I introduced each class to the ten golden rules. This was great in theory but in practice, ten were far too many and pupils did not remember them all. This summer I wrote my classroom rules again. There are now three, simple, straightforward statements that all pupils can understand and remember.

I was much more hung up on rules last year. I expected all pupils to behave perfectly. As I have gained in experience and confidence, I've learnt that there are some pupils with whom rules have to be bent slightly in order to form positive, working relationships. This has taken nearly two years to develop and although it is not what the training centres tell you, I think that I am a better teacher because of it.'

*Written comments from two Science NQTs after their first year of teaching*

*Teacher D*

'In my NQT year I made my rules very clear at the start of the academic year. However, I did not tend to remind the students of these rules during my lessons. I just expected them to

remember them and got cross when they didn't. This year I remind the students frequently about my expectations at the start of each activity so that they know what they are to do. Last year I thought I did not have enough time to do this because I needed to get through so much information. This year I have begun to realize that reinforcing my rules actually saves time as I spend less time having to discipline pupils for silly things like not putting hands up, etc. It's not perfect but it's better than last year.'

*Teacher E*

'During my first week in the school I spent a lot of time going over the ground rules for my classroom. Most of the ground rules were volunteered by the pupils themselves and I made sure the reasons behind the rules were clear. After that I assumed the pupils would remember the ground rules and comply with them. However, without continued reinforcement the rules were soon forgotten and I found myself back to square one. My advice would be to make a big deal of the rules at the start of the year, and then to take every opportunity to reinforce them. For example, before the class watches a video, ask the pupils what the seating rule is, or before a group discussion, ask the class what rule will ensure that everybody will be heard.'

You need to know that there are some very strong teachers among this research sample. You can see from the high quality of their reflective comments that these members of staff have been fully committed to the notion of establishing rules and regulations with their classes from the very outset. What they admit to *not doing* was taking the time and trouble to reinforce these routines.

I also note with interest and agreement the comments made by teachers A and C who write about the need to be flexible. The

rules and routines in a classroom are there to establish good order and to facilitate learning. If this is not happening then change your routines – but don't abandon them. I mentioned earlier the need for you to gain some ownership of your rules and routines. Teacher C wrote about imposing ten classroom rules as instructed by college staff. By this teacher's own admission this simply didn't work and they felt the need to reduce this number to three or four. You need to find your own way through this but what is important is for you to come up with a meaningful classroom regime that matches your personality and your teaching style. Whatever you do, the most important thing to remember is to reinforce your rules on a consistent basis. Again, I would be lying to you if I said that it is easy to do this. Interestingly enough, many teachers manage to maintain their rules and regulations almost up to the Christmas period but, as they get tired and run down, they tend to relax their hold on their classes. Many teachers relax their rules and routines much earlier than this. They may be three to four weeks into the academic year and, delighted that the expected bout of indiscipline has not yet manifested itself, they then start to relax and reduce their efforts as far as reinforcing the routines are concerned. What they have failed to do, however, is to recognize the 'honeymoon' period that occurs with most classes after the initial three-week settling in period. While experienced teachers can often get away with this by re-establishing their control when they feel that things are getting out of control, it is much more difficult for an inexperienced teacher to do this. Teachers who are in the 'dawn of their profession' do not have a fund of reputation and experience behind them and find it a lot more difficult to claw the situation back. Teachers D and E obviously learned a very salutary lesson in their first year but now seem to have got to grips with these issues.

Exactly how you reinforce your rules, routines and sanctions is up to you. However, you may like to consider some of the

strategies that have worked for me over the years. These are set out overleaf.

You could design a class quiz to check that your pupils understand your expectations. I have provided an example below of the True/False quiz I use immediately after my 'Starting the Year' lesson to ascertain exactly how much pupils have 'taken on board' from the 40-minute session.

You can tell, particularly by looking at the nature of the final question of the quiz, that this is a somewhat light-hearted way of getting my point across. I usually give a few chocolate bar prizes to those youngsters who get the most questions right. However, what never fails to amaze me is that, even when one takes question 20 out of the equation, no pupil has ever yet managed to gain maximum marks for this quiz at this early stage of the year. And, here lies a major learning point for you 'beginning teachers'! You may know your rules, routines and sanctions off by heart but it is vital that you give your pupils *themselves* every opportunity to 'internalize' them. This will not happen after one launching session at the beginning of the year. As I have stated before, you must, therefore, make it your business to constantly reinforce your expectations with your classes.

If you are not happy with the way things are going with your classes, then you need to return to your rules and routines on a formal basis. I say on a formal basis because in doing so, you will be allocating a degree of status and gravitas to the process. In my role as Professional Development Tutor, I have witnessed many 'beginning teachers' simply reacting to the poor behaviour of pupils instead of taking on a more proactive stance. Just think about the number of times you have used phrases such as these, yet to no real avail:

'How many times do I have to tell you not to . . . . ?'

'I've told you time and time again to put your hands up if you want to answer a question.'

**How well do you know my rules, routines and sanctions?**

Simply put a tick in the True or False box

Rule/routine	True	False
1. I do not mind you being late to my lessons.		
2. If the door is unlocked you are allowed to enter the room.		
3. If the door is locked you are expected to line up in twos outside the classroom.		
4. You are expected to enter the room quietly.		
5. You are expected to wait for me to tell you to get your books and equipment out.		
6. If there is a task on white/blackboard you are expected to get on with it.		
7. The beginning of the lesson is the right time to have a personal conversation with me.		
8. Once I have finished the set task, I have nothing else to do.		
9. I really don't mind if you chat quietly to your neighbour when I am taking the register.		

**Rule/routine**

10. I will count from five down to 1 when I want silence.

11. You are expected to record all homework in your logbooks.

12. You are allowed five late homeworks before you are put in detention.

13. I am not fussy about the state of my classroom.

14. If I see litter on the floor and didn't drop it, I am not expected to pick it up.

15. Glue, scissors, paper, rulers and pencils can all be found in the cupboard over by the door.

16. I am expected to ask every time I need to get resources.

17. When the bell goes at the end of the lesson I will dismiss you all at the same time.

18. I do not expect everyone to ask/answer questions in class.

19. I have very low expectations of the pupils in this class.

20. My jokes are excellent!

True      False

*How well did you get on?*

'I've told you before about coming into my classroom like that.'

It becomes obvious very early on that using reactive strategies such as these simply don't work. My advice would be to stop the class in their tracks, adopt your most assertive body posture, scan the classroom, instruct the pupils to face the front, tell them to put everything down and to give you their full attention. At this point, and only at this point, you should go through your rules, routines and sanctions in a formal and measured way. Do not under any circumstances rush the process because in doing so, the youngsters will know that you are not that serious about the message you are trying to deliver.

3

## Sanctions and rewards

### Sanctions

I have constantly made reference to rules, routines *and* sanctions. My experiences of observing 'beginning teachers' in the classroom have shown me that, whereas most of them give a varying degree of attention to rules and routines, they tend to give less thought to what to do when things don't go according to plan. In other words, they simply haven't thought through their sanctions. They then wonder why their rules and routines are proving to be so ineffective.

It is, therefore, vital that you produce a fund of gradated sanctions which you share formally with your classes. Put quite simply, pupils need to know where they stand! I would be untruthful if I told you that all of my routines work to perfection. I have had some very difficult classes over the years and things have not always worked out as planned. However, I have tried very hard to be consistent and have enjoyed more success with these classes than had I abandoned these routines when things initially got difficult. It is also important to anticipate that pupils will constantly test you to see whether you mean business or not. In order to cater for this situation you need to design a set of 'gradated' sanctions that support the routinization process. The pupils need to know exactly what these sanctions are. An example of these could be:

First offence  
Second offence

Warning  
Five minutes' clear-up duty after the lesson

Third offence	Ten minutes' clear-up duty at the end of the day
Third offence	Official detention
Fourth offence	Contact parents – always with the permission of the head of year

There is no doubt whatsoever that the need for consistency and follow-up is a vital ingredient of the behaviour management recipe. It is pointless issuing sanctions to pupils and then failing to follow up on a consistent basis.

### Reward systems

No classroom management plan would be complete without a mention of the reward systems needed to support your discipline strategies. You need to remember that the appropriate use of praise is one of the most effective forms of behaviour management. Although it is extremely important to make maximum use of the school's own reward system, I feel that the more personalized your own reward system is, the better.

The following are details of the reward system I use with my own pupils. I use a rubber stamp with a picture of an oven glove engraved upon it and accompanied by the words 'hot work'. Every time a pupil completes a piece of work that warrants a credit, they receive a 'hot work' stamp (see Figure 3.1). The humorous notion behind this is that the pupil's work is so 'hot' that I have had to put oven gloves on to mark it. When pupils collect six 'hot work' stamps they are issued with a raffle ticket that could win them a CD voucher at the end of the term. In addition to this, if I feel that a pupil has handed in a particularly outstanding piece of work, or if they have worked at a consistently high standard over a period of time, then I send one of my specially designed postcards to their home.



Figure 3.1 Reproduced from G. Dixie, 'Oven Glove Award' (*Getting on With Kids in Secondary Schools*)

Lee Canter's *Assertive Discipline Workbook* offers a host of different behaviour reward ideas. One of his most successful strategies is the 'Clock Buster' award which rewards good behaviour by allowing the pupil concerned an extra day to turn in an assignment. Another one of his suggestions is the 'Privilege Pass' which rewards good behaviour by entitling pupils to that little extra freedom during the school day. Perhaps they could surrender the pass to earn the privilege of going down to lunch a couple of minutes early so that they are then able to beat the queue. You could use a privilege pass to offer the pupil the following rewards:

- can choose to sit next to someone of their own choice for a week;
- be allowed to listen to music on their headset;
- given ten minutes' free time towards the end of the lesson;
- extra time on the computer;
- given the opportunity to choose their own research topic to work on.

I have mentioned earlier in the book the need to involve parents in behaviour management strategies. You should certainly take every opportunity to make telephone calls home to parents to let them know about the good/improved behaviour of their son(s)/daughter(s). You could also pen your own letter to be sent to the parents of pupils who you wish to reward for good behaviour. It is equally important to involve other adults in your reward systems. A very simple but effective ploy to reward pupils that works for me is to simply put a comment in pupils' exercise books and get the head of year, form tutor and parents to add their signature, comments and date, next to mine. By doing this, not only have you dramatically improved home-school relationships, but the pupils concerned receive praise from four quarters. Try it, and notice the difference in their motivation and behaviour.

Up to now, I have focused on describing reward systems for individual pupils. I would like to take this a stage further by exploring possible reward systems for groups of pupils or for whole classes. Just as you should recognize individual pupils for their appropriate behaviour, you can also reward larger groups of pupils who successfully meet your expectations.

A whole-class reward system is a programme in which all of your pupils, not just one pupil, work together towards a positive reward that will be given to the entire class. The goal of a whole-class reward system is to motivate pupils to learn a new behaviour or to work on an existing behavioural issue that needs addressing. It shows pupils the importance of working together in a cooperative manner to achieve a common goal. Reasons why such reward systems are successful, even for older pupils, are:

- The system makes use of 'peer' pressure. It is not uncommon to hear pupils chastising their fellow peers in an effort to gain maximum class rewards.
- If the behaviour problem is 'whole-class' in nature then what better way to tackle the issue than with whole-class measures.
- Whole-class reward systems are particularly effective at the beginning of the year in subjects such as P.E., art, practical science and drama, where pupils need to learn important procedures for collecting and setting up/clearing away equipment.

Examples of whole-class rewards are:

- class quiz or game – you could gear these towards the subject matter you have been studying;
- allowing the class to watch a video;
- invite a special visitor to the class;
- allow the radio to be on for a specific number of lessons.

I would like to suggest a number of 'ground rules' for 'whole-class' reward systems. Make sure that you enable the pupils to gain their reward within a 'reasonable' time span. Come up with your own 'points system' and set a goal as to how quickly you want the class to earn a reward. If some degree of success has not been achieved within a couple of weeks, your whole-class reward system will simply 'die a death'. I would also strongly suggest that you give the system a positive slant. Don't be tempted to take away points for misbehaviour. If you do this then your pupils will get downhearted and disillusioned as soon as one or two 'challenging' pupils start to rock the boat. It is also important that, in a whole-class system, that *all* pupils benefit from the rewards being proffered. At this point I can hear you say 'That's not fair, why should the difficult ones benefit from the reward system?' The answer is simple: this is a whole-class and not an individual system. Providing you follow up on an individual pupil's misbehaviour in your normal fashion, then you need to leave it at that. You would be penalizing them doubly if you then withdraw them from the whole-class reward system. Don't forget that you are trying to get the pupils to work together as a team.

We have explored the notion of issuing individual and whole-class rewards but there is another possible rewards system for you to consider. You could divide your class up into groups of pupils and run an inter-class competition. Although this is likely to work more effectively with Key Stage 3 pupils, I have seen it working with older pupils.

### Maintaining the balance between rewards and sanctions

Take a good look at the successful teachers in your schools and ask yourself exactly how they maintain good classroom discipline. I would bet the very 'shirt off my back' that you will rarely

see these teachers rant and rave at their pupils and yet, in a seemingly effortlessly fashion, they are able to create a calm and purposeful learning environment for their pupils. You must be asking how exactly do they do it. I would suggest the answer lies in the balanced approach these teachers make towards the use of their sanction and reward systems.

Even as far back as 1989, the Elton Report school inspectors had some important things to say about this issue:

Our evidence suggests that schools which put too much faith in punishments to deter bad behaviour are also likely to be disappointed.  
(Cited in Smith 1996)

Mortimore *et al.* (also cited in Smith) in *School Matters: The junior years*, found that behaviour tended to be worse in junior schools which placed more of an emphasis on sanctions rather than on rewards. I would strongly suggest that the same applies to secondary schools. This does not mean that punishments are not necessary but that teachers need to maintain a healthy balance between issuing punishments and rewards. In my classes, I constantly refer to this balanced approach as being like a 'warm bath and cold shower'. The 'warm bath' represents all that needs to be celebrated, whether it be good academic performances, consistently high effort or good behaviour. The 'cold shower' represents the need for me to challenge the work rate, performances or inappropriate behaviour of my pupils. I find it helpful to discuss these ideas openly with the pupils when setting up my expectations at the beginning of the year.

## Control by proxy

There will probably have been occasions during your training or induction year when you will have been called away from your classes to attend courses, or when you have simply been away due to sickness. It is highly likely that having returned to school you have found that your pupils have let you down and have misbehaved in your absence. If you have ever covered lessons for colleagues you soon discover, from the way the youngsters behave in these lessons, whether or not the host teacher has managed to exert 'control by proxy'. So what, exactly do I mean by this term? 'Control by proxy' refers to the importance of setting up an infrastructure whereby the colleagues who cover your lessons are supported by your discipline plan. Hopefully your school will have its own system to support colleagues who cover lessons. At the end of this chapter is an example of the pro forma used by my school to support supply teachers, cover supervisors and/or school staff called in to cover for absent colleagues.

The point I need to make here is that if your school does not have such a support system, then you need to put your own support system in place. Of course, it is not enough to provide the means for cover staff to simply report back on any indiscipline by your pupils. You must be fully prepared to follow up on this misbehaviour, issue your sanctions and, most important of all, support your colleagues by providing them with a written or verbal explanation of what you have done. It is vital to follow up any behavioural issues with the whole class when you next see them. Let the pupils know how disappointed you are, reinforce the fact that, whether you are there or not, your expectations

remain the same. Inform the pupils that you will *always* follow up any discipline issues and that you will *always* issue sanctions if you feel their behaviour has warranted it. Providing you deal with these incidents in a consistent and fair manner, you will soon build up a reputation among the pupils as being a teacher ‘not to be messed with’. I realize that one of the major obstacles to following up pupil indiscipline is simply a lack of time. To this effect I have produced a pro forma designed to make this process more efficient. Put quite simply, it saves time writing individual notes to pupils requesting them to come and see me. This pro forma is on page 49.

Work Instructions for Cover		
Date:	Teacher being covered:	Attached to this form is an <u>up-to-date</u> class list. Codes written against a name indicates a special need.
Period:		
Room:		
Location of HoD or any other Department teacher (if an issue arises):		
<p><b>Cover staff will want to get students on task quickly.</b> Please leave instructions that are quickly and easily given out to pupils. Alternatively, if your instructions/and associated resources are complex, please indicate a <b>simple starter activity</b> to engage the pupils. The cover teacher will then have time to sort out the more detailed instructions/resources while the pupils are working.</p>		
Quick Start Activity (if required)	Resources required	
More detail (include the learning objective)		Resources required
<p><b>Please let me know of anybody who fails to work or whose behaviour is unacceptable</b></p>		
<p><b>Please make sure classroom chairs are tucked in and rubbish has been picked up off the floor</b></p>		
Where do you want the resources/pupils’ work left at end of lesson?		
<p><b>Lesson feedback:</b> Cover teachers are asked to complete the simple feedback form printed on the reverse side of this instruction sheet. Thank you for covering the lesson.</p>		

**Lesson report supplied by the cover teacher****Name of cover teacher:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please tick the appropriate box. *A comment is only required if the NO box has been ticked.*

Was an up-to-date class list left?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	The names of missing pupils should be established and entered here.
------------------------------------	--	---

Was the work set generally appropriate?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	What was wrong?
---	--	-----------------

Was the work output from the pupils generally satisfactory?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	More detail (and/or information relating to specific pupils):
---	--	---

Was the behaviour of pupils generally acceptable?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	More detail (name?)
---	--	---------------------

Was the learning objective achieved?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	More detail:
--------------------------------------	--	--------------

**Follow up Pro forma****Tutor Group:** Mr G Dixie

Date:

Please will the following pupils come to see me:

Gary X
Maria Y
Sophie Z



Day	Time	Place	
Monday	✓ Registration a.m.	My classroom	✓
Tuesday	Registration p.m.	Staffroom	
Wednesday	Break time 10.50 a.m.	Departmental office	
Thursday	Lunch time 12.10 p.m.	My office	
Friday	After school	Youth Club	

For detention	Sociology	✓	Reply slip
To hand in:	✓ Geography		Money
To discuss their behaviour	Humanities		Exercise book/folder
Regarding their:	Field trip		Essay
On a personal matter:	PSHE		Coursework

(:(
UNHAPPY
<input type="checkbox"/>

:)
SERIOUS
✓

:)
HAPPY
<input type="checkbox"/>

## Giving instructions to pupils

Giving instructions to pupils is not as easy as it seems. Having observed many teachers come unstuck when giving what they thought to be clear instructions to pupils, I am convinced that this issue needs to be given deeper thought. The importance of this is compounded if you are teaching practical lessons where pupils have a degree of freedom to use the resources located at various points in the classroom. When determining the specific instructions you want your pupils to follow, use these guidelines:

**Keep it simple!**

Choose a limited number of instructions for each classroom activity.

**Choose instructions that are observable**

Don't include vague instructions such as 'behave appropriately'.

**Relate your instructions to:**

- How you want the pupils to participate in the activity or procedure – what you expect them to do.
- How you expect the pupils to behave in order to be successful in the activity.

An example of one set of instructions is given on the next page.

**Sample lesson sequence** for teaching specific instructions for taking a test.

### 1. Explain the rationale for your instructions

Explain to the pupils the benefits of following your instructions carefully.

'On Friday you will have a test. At the beginning of the lesson I will give you instructions. It is very important that you follow these instructions carefully so that you complete the test and do well.'

### 2. Involve pupils by asking questions

Pupils will follow your instructions more readily if you involve them in a discussion that rationally addresses their concerns.

What would happen if we wasted a lot of time getting ready for the test? What are the consequences of pupils not coming to the lesson with the correct equipment?

### 3. Explain the specific instructions for the test

Teach the specific instructions they will be expected to follow. Remind them that when everyone follows these instructions *all* pupils will have an opportunity to succeed in class.

'I want you to clear your desks, except for a pen.'

'There is to be no talking or getting out of your seat.'

'When you receive your paper lay it face down on the desk until I tell you to begin.'

'When I say "begin", turn your paper right side up, write your name and date, read the questions carefully.'

'When you are ready, begin writing.'

'If you have any questions, put your hand up and wait until I get to you.'

'When you have finished, check over your answers, come to the front of the class and hand your sheet in. You may take out a book and read quietly until the papers are collected.'

Again, I should like to return to the notion of 'control by anticipation'. In other words, it's a bit like Murphy's Law – if things can go wrong, they will. Clear, structured and well-thought out instructions will go a long way to reducing the possibility of things going awry in your lessons. I am sure that a few of you will empathize with some of the examples given below when instructions were hurried, ambiguous and where events have not gone according to plan.

#### NQT English

'Year 7 love to ask questions and the majority of the time it drives me crazy! I can handle the occasional "What's your middle name?" or "Have you got a cat?" but the other day I set them a piece of work, blurted out what I wanted them to do and left them to it. Within seconds, the lesson had turned into chaos and all I could hear was "I don't understand", "This is crap", and "What do we have to do?" I wished I could have stayed calm and instructed them again, but if the truth be known, I didn't have a clue myself! This was due to having to do 160 reports and therefore letting my lesson planning go "out of the window"!'

#### NQT Science

'I was getting pupils to do an experiment on lenses and focusing lengths. This was a high ability class, so I gave verbal instructions and then asked if they all understood. They agreed, so I let them start. Within five minutes I had to get them to stop and show them a demonstration as no one had the right idea. A very silly mistake! Next time, I will always do a demonstration and get them to repeat the set-up.'

#### NQT English

'The worst incidents where instructions fail to be carried out successfully are when you are ill-prepared and give instructions for a task which is yet to materialize in your head! You don't really know what you want the pupils to achieve and therefore there isn't a remote chance that they will know what to do! You just feel like running away!'

## NQT P.E.

'In P.E. there is a high risk of accidents or incidents because of the nature of the subject. It is important to have every pupil still and listening. On this particular occasion, I was trying to go through some recapped teaching points and said to the pupils "Can you hold your balls still?" This may be fairly humorous, but can instantly change the mood and atmosphere. Pupils move from a state of concentration and focus to being silly and immature. It can be so difficult to refocus the pupils after such a slip of the tongue.'

There will be numerous occasions, no matter how many times you issue your instructions and irrespective of how clear you make them, when pupils will simply fail to listen to what you are saying. The net result is that they will continually ask you what they have to do. This can, understandably, lead to frustration on your part and cause you to become irritable and short-tempered with the class. A way to reduce the chances of this happening is to produce an 'instruction checklist'. This involves a series of written instructions accompanied by a number of matching tick boxes. Although it is certainly no substitute for a verbal explanation of the tasks in hand, the checklist does give greater clarity to those pupils who are likely to forget what you have just said. By asking the pupils to put a tick in the appropriate box you are helping them to keep track of their own progress. The process of actually 'ticking the tasks' off also acts as a motivational tool. I have found that while not totally eradicating the 'obvious question', this system does allow most pupils to work independently on the tasks in hand. An example of an 'instruction checklist' for the beginning of a lesson is provided opposite.

## Instruction checklist

1	Put a title of .....	✓
2	Cut out and paste the lesson objectives into your book immediately underneath the title.(Glue, scissors are inside cabinet)	✓
3	Turn to the back of your exercise book and answer the 'starter' question that has been written on the whiteboard.	✓
4	Clear your book of any scrap paper. Put rubbish into the bin at the front of the room.	✓
5	Stick any loose worksheets into your exercise book.	✓
6	Put spelling corrections into your logbook.	✓
7	Read pages ..... in textbook. Find out the answers to questions 1–5. Be ready to share your thoughts with the rest of the class.	✓

## Body language, voice techniques and class control

Many teachers feel that their level of control and authority over pupils has been severely eroded over the past twenty years. They feel that, in reality, there is little they can really do should pupils decide to 'call their bluff'. If this is the case, then surely is it not the same for all teachers. Why is it then, that pupils take some teachers seriously but do not give others the time of day? What is it about some teachers that cause them to have less grief with their classes than do other members of staff? To my mind, teaching has much in common with the theatre, with the good teacher taking on the role of the playwright, actor and critic. It is my view that successful teachers are those who have realized the need to utilize every aspect of their professional repertoire and to fully capitalize upon the 'actor' in themselves to deal with everyday school situations.

### **Your body language**

I have been told by many pupils that I must 'have eyes in the back of my head', but the simple reality is that I try to maintain a readiness for what could possibly go awry in my lessons and, in almost expecting pupils to 'try it on', I am constantly aware of the types of misbehaviour likely to occur. To project this image, I try to create an imposing and upright body posture to give an impression of being in control and allowing me to oversee the actions of the pupils in my classes. As it is important to give off an air of confidence and yet not appear to be

defensive, I try to make sure that my arms are down by my sides and not folded across my chest.

#### *Posture*

Strong signals are given by our body posture and it is worth noting one or two ‘tricks of the trade’ as far as using posture as a means of gaining control. There is relative power to sitting or standing. In school, where pupils are usually required to remain seated, it is powerful to stand next to someone who is sitting. You are much taller than the seated person and it is usually regarded as submissive to be lower. Any sociologist will tell you about the importance of power ‘symbols’ in a classroom. A simple thing like seeing the caretaker and getting a large teacher’s chair for your room can go a long way to giving off a symbolic message of the balance of power in your room.

#### *On the level*

Having just mentioned the importance of using your body language to distance yourself from the pupils, I am now going to offer you an alternative strategy. On occasions, one of the best forms of pupil control is to manipulate a situation where you almost become ‘one of them’. There are occasions where you can find the opportunity to sit with your pupils. This has much more the feel of equality and the pupils are then able to deal directly with you. Turning the whole body to face the person being addressed makes a conversation seem more personal. It also shows that you are prepared to be fully attentive and ready to ‘share’ rather than to ‘dominate’. The irony of all of this is that it is this ‘sharing’ experience with the pupils that provides a highly effective form of control when used wisely. The bottom line is that you need to be aware of both types of control method and use them accordingly.

#### **Eye contact**

In my current position as Professional Development Tutor, I make countless observations of a whole range of staff. One of the main foci for these observations is their classroom organization, management and discipline. As expected, things don’t always go according to plan for these teachers in their lessons. At the beginning of each year, I make presentation after presentation about the importance of using tactical control in the classroom. In particular, I regularly extol the virtues of initiating and maintaining good routines in the classroom. It is fair to say that at the beginning of the year these members of staff *do* go through the ritual of setting up their expectations and outlining their ground rules, all the things I have asked them to do. So what exactly is missing? Why do the pupils not cooperate? What gave these teachers away was their reluctance to make full eye contact with the pupils while they were setting up these routines.

Why is eye contact so important? Apart from the obvious need to scan the class consistently for signs of pupils becoming distracted and veering off task, there is a need to use eye contact to fully involve all pupils in your lessons. Looking at a pupil in an interested and relaxed manner makes the conversation personal and fully involves them in what is going on in the lesson. It is almost like a ‘psychological contract’ that becomes very hard for the pupil to break. Haven’t most of us been socialized into believing it to be rude to look away when someone is making eye contact with you? The eyes display your confidence levels. Believe you me, the pupils can see in the ‘whites of your eyes’ how secure and confident you feel. It is vital that, no matter how you actually feel inside, that you have the ‘bottle’ to bluff it out when necessary.

The following observation, from a Year 8 pupil about one of his teachers emphasizes the importance of eye contact in motivating and controlling pupils:

'The way she conducted the lesson with such ease but so much enthusiasm and she looks her eyes with everyone's and walked in between our desks involving all pupils.' (BA Research findings)

### The voice

Your voice, along with a positive body stance and use of eye contact, is a very important tool of social control. Too many people feel that shouting at pupils is the only way to convey your displeasure and to turn things around. I would be a hypocrite if I said that I didn't shout at pupils. I do, but I try to limit these instances to the times when I really need to make a point quickly. Shouting should generally be avoided because it tends to mean that the person shouting is not in control of the situation. On the other hand, a voice that is too quiet will be seen as non-assertive and could mean that no one takes any notice of you. Try to maintain a well-modulated, confident voice tone when talking to pupils. I appreciate that this is not always easy especially when the last thing you are feeling is confident.

Try to alter the tone of your voice to suit the occasion. For example, if you are making a transition from one part of the lesson to another, then you need to alter your voice tone to indicate this. To establish your high expectations, you need to use a strong assertive tone for setting up pupil assignments. Uncomfortable as it may be, it might be an idea to audio tape your lessons in order to try to ascertain the effect your voice is likely to have. The following quote, from another Year 8 pupil about one of their teachers, illustrates the importance of voice tone in motivation and control:

'A teacher should have different tones of voice to make things exciting and also interesting so that you don't fall asleep with boredom in the class. My English teacher from Year 7 sounded exciting when explaining a piece of work and when reading to the class.' (BA Research findings)

### Gesture

Gestures accentuate what you are trying to say. Uninhibited movements tend to suggest openness and self-confidence but these should not be erratic and thereby give the appearance of being nervous. Appropriate hand gestures can add emphasis to your teaching points and go a long way to involving your audience in the proceedings. For example, drawing your hands towards your body can convey both warmth and your wish to involve all of your pupils in the discussion. You can convey openness by sitting with your hands and legs uncrossed, by leaning forward and moving closer. Never underestimate the importance of a smile. You can convey sincerity if you smile, maintain long and positive eye contact and have open hands. Obviously, you will give off a completely different message if you adopt a converse gesture. You will give a totally defensive impression if you purse your lips, avoid making eye contact, lean away and/or clench your fists.

In my opinion, the experts on what makes a good teacher are the pupils themselves. You have already seen what a couple of pupils feel about this issue. The following quotes come from a range of Year 8 pupils during some classroom research on body language and effective teaching.

'A good teacher stands tall and confident when he is telling you things which make him seem in control with power. When he talks to you he looks straight into your eyes, making the message he's trying to get across become more strong.'

'A good teacher will stand up straight and walk around to be in control and confident that they can talk in front of a class. Also, they can look around at each pupil to show that "I am here so nobody mess with me". The voice can be nice so that they know the teacher is nice but go lower to say "I don't want any messing around." Facial-wise, if you are bad they give you "evils" for a few seconds.'

'A good teacher I have stands in the middle of the class. He stands confidently and this makes him look more in control because he is bigger than the rest of the class. He keeps eye contact with a lot of the class and that looks like he means business and wants to teach rather than just make money. If someone talks in his class or forgets his homework, he shouts at them and gives them an extremely angry look. This keeps very good control of the class. His voice is loud and confident so that pupils know he means business. Teachers with weaker voices seem less confident so pupils are more disruptive. My teacher uses lots of gestures to explain the work and points when he is telling someone off. This also keeps good control.'

'When this teacher teaches our class, he stands in the middle of the front of the class. This gives off the message that he is confident. He always stands tall and confidently. He mainly looks at the whole class but sometimes he looks at individual people to see if what he said has got through or not. You can tell he means business because his eyes open more.'

'A good teacher is someone who stands not sits because they're showing that they are getting involved with the class. Also a good teacher is someone who keeps their head up and looks at you instead of not looking at you the whole time in class. The teacher's facial expressions are important because if you do something bad you will know because of the way they look at you. The voice is important because you can tell if they mean business by the tone.'

'A good teacher will stand up when you're coming into the lesson to show you that they are ready to teach. When they are talking to the whole class they would try to stand in the middle of the class to try and get everybody involved and they will try and show everybody some eye contact. When they are teaching you separately they will give you eye contact. If they are in a big stress they will stare at you hard and give you the evils. They have to talk like they can be bothered. They should also use hand gestures to help things and to show how things are done. Also, for posture they have to stand proud and big!'

'A good teacher is someone whose voice is in different levels such as high and cheerful and enthusiastic.'

To summarize, these 13-year-olds view a good teacher as someone who:

- uses assertive and confident body language;
- uses disapproving facial expressions when angry or annoyed;
- makes full eye contact with all pupils in the class;
- uses an assertive but friendly tone of voice;
- involves every pupil in the lesson;
- can *control* the class.

I am sure you will agree that the comments of these 13-year-olds are remarkably perceptive. True, the responses were preceded by a brief explanation as to exactly what was meant by terms such as 'gestures', 'posture', 'body language', etc., but the rest was all down to them. Whether you agree with it or not, we live in a consumer age and many educational pundits would suggest that teachers are being placed more and more in the marketplace. We have already seen in Chapter 1 how important first impressions are to youngsters. Perhaps the advice provided above will go some way to making that early good impression with your new classes.

## The role of questioning as a classroom management tool

### Establishing a collaborative climate

Have you ever attended a lecture or a meeting where you have simply been ‘talked at’ for the duration of the session? Let’s face it, if you do not feel involved in a project you tend to simply switch off! Youngsters are no different. When this happens, however, they are less prone to adopt the passive role often taken up by adults in these situations, but are far more likely to make their feelings known. Obviously this is where the disruptive behaviour comes into play. Believe you me, you *can* do something about this! In the preceding chapter we explored the need to use body language, eye contact and voice tone so that your pupils feel involved. Now, let’s take that a stage further and explore the role of questioning in the classroom management equation.

It is vital that you involve as many pupils as possible in your question/answer and discussion sessions. Giving pupils a high degree of ownership of the lesson will have significant positive effects on your class control. Make sure you obtain a ‘gender balance’ when choosing pupils to answer your questions. Don’t ignore those ‘quiet’ pupils and don’t allow individuals to dominate. Have a word with them privately, thank them for their enthusiasm and commitment, and explain to them the need to let others ‘have a go’. Much research has been carried out to show that good questioning technique is at the heart of effective classroom control.

I am sure you’ve all been there – you’re in the process of conducting a class discussion or question/answer session with pupils

in your class. As usual, it is difficult to keep some of the more dominant youngsters quiet. So what exactly can you do to control the input of those pupils suffering with ‘verbal diarrhoea’ without curbing their enthusiasm?

This is quite a difficult one and I can only tell you what has worked well for me over the years. The first thing I do is to call the youngster concerned to come and see me. Let’s call the pupil Tom. I then spend a couple of minutes telling Tom how good he is at the subject and how pleased I have been with his verbal input over the past few weeks/months. At this point, and in a spirit of complicity, I say to him something like this:

‘Tom, we both know you are very good at this subject and I am certain that you know the answers to many of the questions that I ask in class. However, I feel that we need to let the others in the class have a go at making responses. We need to give them more thinking time. What I am suggesting, therefore, is that we work together on this, that you don’t call out in class; that you leave the easier questions to the other pupils to answer and that you focus your efforts on answering the really “challenging” questions.’

It is important for you to note the extensive use of the word ‘we’ in the conversation. By employing this inclusive language I go part way to giving Tom the status he is seeking when he attempts to dominate proceedings in lessons. You need to know, however, that on its own this is not enough to stop the likes of Tom from dominating and sabotaging your class discussions or question/answer sessions. Therefore, I would take this process further by informing the dominant pupil that we will both be complying with a set of negotiated rules and symbols during these verbal sessions. These rules are shown below.

- You are not to shout out your answers in class.

### The role of questioning as a classroom management tool

- You should try to leave the easier questions to other pupils in the class. Your target is to focus on the really challenging questions.
- If you feel you are bursting to answer a question, you must put your hand up and await the signal from me.
- If I think the question is too easy for you, I will simply put my thumb up and draw an invisible line with my hand under this signal.
- When I am about to ask a particularly challenging question, I will let the class know beforehand.
- This is where you come in. Again, do not shout out your answer but wait until I am ready for you to respond. You need to understand that, even at this point, I may still seek a response from someone else in the class. However, I will come back to you to see whether you agree with the response or whether you have anything else to add.

By using the ‘thumbs up’ signal, I am conveying to Tom that first, I have noticed him, second, I have recognized the probability of him knowing the correct answer to the question, third, I have not interrupted the ‘flow’ of the lesson, fourth, most important of all, I have ascribed him the status he has been seeking throughout the lesson. Does this system work? Providing I have supported the process with plenty of praise and the appropriate use of positive language designed to raise the esteem of the dominant pupil in the eyes of his/her peers, then yes, I have generally found this approach to be very successful.

There are, however, a substantial number of pupils who fail to make much of a verbal contribution to lessons. These are the very youngsters who are going to become distracted and miss out on the learning experience. Why does this happen? It’s not all down to the ability levels of the pupils involved. A lot of the time it is the brighter pupils who find it most difficult to speak up in class.

My experience of ‘pupil watching’, together with conversations with both parents and children, suggest to me that there are three main reasons for this.

The first cause relates to the pupil’s perception of the *value* of actually participating verbally in class in the first place. Why should a pupil who is ‘plodding along nicely’, or who is already getting excellent grades in his/her written work, put themselves ‘on the line’ by volunteering answers in class? The value of such a contribution needs to be made clear to them. Secondly, even some of the most able of pupils suffer from a crisis of confidence when it comes to speaking out in class. They’re afraid of getting things wrong and making fools of themselves in front of their peers. They tend to conveniently ignore the fact that they are usually highly successful in their responses. Many pupils also hold back for fear of being labelled ‘boffs’ by their peers. The important thing to remember here is that it is their *perception* of the situation which affects their behaviour and which ultimately hinders their verbal contribution to lessons. They perceive the working culture of the classroom to be focused on the individual and to be competitive and threatening. This then leads them to ‘opt out’ of the lesson and to subsequently become prone to distraction and misbehaviour. Thirdly, a large number of pupils feel that they have no vested interest in what goes on in the classroom. Why, therefore, should they get involved? This is something that an inclusive questioning technique can help to rectify.

If you are going to get your pupils fully involved then you need to address these perceptions by creating a more collaborative and non-threatening climate within the classroom. I constantly tell my pupils that I am their ‘safety net’ (see Figure 7.1) and that they are to take risks in my classroom. If they fall I will catch them. A wrong answer in class should not invite ridicule, be dismissed by staff or fellow pupils, but should be seen as an important step in the journey towards achieving the objectives of that specific lesson.

**Provide some security for your pupils**



Figure 7.1

To this effect, in the next chapter I have put together a number of strategies which I have found to work and which have gone a long way to producing a more collaborative atmosphere in the classroom. These strategies are not prescriptive. Take from them what you find useful. It is hoped that my ideas will provoke your own thought processes on the issue and that you will be able to devise your own methods for encouraging youngsters to participate more freely in class discussions in the future.

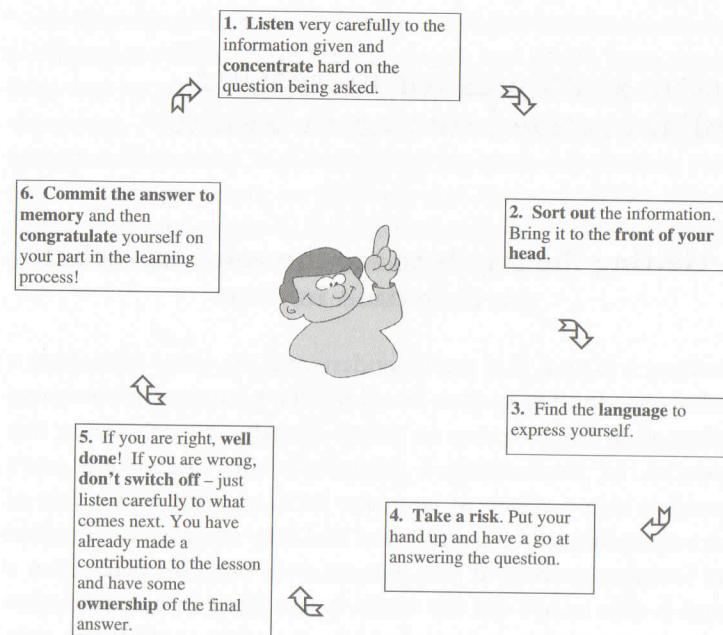
## Some strategies for increasing collaborative learning in lessons

### **Getting the pupils to see the value of verbal participation in class**

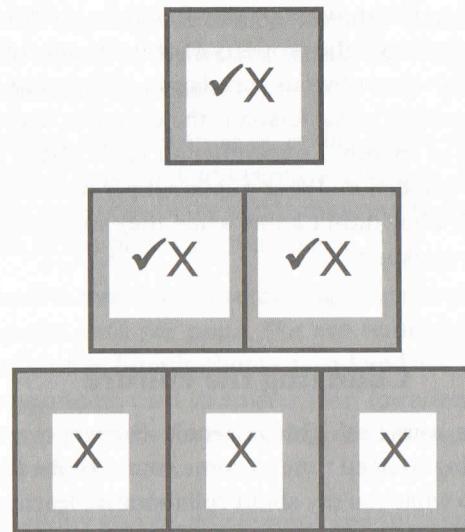
I believe it is vital that pupils understand the value of making a verbal contribution to their learning. The processes of absorbing information from written or verbal stimuli, of synthesizing this material, of formulating a hypothesis and organizing one's thoughts into a coherent language form, provide ownership of the concept/issue being addressed and fully commits the pupil to the learning process. If this process does not take place then a pupil is able to opt out too easily, is less likely to commit information/concepts to memory and is, therefore, unlikely to gain ownership of the material covered within the lesson. The rationale and importance of verbal participation in lessons by pupils should be established by teachers in their initial launch sessions with classes, and should be constantly reinforced by them throughout the academic year. The above process needs to be translated into 'pupil speak'. I use the verbal participation diagram (Figure 8.1) when trying to explain this process to the pupils in my class. You may find this useful.

### **The building block model**

The need for a collaborative approach to class discussions and question/answer sessions has already been outlined. What I felt was required, however, was a visual model which could be used

**Figure 8.1** Verbal participation diagram

- 1. Listen**: Listen very carefully to the information given and concentrate hard on the question being asked.
- 2. Sort out**: Sort out the information. Bring it to the front of your head.
- 3. Find the language**: Find the language to express yourself.
- 4. Take a risk**: Put your hand up and have a go at answering the question.
- 5. If you are right, well done!**: If you are wrong, don't switch off – just listen carefully to what comes next. You have already made a contribution to the lesson and have some ownership of the final answer.
- 6. Commit the answer to memory**: Commit the answer to memory and then congratulate yourself on your part in the learning process!

**Figure 8.2** Wooden building blocks

to demonstrate this process to the pupils in my classes. I find that by using a set of wooden building blocks (see Figure 8.2), I am able to successfully get over the concept and value of collaborative learning in my class discussions and question and answer sessions.

At the beginning of the year, I explain to the pupils that each wrong answer given in class acts as a stimulus (or building block) for another pupil to take on the thought process that little bit further. A wrong answer, therefore, is given a degree of status! A partially correct response also brings us a little closer to that required answer and, it too, acts as a building block for other pupils to further develop their thought patterns. Eventually, the correct answer is arrived at. I emphasize that the process is to be seen as collaborative and not individualistic. I have a poster on the wall which reinforces the view that it is 'OK to be wrong' and

I try to point out that, without this full-class contribution, real learning then becomes the property of only the minority of pupils in the class. The other obvious correlation of successfully increasing pupil ownership of the lesson is the dramatic decrease in discipline moves in lessons. I remember an HMI saying to me after an OFSTED inspection: 'Your pupils simply didn't have time to get distracted. They didn't know when they were going to be hit with the next question.'

### Changing the culture

Don't expect miracles! Things won't change overnight. The pupils are going to need time to come round to the fact that you actually mean what you say about collaborative learning. You are, therefore, going to need some contingency strategies to bring about whole-class participation in oral work sessions. Below are a few ideas which I use to persuade, cajole and, ultimately, coerce pupils to participate in lessons.

- If you know that the lesson is going to be dominated by oral work, give your questions a *currency*. Tell the class that you expect every pupil to answer a question during the lesson but that the earlier questions are going to be that little bit easier. By doing this, the more reluctant and/or less able pupils are more likely to respond in the early part of the lesson.
- Taking the currency idea a stage further, try limiting each pupil to one answer during your question/answer session. Each pupil has then got to think very carefully what they 'spend their answer' on. You need to advise the 'more able' to wait until they receive more challenging questions.
- Before you start the lesson, explain to the class that you will be asking a specified number of pupils a question each on the content of your discourse. This usually has the required effect

of gaining their full attention during that all-important launching period of the lesson. It thus provides an excellent tool for testing comprehension.

- Use a process of elimination by asking pupils to put up their hands if they have not answered a question. Then, simply target your questions to the appropriate pupils in the class. Try to involve all the pupils in your class.
- Use a random method of questioning. Use two packs of cards. Give out one card per pupil. Put the remaining cards from both packs aside. Simply choose a card and ask the pupil with the corresponding card to answer your question. This is a bit of fun but it gives the session a degree of 'tension' and keeps the pupils on their toes.
- In mixed ability groups, where some less successful pupils feel reluctant to participate in front of their more articulate peers, it is important to adopt a strategy to keep them involved and valued. Target specific questions at these pupils, but ensure they are of a low level nature. Hopefully a correct answer will be forthcoming, or at least a response which may provide a starting point for further discussion. Praise can be offered, especially when the answer creates an opportunity to build more blocks. The less able will have been seen to have participated successfully in the session by others in the class, and are likely to feel good about themselves.

It is vital that you recognize the verbal contribution of those pupils in your classes who usually cannot be bothered to get involved, or those who do not find it easy to participate. After all, it takes a lot of courage for some pupils to speak up in class. A quick word of praise, a telephone call home or the issuing of a 'Community' credit are just some of the ways their contributions can be acknowledged. Discuss the issue with individual pupils and set them targets. If possible, take the opportunity to discuss these

with their form teachers. Let the pupils know that what you are asking them to do in class should be transferable across the curriculum, i.e. what they can do in your lesson, they can do in others. Something that has worked well for me over the years is the 'self-regulatory participation sheet'. This requires the reluctant pupil to log the number of verbal responses he/she makes in lessons during any given period of time. You can either employ this system in your subject alone, or you can work with the pupil's form tutor to encourage greater verbal participation right across the board. A version of the subject tutor's sheet is provided opposite.

The sheet would then be presented to you, as the pupil's subject teacher, at the end of an agreed specified period of time, or to their form tutor who would then make an assessment as to how far the pupil has met his/her verbal participation target. As we have discussed before, this process involves pupils being honest with themselves and, above all, taking risks. It is imperative for you to remember how difficult it is for some pupils to take risks in front of their peers and you must remember to think carefully about how you can reward these youngsters for their efforts. Again, I feel this is an apposite opportunity to fully involve parents in the process.

Let me say straight away that I realize that the system does require you to trust in the individual's wish to alter their learning behaviour and could therefore be seen as being somewhat flawed. True, the pupils could abuse the system very easily. However, isn't this just the point of the exercise? I feel that it is important to put some of the onus onto the pupil to get them to think about this aspect of their learning and to take some responsibility for their own contribution to the process. I would be lying if I said that I have experienced total success with this method. When you take risks with pupils there are bound to be failures. However, I usually find that even the most reluctant of pupils are keen to participate in lessons and just need that little extra 'prod' to get them going.

#### Self-regulatory Verbal Participation Form

*Would subject tutors please encourage Selina to make a voluntary verbal contribution to lessons and sign this sheet at the end of each lesson.*

Name of pupil: Selina

Day	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4
Mon	Subject Tutor:	Subject Tutor:	Subject Tutor:	Subject Tutor:
Tue	Subject Tutor:	Subject Tutor:	Subject Tutor:	Subject Tutor:
Wed	Subject Tutor:	Subject Tutor:	Subject Tutor:	Subject Tutor:
Thu	Subject Tutor:	Subject Tutor:	Subject Tutor:	Subject Tutor:
Fri	Subject Tutor:	Subject Tutor:	Subject Tutor:	Subject Tutor:

Form tutor's signature:

Parent's signature:

### **Questioning technique and use of 'Wait-Time'**

Many experienced teachers would admit that when they start teaching their new classes in September, they experience a degree of nervousness when standing in front of their pupils. I have spoken to colleagues who have also admitted that in their early lessons with their new pupils, they tend to rush proceedings. Because of the novelty of the situation, and because they don't know the pupils very well, there is a degree of tension in their question/answer session technique. Questions are rushed and pupils are not given enough time to think about their responses. Multiply this teaching behaviour by a factor of ten and we can begin to understand how inexperienced teachers may feel when confronted by new classes. It is this lack of confidence and nervousness that plays a large part in promoting misbehaviour and indiscipline in the classroom. If only we all had the courage and the confidence to 'bluff it out' and to take things a little more slowly instead of trying madly to get through the lesson content as fast as we can.

My interest in the field of questioning as a means of pupil control has led me to explore the notion of 'wait-time'. Over the past twenty years, in contexts ranging from infant classes right up to university level, the concept of 'wait-time' has been explored. What exactly is 'wait-time' and why is it important? It would seem from the research that a large number of teachers typically wait one second or less after they ask questions of their pupils, and that, after the pupils respond, they begin another verbal response in less than a second. According to Zimpher and Howey (1987), when teachers wait that extra three seconds or so, a number of effects are achieved:

- the length of pupil responses increases between 300 and 400 per cent;
- pupils are more prepared to support their answers with evidence;

- pupils answer more questions in class;
- pupils talk to other pupils about their work more;
- failure by pupils to respond decreases;
- the number of pupils voluntarily participating increases;
- teacher discipline moves decrease.

The implications for pupil discipline are obvious. If they respond more in these question/answer sessions, if they take time to work out a rationale for their responses, if they take the time and trouble to ask more questions, if they talk to their peers more about the work and if they participate more fully in lessons, then it is not surprising that these pupils are less likely to become distracted and have behaviour problems.

So, what are the implications for the teacher? Basically, if you can summon up the confidence to wait those extra two/three seconds before moving on to your next question you will reap the rewards of having a more involved set of pupils.

It is important, however, to remember that teaching is not an absolute science and the advice offered above should not be seen as a fail-safe formula ensuring success. Take it from me, things can go very wrong as the following example will show you. A number of years ago I was given the responsibility of mentoring an NQT who although struggling with his classroom management was always willing to take on board the advice and guidance given to him. Let's call this NQT Ian. In this particular case, I was talking to Ian about the significance of 'wait-time' and was pleased to see him making copious notes and seemingly taking 'everything in'. We negotiated a time when I was to come in to one of his more challenging classes to observe him teaching, the natural focus of the observation being 'behaviour management'. Despite the enormous fund of advice given to him, it soon became obvious that Ian had failed to internalize this when faced with a classroom full of Year 10 pupils. Unfortunately, he broke

every rule in the book and neglected to set up his rules, routines and expectations. As a result, he failed to stamp his authority on the group. Things simply went from bad to worse. During the course of one of his question/answer sessions, Ian decided to employ the technique of 'wait-time'. Initially Ian did virtually everything right. He asked his question, scanned the classroom and waited. However, because he had failed to effectively establish his ground rules this 'wait-time' turned into an absolute disaster. At first there was an uncanny silence as pupils sat there wondering what was going to happen next, then a few girls started to giggle. This was followed by a number of inappropriate comments made by some of the boys towards the back of the room. I'm thinking, 'Come on Ian, cut your losses here', but still he waited, and waited and waited. Quite honestly, I could have grown a beard and gone out for a meal in the time it took for Ian to realize that this process simply wasn't working. In our post-observation feedback session, Ian was somewhat at a loss to explain why his use of 'wait-time' had failed. The important lesson to learn from this story is that when making decisions about using 'wait-time', it is important to know your pupils well and to be able to gauge the atmosphere in the class before implementing this approach. It is vital that you have established firm rules and routines to the process.

I hope that the strategies discussed above will go some way to illustrating the importance of fully involving your pupils verbally in lessons. What is evident from my research is that full pupil involvement in lessons brings about a dramatic decline in discipline moves and is therefore one of the most effective methods of class control in a teacher's repertoire.

## The importance of the physical environment

I have long held the belief that teachers, either wittingly or unwittingly, impose their personalities on their teaching bases. This can be for better or worse. A bright, stimulating and well-organized classroom can go a long way to creating an effective learning environment. Conversely, a dull, disorganized classroom creates a negative working ethos among the pupils. Anyone who has any understanding of the power of the 'hidden curriculum' will know that the physical environment of a school can have a dramatic effect on the quality of learning and teaching that goes on within it. The way a classroom is laid out, the quality of pupils' work displays, the general condition and tidiness of the room all play a part in conveying positive or negative messages to the pupils about your expectations. The big question, therefore, is what does your classroom say about you?

My role as an AST (Advanced Skills Teacher) also requires me to support whole departments in their classroom management strategies. One of the first things I do in preparation for initial discussions on this issue, is to visit the department with a view to looking at the physical state of the classroom and the quality of the display of pupils' work. By doing this, I am soon able to ascertain the work culture and expectations of the department and later able to link my observations to the behaviour of the pupils in these classes. Let me share the results of some small-scale research on this issue. Although I have always seen a transparently obvious link between the state of the physical learning environment and the behaviour of pupils, I wanted to gain a pupil perspective on the issue. Therefore, I asked 50

pupils to describe the characteristics of specific areas in the school where they felt that the learning environment had been neglected by staff and/or damaged by pupils. I gave the pupils a number of examples of what I meant by this: poorly maintained classrooms, damaged and vandalized furniture, an abundance of litter and lack of pupil displays. I then asked them to take this process a stage further and to say whether or not these physical conditions had any effect on their behaviour and learning. Again, I do not intend to provide you with an in-depth analysis of the results but I do feel it is important to furnish you with the general 'flavour' of the research findings. The following are some of the descriptive phrases offered by the pupils about some of their classrooms:

- poorly lit and boring;
- a complete lack of displays;
- the room is messy with lockers, tables and chairs damaged;
- chewing gum is everywhere – on the carpet and furniture;
- loads of litter, spilt drinks, ripped displays, graffiti;
- dirty, with food and drink everywhere;
- cramped, dirty and dark;
- broken blinds, stuffy because you can't open the windows;
- messy room with pencil shavings and other rubbish on the floor;
- worksheets and rough paper left out on the desks.

How do these classroom conditions affect the motivation, behaviour and learning of the pupils within them? With the exception of one pupil who described how his 'high self-esteem' helped him to ignore the poor physical conditions, virtually every respondent described some form of negative effect of these classrooms on their motivation, behaviour and learning. The

following are a range of pupil responses that illustrate the obvious link between the physical and learning environment.

- It makes me feel disgusted! I feel I can't work because it's like working in a rubbish bin.
- I can't be bothered to work because no one has bothered to look after the room.
- I feel I don't want to work in this classroom. It makes me feel grumpy.
- This classroom makes me feel really grim and not interested in what is going on. I lose concentration and work slow.
- I don't work hard because the room is depressing and it is hard to concentrate.
- It makes me feel unwelcome and I can't work in there.
- They don't have respect so I don't work as hard.
- It makes you feel bored and sad.
- It makes you not pay attention.
- You feel that you don't have to work as hard. You don't care about the neatness of your work, you get distracted easily and mess around more.
- If the classroom is not made to look good then I'm not going to work either.
- If everybody else has written on the desks it makes me want to write on the desks as well.

The lessons to be learned from the above research are patently obvious. You would be well-advised to learn from the perceptive nature of the comments made by pupils about their learning environments. Failure to do so will have serious consequences as far as your behaviour management is concerned. So, what can you do to create a positive learning environment that is sympathetic to good motivation, behaviour and learning?

When you are planning the layout of your classroom you need to give some thought to the ‘ease of movement’ of your pupils within the room. You need, therefore, to think about creating ‘flow lines’ in your classroom. Try to organize your furniture in such a way as to provide ‘channels’ for easy pupil movement and to produce a feeling of ‘space’ within your room. Before you set about doing this you need to ask yourself a number of important questions. Can your pupils make their way to their places without making physical contact with other pupils or their property? Can the pupils access the resources in your room easily? Have you placed difficult pupils near to your resource store? Can you wheel additional equipment, such as video players, slide projectors, into the room without having to get the pupils to move? As classroom teachers we are all aware of the conflict that can occur when even unintentional physical contact is made between pupils during the course of a lesson. With forethought many of these minor distractions can be avoided and the lesson is likely to run more smoothly.

There has been much research to show the importance of ‘routinization’ as an excellent way of establishing good classroom control and discipline. Your pupils should, therefore, learn very quickly where all the resources for the lesson can be found. To this effect, doing something as simple as labelling your resource drawers can save you a great deal of hassle during lessons. How many times are you interrupted in lessons by pupils who say ‘Where is the lined paper, sir?’ or ‘Where do you keep the coloured pencils miss?’ You then have to break off from what you are doing to deal with these questions. Setting up routines whereby pupils get to know where all the resources are, how to collect them and where to put them back are vital to the flow of the lesson. On numerous occasions I have observed teachers, having gained the full attention and interest of all the pupils in the class, then having to break the flow of the lesson by asking pupils to go and

collect the resources. Having resources already laid out on desks or ready to be collected by pupils when they come into the room can go a long way to alleviating low-level discipline issues. How accessible do you make your classroom resources to your pupils?

Your classroom should be your ‘pride and joy’. Pupils’ work should be displayed on the walls in an effective and colourful manner. If you are not artistically or graphically oriented then seek advice from the Art or Technology Departments. Make sure you change pupil displays regularly, ensuring that you are showing examples of work from a range of ability levels. Why do I feel this is important? Celebrating pupil success is a way of identifying exemplary practice for other pupils to learn from but it is far more than this. It is about increasing the level of pupil involvement and helping to reduce the marginalization of some of the youngsters in your classes. Chase up on any graffiti or vandalism in your room. In Part 1, we looked at the issue of establishing behaviours and expectations. If you do not follow up on a single act of graffiti, or, at the very least, fail to show your disapproval, you are going a long way to establishing the notion that this behaviour is acceptable in your classroom. Once you get a reputation for following up on these types of behaviours, you will have less trouble. Use your classroom to get your values across to the youngsters. Display the school and class rules on the notice board; put your visual versions of your rules and routines up on the wall (two examples of Visual Versions are included here, see Figure 9.1)

Take the opportunity to display advice and guidance about the way you want pupils to work in your lessons. Again, we’re back to the importance of the hidden curriculum in establishing the norms, values and skills required in your teaching area.

On the next page I list a number of prompt questions for you to consider when thinking about the physical environment of your classroom.



**Figure 9.1** Visual versions of rules and routines

- How much attention do you give to the layout of your desks?
- Is the layout appropriate for the activity being undertaken?
- Do pupils get too socially comfortable in your classes?
- How often do you change your desk layout? The desk layout for group work, for example, when you want lots of pupil interaction, is not appropriate when you want pupils to work quietly or on paired tasks. In a busy teaching schedule, you cannot personally be expected to physically change the layout of the classroom for each type of lesson. What you could do, however, is to draw up a number of layout permutations, say plan A, B and C, which can be used by your appointed monitors to lay out the desks at appropriate times during the week.
- How sure are you that your pupils can see the black/whiteboard, the video or hear the audiotape easily from their positions in the classroom?
- Does the light from the window obscure the picture on the TV screen?
- Does the overhead projector obscure the view of the whiteboard for some pupils?

You need to constantly check with your pupils as, and when, you change your furniture arrangements during the term. Much of the above contributes to a 'lack of flow' in lessons and gives the pupils opportunities to become distracted or to distract others.

See what the pupils have to say about the importance of the physical environment in the learning and teaching equation. With the exception of one Year 11 lesson per week, I am one of those teachers fortunate enough to have my own teaching base. Two years ago, for timetable reasons I was asked to teach one of these lessons in another classroom. In no time I became aware that the quality of teaching and learning conducted in the 'foreign' classroom was well below that normally found in my own teaching room. I was interested in finding out whether the pupils themselves would pick up on the cultures of the two different classrooms and how this perception would affect their attitude, behaviour and motivation. These questions formed the basis of some low-level classroom research. If you are interested in finding out more about the research rationale and methodology, you need to follow up on the article as listed in the bibliography (Dixie 2000). It is necessary, however, for me to briefly describe the classroom environment in which this Year 11 class had one of its lessons once a week.

The desks were positioned in rows facing a small whiteboard at the front of the class. This white board was not big enough to project slides or OHT images but could be used to write down assignment instructions. The blackboard and larger projection screen were situated at the back of the room which effectively meant that pupils had to turn their chairs around if these teaching aids were to be utilized. Plug-point access could only be found for the television/video packages at the front of the room. Combined use of blackboard, OHP or slide projection screen could not therefore occur since there was only one double socket with no adapters provided. Although experienced, the host teacher was an extremely busy member of staff and often did not

find time to clear up her teaching desk. This caused difficulty when trying to find room to organize textbooks and resources for their effective distribution to pupils.

It was in this context that the research was carried out. I selected a number of pupils and asked them each to complete a questionnaire. I explained that although I would welcome responses to the specific questions being asked, I would also value their opinions on any issues relevant to the research enquiry. The findings were as follows.

- Seven out of the eight respondents felt that the quality of teaching and learning was noticeably worse in the host classroom than in their normal teaching room. According to them, much of this was down to not being aware of where the basic equipment in the room was kept. A number of them mentioned the resultant inconvenience that this caused during the lesson. One pupil wrote about this ‘interrupting the flow’ of the lesson and about me becoming ‘edgy’ when I was not able to find what I was looking for. Two pupils wrote about me becoming more ‘stressed’ when looking for equipment, when seeking space to place my resources or when trying to find a suitable place to put my overhead projector. She went on to say that this tension has a marked negative effect on the quality of teacher–pupil relationship in the class. She explained that the loss of time in setting up this new room for the lesson meant that the pupils lose out on the individual attention they receive in their ‘normal’ teaching room. This view was supported by another pupil who went on to say:

‘We feel we can get away with more as there is a “different atmosphere” and your concentration is more on getting resources rather than on the individual pupils.’

She then went on to write about the layout of the host classroom as being ‘cramped’ and then offered the following description of her usual teaching room:

‘We are familiar with our original room and I find that it is more spaced out and has a better working atmosphere. We also have our resources where we know, so we don’t have to spend time looking or having to go and get the resources.’

- All of the respondents felt that to some degree the move had a negative effect on their motivation and behaviour. Two pupils wrote about it being more like a ‘cover lesson’ than a normal geography lesson. They described their behaviour as being more ‘unsettled’ in the host classroom as opposed to their usual teaching room. They both admitted to being noisier, more prone to distraction and getting less work done. Another pupil wrote about the negative effect of the ‘changed atmosphere’ on the behaviour and motivation of the pupils in the class.

Another pupil offered the following observation:

‘I think the behaviour and motivation of the pupils is different for the worse but I don’t know why. The behaviour doesn’t dramatically change but I notice a difference. I think that getting distracted is very easy but I don’t know why. I don’t think we get as much work done as in our normal teaching rooms because in our classroom the work environment is brighter and more spatial whereas in the host classroom we are more cramped and we don’t know where anything is.’

- Pupils in the survey wrote about me becoming ‘edgy’ when I was unable to find the required resources in the host classroom or when being constantly interrupted by pupils asking where equipment could be found. It is vital that pupils are routinized into knowing where textbooks, stationery, worksheets, etc., are to be found and where they are to be returned to at the end of the lesson. They should also be routinized into making sure that rubbish is cleared away and in making sure

that the classroom furniture is left in an orderly fashion before they leave the room. The benefits of this are twofold: firstly, there is less chance for the pupils to disrupt the flow of your lessons; secondly, you are then able to spend your time more constructively in welcoming the pupils to your next lesson instead of having to tidy up your classroom. The learning culture is therefore set up nicely for your next class.

So, what are the implications of these responses? The comments made by these pupils lend credence to my belief that the physical environment of a classroom can have a substantial effect on the attitudes, motivation and behaviour of the pupils within its confines. I continue to argue that a well-planned and well-organized classroom can provide a strong foundation for good order and discipline among the pupils in your charge. This view is supported by the pupils who responded to the questionnaire and whose highly perceptive comments lend weight to my argument. It is also supported by a number of colleagues who, despite being excellent practitioners, admit to having to work that 'bit harder' to establish and maintain a positive ethos among their pupils in classrooms which are lacking in stimulus and which are devoid of good planning and organization.

Although there is little we can do about the physical learning environment when we are forced to teach in alternative rooms, we can learn to appreciate the luxury of having our own teaching bases and do our best to make the most of this as a learning opportunity for the pupils. The message is simple: make the most of your classroom as a creative base for good teaching and learning. Not everyone is fortunate enough to be blessed with a classroom they can call their own.

## Gaining the psychological advantage

### Punctuality

How many times have you been in the following situation? You arrive late to a meeting to find everyone is already in the room. You sense that they have socially bonded, and that they are already fully engrossed in the throes of working through the agenda. As you enter the room you feel that everybody is staring at you and you begin to feel uncomfortable and embarrassed simply because you don't feel fully part of things. In most professional situations, this feeling doesn't last. Your colleagues usually do what they can to make you feel welcome and involved. Youngsters aren't always that generous. In that brief period before you arrive at your classroom, they have established a set of norms, a code of conduct and a high degree of social bonding which they are highly resistant to change for what they perceive to be 'an intruder'. In other words, they have gained the psychological advantage. Apart from being totally discourteous to the pupils, being late for your lessons is a bad management ploy. Punctuality to lessons ensures that you are on 'home territory', that you are ready to meet the pupils on 'your terms' and that the psychological advantage is very much with you. If you are late to your lessons you will have to spend valuable teaching time trying to wrest that psychological advantage back from your pupils. Why cause yourself these problems? Realistically speaking, however, in situations where teachers have to move from one classroom to another, lateness is bound to occur through no fault

of their own. This is unavoidable and teachers simply have to get around this. However, pupils will most definitely pick up on your courtesy towards them if they know that you have simply been having another cup of coffee in the staff room when you should have been making your way to their class. If you are late, then my advice would be to lead by example, and to apologize to the class, giving your reasons for not being in the class when they arrived. This will make it a lot easier when it comes to dealing with pupils who come late to your lessons. Always challenge lateness in such a way which makes it obvious to the class that punctuality is important but do so in a way that does not cause an interruption to the flow of your lessons. Simply by telling the miscreants that you will be ‘dealing with them later’ will get the message across to the class about your view on lateness. Once again, however, it is vital that you actually do follow this up and that you don’t simply forget about the issue. Remember the important phrase ‘certainty rather than severity’.

### **Knowing your pupils by name**

Knowing your pupils by name is absolutely vital to good classroom control. You need to think seriously about the psychological advantage of getting to know a pupil’s name and using it. Once a pupil has been addressed by his/her personal name they feel a sense of status and involvement – a bond is established and an informal contract has been forged. This is the first stage in getting the pupils on your side and in making them feel special. Making someone feel special reduces the likelihood of them misbehaving in your class.

It is essential that you learn the names of your pupils as soon as possible. There are a number of ways to learn pupils’ names; you could sit them in class alphabetically until you have learned their names off by heart; you could take a class photograph and

attach it to your register sheet; you could turn the process into a game, giving a small prize at the end of the lesson to those pupils you are unable to name. Whichever way you choose, it is vital that you learn names quickly!

A certain amount of social control is carried out simply because pupils like you. Smile as much as you can at pupils. A sense of humour is also vital: know when to laugh at yourself. Humour often diffuses a potentially difficult situation!

Take every opportunity to talk to pupils on the playground, along corridors, on field trips. On Activities Day, and similar occasions, try to be friendly to pupils, especially those who you have recently admonished for their inappropriate behaviour. Take this opportunity to build bridges. It will pay off in the classroom!

### **The structure of your lessons**

Often a lesson gets off to a bad start because pupils do not always arrive at the classroom at the same time. They may have to come from completely disparate parts of the school and it is important that you cater for such occurrences. One of the best ways to get your pupils ready for the lesson is to set some kind of ‘holding task’. This could be in the form of a ‘teaser’ or a task that pupils have to do in the back of their books until you are ready to formally start the lesson. Apart from increasing pupil knowledge and providing them with more opportunities to improve their ‘thinking skills’, it can have a dramatic effect on behaviour and motivation in that early part of the lesson. In order to do this task, pupils have to get equipment out of their bags, get their books out and generally get organized. If you make these ‘holding tasks’ part of your lesson routines, you are less likely to have to nag the pupils about getting themselves sorted out before the start of the lesson.

Any teacher who has been through the dreaded OFSTED process will know how much HMI stress the importance of sharing lesson objectives with pupils. Inspection issues aside, I would certainly support doing this, simply because it is good practice. However, I would go further. I feel it is vital to share the ‘lesson journey’ with the pupils. An example of exactly what I mean by this is shown below:

‘Right, 8M6, I am going to explain the objectives of this session and then I am going to tell you exactly what we are going to do at various times during the lesson.’ (The journey is as follows)

(0–5 minutes) ‘I will outline the lesson objectives and we will then discuss these.’

(5–10 minutes) ‘We will explore the resources and see how they match up with the lesson objectives.’

(10–25 minutes) ‘You will have an “active” group work.’

(25–35 minutes) ‘We will discuss the results of your task.’

(35–55 minutes) ‘You will complete a short written assignment.’

(55–60 minutes) ‘We will discuss how the lesson objectives have been met.’

Why is it important to break the lesson into time slots and, more importantly, why have I seen it necessary to inform the pupils of the structure of the lesson? You may have heard the expression ‘we live in a three-minute culture’, inferring that people in our society today have short attention spans. I wouldn’t go quite as low as three minutes, but I certainly do believe that a lack of focus and concentration in lessons plays a major role in creating disruption in our classrooms today. You don’t have to be a brain surgeon to realize that breaking the lesson down into varied and manageable time slots is more likely to stimulate the interest of the youngsters in our classes. I’m sure most of us do this as a

matter of course. However, how many of us actually share the lesson journey with our pupils? Knowing that they only have to focus for, say, ten minutes before they make a transition to another activity makes it easier and more worthwhile for an easily distracted pupil to focus and take on board what the teacher is saying. If the pupils perceive that they are going to have to sit still and listen for the whole lesson they will switch off and you will find it difficult to get them refocused when and if you do change the lesson activity.

### **Using praise effectively**

Never underestimate the effect of praise as a behaviour management tool. Just think about how positively you have felt when someone has taken the time and trouble to say a big ‘well done’ to you. Most of us respond to praise positively and using it in the right way can dramatically increase motivation and achievement among your pupils. Youngsters might not readily admit to it but I am convinced that they relish praise along with the rest of us.

Remember, however, that some adolescents do not respond well to praise given in front of their peers. With these pupils it is best to deliver praise quietly after class or unobtrusively during the lesson. Be aware that you can often win over potential troublemakers by giving them the esteem they have failed to gain in other areas of their lives. But effective praise must be genuine, descriptive and specific. It is important not to praise pupils unless you really mean it! Show that you are genuinely appreciative of their work ethic or of the appropriateness of their behaviour. Pupils need to know exactly what they are being praised for. By being specific about the behaviours you wish to credit them for, they are more likely to repeat the desired behaviour in the future. The following are examples of using praise as a vehicle for classroom control:

'Tom, I am really pleased to see you have worked quietly and haven't got out of your seat during this lesson.'

'Hannah, I have to say that the way you came into this room, got your books out and sat quietly waiting for me to start, was absolutely excellent. Well done.'

You may be aware that, although the majority of pupils in your class may be behaving appropriately, there may be one or two pupils who are not carrying out your routines. You may find that using 'proximity praise' provides an effective way of gaining class control. Rather than focusing negatively on the inappropriate behaviour of these pupils, simply praise those pupils who are behaving appropriately. Again, remember to be specific about the desired behaviour you wish to encourage. Proximity praise can also be used on a more individual level. An effective way to redirect a non-disruptive off-task pupil back on task is to focus on the appropriate behaviour of those pupils around him or her. Here's an example:

The entire class, with the exception of Michael, is working independently on their research reports. Rather than answering the questions, Michael is staring out of the window. On either side of Michael, Dawn and Maria are both doing their work. Wanting to get Michael on task, the teacher says, 'Dawn and Maria, you both look like you're really into this task. Well done!' As she expects, Michael looks around him, notices what is going on and gets back to work. The technique is doubly effective. Off-task pupils are motivated to get back on task, and pupils who are on task receive well-deserved praise. Believe me, I have even seen this tactic work with Sixth formers.

### **Creating tension in lessons**

I mentioned in Part 1 the need for pupils to feel safe and secure in their lessons if real learning is going to take place. I explained that this was one of the prerequisites of the Reptilian Brain; that primeval part of the brain that helps us to function when threatened by physical, mental or emotional stress. However, things mustn't get too cosy! There's nothing like a small amount of healthy tension in classes just to keep pupils 'on their toes' and in a state of readiness for learning. While the pupils are in this heightened state they are less likely to misbehave in lessons. It is amazingly simple to create this degree of tension in your classes. I have included a few ideas below:

- During the establishment phase of the year, ask the pupils for their home telephone numbers. This creates a degree of uncertainty among the pupils. I am in no doubt that someone will ask why you need them. Keep a wry smile on your face and tell them that you need their numbers so that you can contact their parents in the light of poor or exceptional work from them. Just a word of advice here. Never telephone home without the knowledge and permission of the head of year. They are likely to have a much greater knowledge of the home backgrounds of these pupils and of the context of their behaviour.
- When launching the instructional phase of the lesson, pre-warn the class that you will be selecting at random the names of, say, five pupils to feed back your instructions to the rest of the class at the end of the session. The uncertainty of whether they are going to be the 'unlucky ones' to be picked tends to bring about a sharper focus among the pupils.
- Sometimes a light hand on the shoulder can effectively serve to refocus a pupil's attention on to their work. However, you do need to be careful when you choose to do this. I had

occasion recently to visit a class in a neighbouring secondary school. At the end of the lesson, I gave a Year 7 boy a friendly pat on the shoulder only to be met with the threat of litigation from his father who 'didn't like that kind of thing'.

- Standing silently behind pupils who are not on task can also have a refocusing effect on pupils and lets them know that 'you are on their case'.
- A continued look of disapproval can often do the trick. Have the courage to establish, and maintain, that all important 'eye contact' and do not turn away until you are satisfied that the pupil has complied with your wishes.
- Don't let the pupils get too comfortable and predictable in their seating patterns. Make name cards for your pupils and change the seating arrangements from time to time. When asked by the pupils why I have done this I simply tell them that education is about more than just bookwork and examinations. It is about getting on and working with all different types of people.
- If you are not satisfied that a pupil is fully 'on task', simply write the time in the margin of their exercise book and then walk away. The implied consequence of this action is that some form of sanction will follow should the pupil concerned not increase their work rate before the end of the lesson.
- Don't forget the importance of non-verbal communication as a means of creating tension and of gaining effective classroom control. We have already explored the power of the 'stare' but there is a place for using hand signals to illustrate disapproval. Let me share a simple technique that has worked for me.
  - identify those pupils who are failing to comply with your demands for silence;
  - use a flat hand 'halt' signal followed by a 'thumbs up' sign to indicate that you wish them to be quiet;

- make brief eye contact and then look away, giving the pupils time to respond positively to your instructions.

### **Scanning and circulating the classroom**

What exactly does the technique of scanning entail? Scanning is simply the art of 'having eyes in the back of your head'. It is the ability to use your peripheral vision to check what is going on in your classroom while at the same time giving your attention to other pupils or tasks. The scanning technique is useful when you are working with a small group of pupils or with individual pupils while the rest of the class is working independently. The objective of this technique is to reinforce pupils who are on task, thereby encouraging them to remain so. This technique will help you to recognize pupils who may not normally receive attention until they misbehave. By using this technique, you can keep independent workers on task and still remain working with one small group. The following are examples of using the scanning technique.

- When you are working with a small group, look up every few minutes and scan the pupils who are working independently.
- In situations where pupils are not working appropriately give them a disapproving look, a hand signal or have a quiet word with them.
- When you notice pupils who are working appropriately, take a moment to recognize their good behaviour. You could say something like 'The group near the window has been working non-stop on this assignment. Well done and thank you!' The pupils will appreciate the recognition and continue working independently. Other pupils will get the message that you are aware of what is going on in the room, and will be more motivated to stay on task themselves.

- Occasionally, you need to move away from your present position and circulate the room, continuing to give positive recognition to those pupils on task. You can quietly and unobtrusively let a pupil know that you recognize his/her appropriate behaviour. Just make the odd positive comment about their work:

'Jason, the first line of that speech will really grab the audience – well done.'

'Georgina, you have made excellent use of the key on your map – well done.'

### The tactical pause and 'take up time'

What do you do when, having scanned the classroom, you observe pupils who are not 'on task'? I would fully support Rogers' (1998, p57) view that this is an appropriate time to use what he calls 'tactical pausing' and 'take up time'. These are effective ways to increase attention when communicating an important message to your pupils. Use the pupil's name, then pause dramatically, before going on to give them the instruction to get back to their work. It is that dramatic pause, creating a degree of tension, that implicitly indicates your requirement that the pupil stops what he/she is doing and that they make full eye contact with you. It also provides an opportunity for 'take up time'. Having gained eye contact with the pupil and, having made your point, you need to turn away, giving him/her time to carry out your demands in a dignified manner. Maintaining eye contact for too long in situations such as this tends to be confrontational and often brings about unacceptable secondary behaviour.

You will be amazed at how doing such a simple thing as this, can lessen your need to 'wield the big stick' in order to gain control over the pupils in your classes.

### Making the work relevant

My role as Professional Development Tutor requires me to make countless observations of beginning and experienced teachers. One of the biggest issues to arise from the feedback sessions relates to the failure of many of these teachers to provide relevance to the work carried out in lessons. As an experienced teacher, I sometimes get frustrated at how many of these teachers consistently miss opportunities to relate the subject content to their pupils' experiences and/or to their later lives.

Earlier in this book, I discussed the functions of the various parts of the brain and we explored the characteristics and the functions of the Reptilian Brain. It is now important to focus attention on the 'mid-brain' or 'limbic system' which possesses the function of processing information for relevance. One of the questions the limbic system will ask each of your pupils is 'what's in it for me?'. So what should you do in your lessons to provide a positive answer to this question?

It is important for you to create an infrastructure where your pupils believe that they have the capacity to be capable learners. Raising their esteem through the use of positive feedback and plenty of praise will provide the motivation required for a positive learning environment. You also need to set each of your pupils goals that are achievable and you must show your classes that you value all contributions. Finally, you need to convince them that what they are learning is worthwhile and relevant to them personally. Failure to do so will result in a lack of both motivation and attention. Apart from the obvious implications for learning, there are serious 'knock-on effects' on pupil behaviour and classroom management if this is not done. As you already know, a bored and disengaged set of pupils is a potential nightmare for a teacher.

So, how exactly do you make the work relevant? I appreciate that some of you reading this book might be scratching your

heads and asking yourself exactly how to make some of your subject material relevant to your pupils. Although I do not intend to offer expansive guidance on how to deliver your subject material in a fresh and interesting way, what I hope to do is to get you to ask yourself the right questions about the way you launch your lesson content. Having said this I would like to offer a couple of examples from my own subject to show how you can provide the 'hook' with which to reel your pupils into the subject content of your lesson.

My first example relates to the issue of poverty, inequality and 'fair trade'. I wanted to provide a particularly challenging Year 11 class with a starter activity that would provide a stimulus for looking at the issue of 'globalization'. Because I am aware that economic geography can be quite a 'dry' subject, I wanted to find a way into the subject that would relate to the interest of the pupils in this class. To this effect, therefore, I asked permission for one particularly challenging boy (let's call him Shane) to be able to come to school fully decked in his 'designer' gear. I also furnished Shane with an explanatory note informing his other teachers why he was not wearing school uniform. At the beginning of the lesson, I got Shane to come to the front of the class to display his outfit to the rest of the class. I then asked the pupils to come up with a rough estimate of how much each component of Shane's outfit had actually cost him. Once we had negotiated these figures, I asked the class to add these figures up and to come up with a total sum for Shane's 'gear'. Having done this, I then asked the pupils to estimate exactly how much money the people who made these items actually receive for their labour. I could tell immediately from the reaction of the pupils that they were 'hooked'. Everybody wanted to be involved. Having then informed the group of rough estimates of the earnings of these Third World workers, I was met with shock and amazement from the group. Comments such as 'that's not fair!' or 'I never really thought

about things like this' were simply 'music to my ears'. I had got the pupils in the right mood to move into the lesson proper. The point about this example is that I had chosen a subject that was totally relevant to all of the pupils in the class. This in turn had provided that all important 'hook' so necessary to get the pupils interested in the topic and wanting to take the issue further.

My second example relates to the issue of 'land use' and housing. Even as an avid geographer I can quite understand why teenagers would not find this topic fascinating. In this particular lesson, I had to find some way of getting the pupils to learn about the types of building and land use found in a typical inner-city area. Yes, we could have gone straight to a page in the textbook where the pupils would find all the information they needed to be able to complete this particular assignment. However, I wanted them to do far more than this. I wanted them to fully 'internalize' this information and needed, therefore, to provide a 'starter' task that was relevant to the experiences of the pupils in the class. To this effect, therefore, I showed the class the introductory scenes from the popular soaps 'Coronation Street' and 'EastEnders'. Although the total video footage only came to about 15 seconds, I elicited enough responses relevant to the characteristics of the inner city to be able to fuel a complete lesson. I was also able to 'tap in' to the pupils' knowledge of the characters in these programmes and link these to the key geographical ideas I was trying to get across to the pupils. This starter activity left me totally satisfied that the pupils had 'internalized' this information. I have listed below some examples of the stimuli you could use in your lessons to provide relevance and/or creativity to your lessons:

- lyrics from contemporary pop music
- television news extracts
- television drama

- newspaper articles
- stories and anecdotes
- sound effects (available on CD or on Internet sites)
- visiting speakers
- pupils' own experiences.

What else could you do to introduce some creativity and relevance to your lessons? Your subject mentor might well be able to advise you on this matter. Alternatively, you could pair up with some of your more creative colleagues and carry out an audit of your syllabus with a view to seeking opportunities to make your lessons more relevant to your pupils. If your school has a 'target setting' process for its NQTs, you could make this one of your professional targets.

### **Optimum control**

Having expounded at great length about the necessity for you to come up with a set of strategies designed to minimize disruption in your lessons, what I am going to say next might sound contradictory. Tony Humphreys (1995) states quite clearly that he does not believe it to be the teacher's job to control children in the classroom. He goes on to say that effective classroom management is based upon the principle that each member of the class, be it pupil or teacher, is responsible for his or her self-control. It is your role as the teacher to educate children to take responsibility for their own behaviour in your classes. Any attempt to 'over control' pupils in the classroom without giving them an opportunity to take responsibility for their own actions, is simply doomed to fail. If you exercise authoritarian control (Dixie 2005) over your pupils without giving them the opportunity to make, and learn from, their mistakes, then you are well on

course for conflict with your classes. It is important to point out that although responsibility for good behaviour lies with the pupil, the responsibility for ensuring that the devised behaviour management plan is effectively implemented lies with you as the teacher. It is, therefore, important for you to remember to constantly remind your pupils of their roles in the learning process and to make sure that they do not try to opt out of their responsibilities. This is where your rules, routines and sanctions come in. Your sanctions are there to check rule breaking behaviour and to encourage responsibility. You need to ensure they fit the crime as unjust consequences rarely induce responsible behaviour. Failure to set up rules, routines and sanctions on a consistent basis will result in under-control of your classes. Over-controlled and under-controlled classes very often lead to the same end – disruption and conflict.

### **Where do you go from here?**

Hopefully, this book will have furnished you with a range of strategies designed to help you to manage your classes more effectively and efficiently. However, it is fair to say that 'knowing' is not the same as 'doing'. You have all heard the saying 'practice makes perfect'. As far as I am concerned the same principle applies to classroom management. It is, therefore, extremely important for you to try out these strategies in order to see 'what works for you'. I would like to suggest a number of things that you can do to improve your own technical competence. The first thing you can do is to take every opportunity to observe as many of your colleagues as possible. Try to select lessons taught by teachers with a range of experience and expertise. Remember that you can learn just as much by observing lessons where the classroom management does not go particularly smoothly, as you can from a well-oiled and slick lesson. However, as with any

<b>Observation focus: Effective classroom management</b>	
Lesson:	Date:
Subject:	
Indicators	Evidence-based judgements
<b>Start and end of the lesson</b>	
Pupil entry to room and initial behaviour	
Teacher activity at the start of the lesson	
Setting up/issuing/collection of resources	
Knowledge of pupils' names	
Lay-out of furniture	
Tidiness of classroom	
Orderly ending of lesson	
<b>Communication with pupils</b>	
Tone, volume and pace of voice	
Effective questioning technique	
Clarity of explanation	
Awareness of individual pupils	
Use of black/whiteboard	
Use of audiovisual aids	
<b>Lesson structure</b>	
Appropriate timing and phasing of lesson	
Suited to class ability and previous work	
Tasks broken down into small steps	
Maintains pupils' attention	

<b>Observation focus: Effective classroom management</b>	
Lesson:	Date:
Subject:	
Indicators	Evidence-based judgements
<b>Pupil behaviour</b>	
Clear, consistent ground rules identified	
Pupils follow ground rules	
Watchfulness maintained on all parts of classroom	
Acts to pre-empt inappropriate behaviour	
Avoids confrontation	
Uses praise to promote positive attitudes	
Pupils sustain concentration	
Pupils are courteous	
Pupils work collaboratively	
<b>Additional comments</b>	

lesson observation, it is important that you have a focus for your observation. To this effect, I have included a 'tactical control' checklist you could use when carrying out your observations. My advice would be to also use a checklist such as this to carry out 'peer' observations and to provide a focus for your feedback sessions.

### Gaining 'the edge'

Although I am convinced that the strategies provided within this book are sufficient for you to cope successfully with most classroom scenarios, it is important to say that on their own these methods are simply not enough to establish and maintain good discipline. Throughout my time as a Professional Development Tutor I have witnessed many 'beginning teachers' applying these behaviour management methods to the absolute 'letter' with no success whatsoever. In the post-observation discussions, these teachers express their bewilderment as to why things had gone awry. 'I followed your advice and did everything you told me,' they say. What they have failed to understand is that it is not merely a matter of 'going through the motions' and adopting a formulaic approach to classroom management. You have got to convince the pupils that you believe in your strategies and that you actually mean what you say. It is imperative, therefore, that you try to develop what I call 'the edge' – that almost indefinable quality that comes into play as you become more experienced and you start to internalize all the advice and guidance given to you in your formative years of teaching. Those 'beginning teachers' who are currently struggling can take heart from the fact that this internalization usually occurs in your second year of teaching. This observation is supported by the results of some low-level research carried out with a group of teachers in their second year of teaching.

What I wanted to know from these teachers was how different they were in their approach to their behaviour management compared to their training or NQT year. Not surprisingly, all of the teachers in the group were quite vocal in saying they were more confident and assertive compared to their previous years. They felt they were more able to be objective when dealing with challenging behaviour and that they were less likely to see poor behaviour as being a personal insult. They admitted to feeling more comfortable in scanning their classes and in making full eye contact with their pupils. They felt that these increased confidence levels allowed them to adopt a more assertive voice tone in lessons. They felt more in control and felt less need to raise their voices to gain the pupils' attention. These teachers felt more comfortable in issuing sanctions when their plans went awry. Despite this, they gave fewer detentions to pupils than they had in the two previous years, feeling more confident in dealing with issues 'on the spot'.

Although the group found it relatively easy to describe how much they had changed as teachers since their training and induction years, they found it more difficult to verbalize exactly *why* this was the case. Through the medium of group discussion, I was able to ascertain some of the possible reasons. These are listed below.

- They felt that they were now more able to anticipate those situations which potentially could lead to disruptive behaviour by pupils. This anticipation manifested itself in them being able to articulate their rules, routines and sanctions more clearly and being able to issue transparent and lucid instructions to the pupils in their classes. This in turn, had a positive outcome on the behaviour of their classes.
- Another major point to arise from the discussion was that these teachers felt more confident in what they were actually teaching. Having been through the courses already for most

of their lower school classes, they began to get a feel of the direction the pupils' learning should be taking. This knowledge provided them with the security required for them to be more relaxed with their classes.

- There was no doubt that removing NQT assessment from their daily lives dramatically reduced the stress of being in the classroom. They felt more able to 'be themselves' and to focus on their own values as teachers as opposed to carrying out the requirements of the ITT or Induction programme. Again, this manifested itself in the teachers being able to adopt a more relaxed but nevertheless assertive approach towards their classroom management.
- Another issue to arise in the discussion centred on the influence of their reputation as classroom managers. They felt that much of their hard work from the previous year(s) in the school was now beginning to pay off. Brothers, sisters and friends had passed on information to current pupils about the expectations of these teachers.

We discussed in the initial chapter how even experienced teachers struggle emotionally to get to grip with their new classes in the initial weeks of a new school year. I explained how these experienced teachers quickly overcame this feeling of nervousness to go on to teach classes in their usual robust fashion. What emanated strongly from this conversation with this group of teachers was that, as the year unfurled, they too were now more able to distance themselves from their own emotions. In trying to help these teachers articulate this, I suggested to them that in their first year of teaching they were more concerned about *their own* performances as teachers and what *they* were going to do in the classroom but as they become more experienced and confident they begin to focus more on the pupils and on their learning. In other words they have moved from seeing teaching as being 'all about them' to now being 'all about the pupils'.

The one aspect the group wanted to stress is that although they were pleased with the progress to date, they fully acknowledged that they have a long way to go. I assured them that this journey can take a lifetime.

## Conclusion

Let's face it, we've all had personal battles with 'challenging' pupils in our classes. Often these pupils have a tendency to act as catalysts for conflict in lessons, constantly stirring up trouble and friction among those around them. As far as you are concerned, these youngsters undermine your authority as well as your confidence levels and seriously damage the learning of others. When they are absent from school, I imagine that you breathe a sigh of relief.

For this small minority of youngsters, setting up an infrastructure based upon preventative discipline appears to be both irrelevant and ineffective. This is not the place to go into any great detail – I have provided guidance on this issue in Chapter 5 of *Getting on With Kids in Secondary Schools* (Dixie 2005) – however, by reducing general low-level disruption in your classes you will have more time to produce behaviour plans and to focus on those higher level discipline problems.

It is important that you do not 'beat yourself up' if things don't always go according to your plans. After 30 years of teaching there are occasions when I come out of some lessons thinking to myself 'that was a shambles', and thankful that an NQT was not in the room observing the lesson. If you get things right 80 per cent of the time you are doing well.

May I also remind you that, on its own, gaining proficiency in the use of tactical control is not enough. It is vital that you work hard at getting to know your pupils, improving your relationships and improving the level of your clinical decisions. In short, you need to become a fully-fledged 'reflective practitioner'. I wish you every success!

## Appendix 1

### Summary of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Abraham Maslow is known for his theory of hierarchical needs which states that human beings are motivated by unsatisfied needs, and that certain lower needs need to be satisfied before higher needs can be satisfied.

According to Maslow, there are a number of general needs (physiological, safety, love, esteem) that must be satisfied before a person can act unselfishly. He called these needs 'deficiency needs'. As long as we are motivated to satisfy these cravings, we are moving towards growth and 'self-actualization'. Satisfying needs is healthy; blocking gratification makes us sick or evil.

He goes on to say that needs are prepotent. A prepotent need is one that has the greatest influence over our actions. Everyone has a prepotent need, but that need will vary among individuals. A teenager, for example, may have a need to feel that he/she is accepted by a group. According to Maslow, when the deficiency needs are met these are replaced by higher order needs, and it is these, rather than physiological hungers, that dominate the organism. Again, when these in turn are satisfied, new (and still higher) needs emerge, and so on. As one desire is satisfied, another emerges to take its place.

#### *Physiological needs*

Physiological needs are the very basic needs such as air, water, food, sleep, sex, etc. When these are not satisfied we may feel sickness, irritation, pain, discomfort, etc. These feelings motivate us to alleviate them as soon as possible in order for us to establish

homeostasis. Once they are alleviated, we may start to think about other things.

#### *Safety needs*

Safety needs are mainly psychological in nature and are concerned with establishing stability and consistency in a chaotic world. We need the security of a home and family. However, if a family is dysfunctional, i.e., an abusive husband, the wife cannot move to the next level because she is constantly concerned for her safety. Love and belongingness have to wait until she is no longer cringing in fear. In school, for example, if a pupil lives in fear of bullying then higher order learning and social needs are unlikely to be met.

#### *Love needs*

Love and belongingness are next on the ladder. Humans have a desire to belong to groups: clubs, work groups, religious groups, family, gangs, etc. We need to feel loved (non-sexual) by others, to be accepted by others. We all need to be needed.

#### *Esteem needs*

There are two types of esteem needs. First is self-esteem which results from competence or mastery of a task. Second, there is the attention and recognition that comes from others.

#### *Self-actualization*

The need for self-actualization is ‘the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming’. People who have everything can maximize their potential. They can seek knowledge, peace, aesthetic experiences and self-fulfilment.

## Appendix 2

### Justification of my ICT rules

Rules for pupils	My rationale
You are to walk quietly to the ICT suite and queue quietly outside the door.	So that my pupils do not disturb the teaching and learning taking place in nearby classrooms.
When I give you instructions, you are to go into the room and log on to the system.	So that I can check that the power switch is on. So that I can ascertain whether the room was left tidy and in good condition by the previous class.
As soon as you have logged on to the system, you must turn your monitors off and place the mouse on top of the computer.	So that the pupils do not get tempted to ‘log on’ to irrelevant sites or programmes, thus taking them longer to settle.
You are then to <i>lift</i> your chairs up and turn them so that they are facing the front. You are then to put all of your equipment	So that the noise level is kept to a minimum. So that the pupils do not lose focus during the important instructional

Rules for pupils	My rationale
<p>down and sit facing me at the front of the room.</p> <p>At no time should you turn away from me or attempt to use your computer.</p>	<p>phase of the lesson. So that maximum opportunities for learning take place.</p>

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