



Managing behaviour

Tips for managing behaviour

It's no secret that behaviour is one of the major causes of stress for teachers.

This guide offers tips on managing some of the key areas of behaviour to help as you develop your experience in the classroom. It contains some key themes, such as the importance of having high expectations, remaining calm and being in charge.

It can take time to get to grips with behaviour. Every experienced teacher has gone through the same process. Focusing on these basics will help you on the journey to becoming brilliant at managing behaviour.



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always here for
you – get in
touch using
the details on
page 19**

The CASPER approach

The CASPER approach – calm, assertive, status preservation, empathy, respect – can help you remember some key ideas about behaviour management.

- **Calm** – try to appear calm, even if you are not feeling calm. The first step in a difficult situation is to create thinking time, so try taking a deep breath.
- **Assertive** – be assertive, have good eye contact, state your needs clearly, and use 'I' statements such as "I need" and "I want".
- **Status preservation** – students operate within a peer group, so be aware of this and use private rather than public reprimands when managing behaviour.

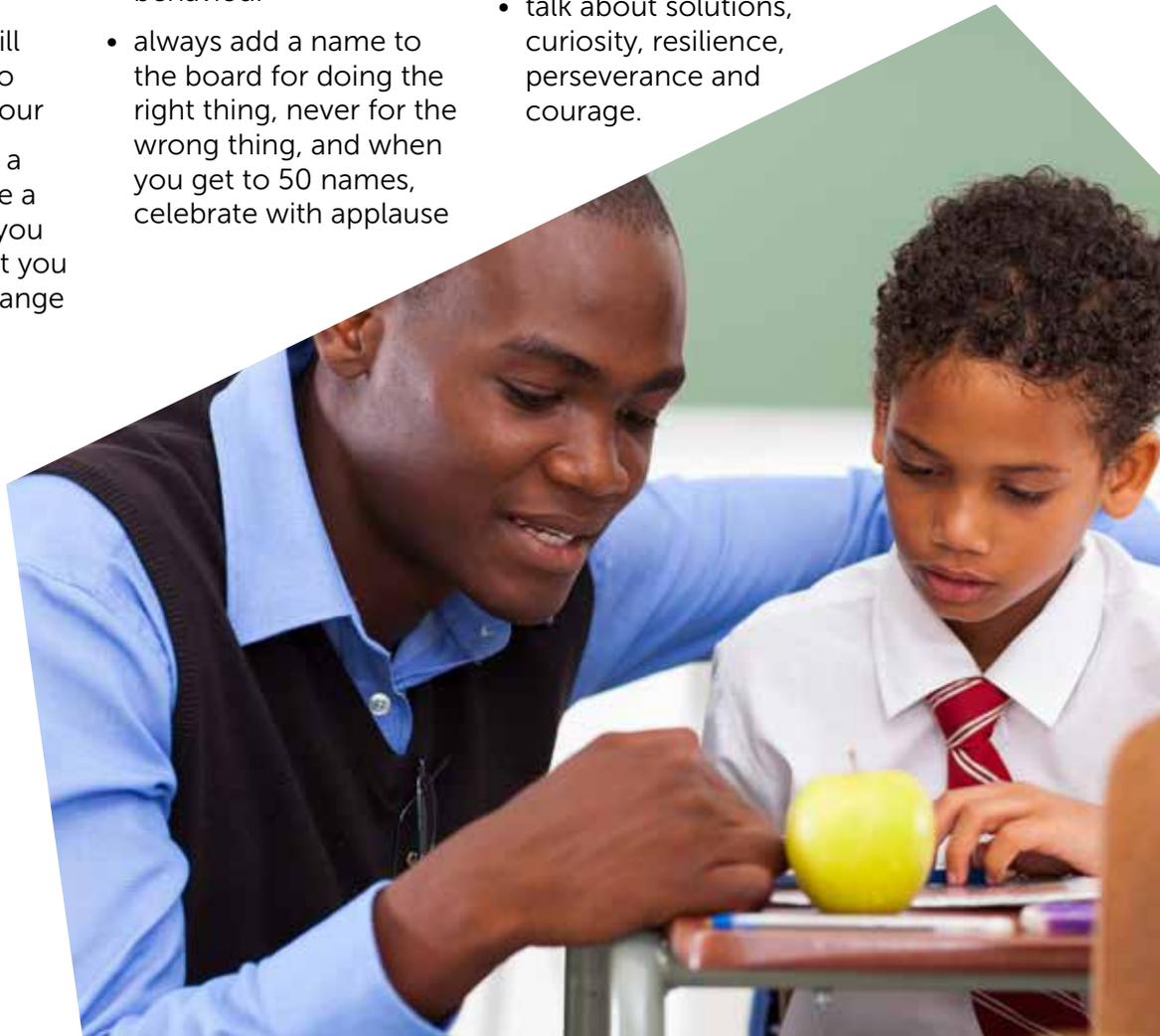
- **Empathy** – show empathy by avoiding challenging questions such as "what do you think you are doing?"
- **Respect** – model appropriate behaviour to reinforce your expectations. Always show children and young people respect, even if they are disrespectful.



Praise and expectations

Think about the culture you are trying to develop. Your relationship with your students is key, let them know you have high expectations and always praise effort. You could:

- praise efforts to follow your behaviour guidelines as this will encourage others to mirror good behaviour
- choose one goal at a time – there may be a million behaviours you want to change, but you won't be able to change them all at once
- focus on a learning attitude and put it on the wall
- a 'praise board' or 'recognition board' can be useful for discouraging low-level disruption – it could also be marbles in a jar, stickers – any way of recognising positive behaviour
- always add a name to the board for doing the right thing, never for the wrong thing, and when you get to 50 names, celebrate with applause
- have high expectations; rather than saying "bring a pen", "look at me", "put your bag at the side of the room", which are functional behaviours, set the expectation much higher
- talk about solutions, curiosity, resilience, perseverance and courage.



Take control...

To take control in class, the following tips may be useful:

- be aware of the different levels of concentration pupils are capable of
- build on pupil interests wherever possible within curriculum confines
- establish a reward system that children and young people value
- ensure that inappropriate behaviour is dealt with quickly, consistently and fairly
- enlist the help of a senior staff member to advise on behaviour issues.



...but show you care

Being in charge is extremely important, but it's just as important to show that you care about your students:

- be warm, respectful and kind
- take an interest in your students as individuals with lives outside of the classroom
- be proportionate with consequences and make sure you start every day with a clean slate
- smiling helps, as does a little fun.

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Entering the classroom

How pupils enter the classroom can set the tone for the lesson. Some schools have set procedures, others leave it to teachers. If your pupils don't stop talking when entering, you could:

- establish routines outside the classroom, for example asking students to line up or letting them in one at a time
- give pupils a challenge on paper as they come into the classroom – this way they have something to do as soon as they come in.

Seating plans

Seating plans serve a number of purposes:

- they subtly communicate that the teacher has control over and/or responsibility for managing the classroom environment
 - they help in learning names
 - they enable the most efficient and least disruptive grouping of pupils.
- If the plan does not seem to be working:
- if the problem involves several pupils, reinforce the plan by displaying a copy of it
 - if the issue is with an individual's noncompliance, use a measured approach that includes assertive 'I' statements – "I need you to move to ... so you can learn better"
 - be consistent – "no you can't move" – they will get bored of asking
 - do not be deflected by promises to be good if you need someone to move – giving in may restore peace but could lead to problems later, with students viewing you as a teacher who doesn't mean what they say.





Positive encouragement

For a pupil who does not always respond well to praise, you could try:

- using small, understated praise to the individual, not the whole class
- involving the parent/ carer or form tutor to triangulate praise, as above, for example sending positive postcards home
- implementing a whole-class reward system to avoid singling anyone out, such as names on a board, as above
- asking the child to choose a target for the lesson and give reward/

praise if met, even if other behaviour was inappropriate

- giving the pupil a role/ responsibility within the class
- praising work achieved rather than behaviour
- setting a personal/ social/emotional target
- encouraging the child to keep a diary of positives/negatives
- having one-to-one or group activities to build confidence/self-esteem
- organising circle time appropriate to their needs.

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Using your voice

It is important to distinguish between shouting in anger and raising your voice to warn of danger. There is no place for shouting if it:

- signals anger to students
- teaches students that it is acceptable behaviour
- makes a noisy class noisier
- isn't good for you – losing your voice is a real danger.

While there may be circumstances when it is appropriate to raise your voice in a measured, proportionate way, you are more likely to gain attention and get your message across by speaking more quietly or using non-verbal cues.

You can also model the different noise levels and voices that are appropriate for the context, for example silence, pair voices, group voices, voices for answering a question, and playground voices – which are unacceptable in the classroom.



Positive engagement with pupils

If you find yourself getting drawn into arguments with pupils:

- don't accept the provocation
- use the partial agreement technique, for example: "I understand that you want to sit next to your friend but your place is over there"
- have planned responses
- state the instruction and walk away, allowing the student time to conform and assuming they will
- don't display your stress – appear calm and in control
- take a deep breath
- use language of choice and consequence.

You are more likely to get your message across speaking quietly or using non-verbal clues



The school's behaviour policy

If you are trying your best to follow the school's behaviour procedures, but pupils complain and say they don't have to do 'x' or 'y' in other classes, try the following:

- provide a calm and assertive response, for example: "That may be the case, I'll check – the important thing now is to remember that when you are in this class we are clear about expectations and consequences"
- make every effort to be consistent in the way that you follow the policy – this is very important when there may be inconsistencies elsewhere or when pupils are 'trying it on'
- discuss the issue with your mentor/senior colleagues; if there really is inconsistency in the way staff follow policy and procedures, this needs to be addressed.

Be assertive

To be an assertive teacher:

- be firm but fair
- don't react to inappropriate behaviour, deal with it
- make clear your expectations and rules
- make use of non-verbal communication, such as marks on the board or facial expressions
- if you say you're going to do something, make sure you do it – consistency is key
- follow through on inappropriate behaviour and follow through on consequences
- focus on rewarding positive behaviour
- make use of humour, but avoid sarcasm at all costs.





Follow through
on inappropriate
behaviour and
follow through on
consequences

Keeping students on task

When pupils are supposed to be working independently or in groups but use it as an opportunity to chat or mess around, to encourage them to stay on task, you could:

- provide a choice of two or three tasks, this may help if the reason for disengagement is boredom with the set task
- deliver gentle reminders to individuals or groups
- pause the activity and select pupils to feedback on what they have done so far
- use positive encouragement, such as: "You've made a good start – what do you need to do next?"
- set and stick to time limits for tasks
- make changes to your seating plan
- ask open questions, for example: "What should you be doing now?"
- review the task – was it interesting, relevant, appropriate; did pupils have the resources they needed to do it well?

Low-level chatter

Give pupils legitimate opportunities to talk, such as talking with their partner or small group work

Low-level chatter can be an issue, even in an experienced teacher's classroom. Try some of these tips to address it:

- give pupils legitimate opportunities to talk, such as talking with their partner or small group work

- use challenges to encourage students to be quiet as quickly as possible, for example: "That took 30 seconds – that's good, next time see if we can halve it"
- clap your hands, sound a horn or use a musical instrument
- write instructions on the board
- set a task as soon as they enter the room – they might be more willing to listen as a result
- use engaging short tasks
- set rules, for example: "When I ring the bell, that means I need you to be quiet"
- build relationships – pupils are more likely to respond to a teacher they like and respect.



Managing calling out

To manage inappropriate calling out from students:

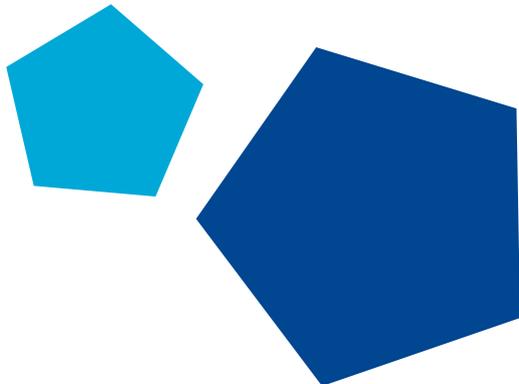
- establish a clear rule about not calling out, and acknowledge and reward compliance
- if you use “hands up”, reinforce it with a visual cue by raising your hand when inviting contributions
- use ‘talk partners’ or similar, where pupils have a short amount of time to discuss the answer to a question with a partner, then pick an individual to answer
- tactically ignore it, repeat your expectation that there is no calling out, and follow it up privately afterwards.



Answering back

It is important to deal with rudeness, answering back and general disrespect:

- always address it
- do not overreact by saying something like “how dare you speak to me like that”
- make them aware of the effect of their behaviour – explain they will get a better response from people if they are polite and respectful
- if it happens more than once, follow it up – this could involve a discussion outside class time.



Attention-seeking behaviour

In response to pupils whose behaviour is attention-seeking:

- consider if there is an explanation for it, for example if there has been a significant event in their life
- try to reframe your view of their behaviour, not necessarily accepting it but working with the pupil to change it
- if there is an impulsive element to it, give a set time when you will respond, such as: "I'll come to you when I have finished at this table"
- if the student is new, identify reliable pupils to help them settle in
- teach the student the acceptable ways they can get your attention
- praise and positively reinforce acceptable behaviour.



Praise and positively reinforce acceptable behaviour

Engaging reluctant students

To deal with a student who is reluctant to take instruction, for example to move seats or return to work after they have received a warning:

- consider the reasons for the refusal/reluctance in the context of previous encounters with the pupil
- use the language of choice and consequence
- repeat the instruction, using an 'I' statement, finishing with "thanks" and allow take-up time
- follow the school's procedure in a measured, firm, fair and consistent way
- keep words to a minimum to avoid coming across as nagging
- stay out of their personal space and ensure your body language conveys calmness
- try not to ask 'why' questions – these can push the pupil into 'fight or flight' mode.



Managing pupil comments

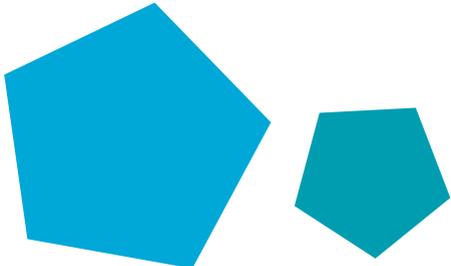
To manage comments between pupils, such as when they make fun of one another's appearance or rubbish each other's work:

- revisit the class contract
- be assertive when challenging the comments being made
- remind students of what behaviours sabotage their chance of being a successful class
- use 'I' statements, for example: "I need you to stop saying things like that, as I expect everyone to treat each other with respect in this class"
- have a quiet word with those involved
- follow the school procedures for overtly hostile, bullying or abusive comments.





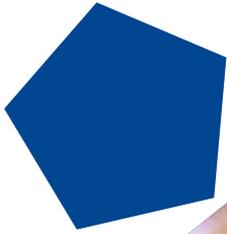
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Working with parents

To work collaboratively with parents who don't consider their child's behaviour in school is problematic:

- clarify the school's expectations, which should be set out in the home-school agreement
 - develop positive relationships with the parents – explain that the school seeks to work in partnership with parents
 - let parents know when their child has behaved well
 - let parents know their views are valued
 - you may wish to ask another teacher to be with you when you talk to parents initially in order to have an accurate record of the exchange
- keep a reasonably detailed and factual record of incidents, such as "Ethan left his seat, went across the classroom and hit James on the back", rather than "Ethan disrupted the lesson and prevented others from learning"
 - seek advice from your mentor on school procedures for meeting parents.



You're not alone

No member of the National Education Union should feel alone when facing pupil behaviour that is threatening or undermining. All teachers need guidance and support around pupil behaviour from colleagues, specialist services or their union at various points in their career.

Schools should provide systems of support for teachers. The school behaviour policy should explain what teachers can and should do when they are experiencing persistent disruptive behaviour, or violent or threatening behaviour, from students. If you need support and advice about how to engage with a particular pupil or class,

speaking to your mentor or a colleague.

The National Education Union is committed to bringing you the best professional development opportunities. We run courses on a wide range of issues such as wellbeing and behaviour management. For more information go to www.neu.org.uk/learning.



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Get in touch

As a member of the National Education Union, you have access to excellent advice and support. Your first point of contact is the rep at your school or college, who will be able to offer you practical and personal support. Your branch/district/division can also provide help and advice. If you do not have a rep in your workplace or do

not know the name/telephone number of your rep or branch/district/division secretary, call **0345 811 8111** or see www.neu.org.uk/contactus.

You can also call **0345 811 8111** or email advice@neu.org.uk for advice and support.



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