

Spotlight

Classroom Management: Standards-aligned evidence-based approaches

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The key messages in this Spotlight reveal that:

- ⚡ Effective classroom management is necessary for student learning; it increases instruction time and maximises student achievement while providing a positive learning environment and enhancing student-teacher relationships.
- ⚡ Contemporary research into classroom management has consistently found that proactive evidence-based practices, which focus on teaching and reinforcing expected behaviours, are more effective than reactive approaches, which focus on dealing with behavioural issues after they happen.
- ⚡ School behaviour policies are helpful when they are applied consistently across the school. Leadership is key to ensuring students' behaviour and

conduct feeds into and reinforces the school culture. By working to set firm boundaries and improve consistency and coherence, school leaders support teachers and help reduce parent and student frustration.

- ⚡ Parental engagement and involvement can contribute to a positive school climate and influence students' classroom behaviour. Building relationships with parents and carers is a valuable way to support student participation and establishes a base from which to have challenging conversations if they are required in the future.
- ⚡ Professional practices relating to creating and maintaining supportive and safe learning environments are critical for effective classroom management.
- ⚡ Building relationships and mutual respect with students, and engaging students in their learning, while respecting student identity and culture, are crucial to supporting student participation and for preventing classroom behavioural issues via proactive student engagement approaches.
- ⚡ Orderly routines and rules for students are key for classroom consistency and structure, appropriate behaviour should be modelled so students know what is expected and students should be held to high standards.
- ⚡ Challenging behaviour ranges from low-level disruptions to extreme violence and threatening behaviour. Proactive strategies are essential at both ends of the spectrum and remaining calm in the face of challenging behaviour is critical, although challenging.
- ⚡ Wellbeing and safety should be prioritised, preferencing holistic, whole-school and whole community anti-bullying interventions. Exclusionary practices don't work; they can result in significant learning loss and can alienate the student against their learning environment.
- ⚡ Classroom management practices need to be used to support online learning also. Early research shows that classroom management factors that support remote teaching include collaboration between teachers to prepare and ensure a consistent experience across the school, effective technology support, and reinforcing appropriate digital practices with students.

Introduction

Students learn best when they are cognitively, behaviourally and emotionally engaged in learning. Learning environments that are calm and orderly with few interruptions to teaching time provide a strong basis for this to occur. Effectively managing the classroom environment is a core element of teaching. Unsurprisingly, the evidence suggests that effective classroom management has positive effects on students' academic, behavioural and social-emotional outcomes (Korpershoek et al. 2016). The importance of classroom management is perhaps reflective of its complexity. It is more than a 'bag of tricks' teachers use to address inappropriate student behaviour. Classroom management is a complex and sophisticated skill, that teachers develop through professional learning and experience.

In recent years in Australia, the issue of student disengagement has led to increased scrutiny of classroom management practices, resulting in investigations in various states/territories into the use of certain disciplinary practices in schools to manage problematic behaviour (see for example, Victorian Ombudsman 2017; NSW Ombudsman 2017). Moreover, recent results from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) global education survey, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) indicate that, according to 50% of Australian principals, learning is hindered (to some extent, or a lot), by students not being attentive (Thomson et al. 2020). The management of student behaviour in schools and classrooms is an enduring concern both for educators and the wider community. Not only does it affect student learning and achievement, but also community perceptions of teachers and schools, as well as teacher well-being, job satisfaction, retention and burnout (Evertson & Weinstein 2015; Egeberg, McConney & Price 2016).

In this Spotlight, classroom management is defined as:

The actions teachers take to create an environment that supports and facilitates both academic and social-emotional learning. In other words, classroom management has two distinct purposes: It not only seeks to establish and sustain an orderly environment so students can engage in meaningful academic learning, it also aims to enhance students' social and moral growth.

—Evertson & Weinstein 2015

Classroom management comprises a "continuum of practices, ranging from proactive to reactive" (Hepburn & Beamish 2019). In general, classroom management is effective when it increases instruction time and student achievement, provides a positive learning environment, and enhances both teacher classroom preparation and student-teacher relationships (Freiberg 2013).



📹 Evidence indicates that effective classroom management has positive effects on students' academic, behavioural and social-emotional outcomes.

This Spotlight summarises research on the factors that contribute to effective **classroom** management, followed by a practical section describing evidence-based practice that meets the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* Standard 4: Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments. The Spotlight also includes quotes from the lived experiences of teachers across Australia from a variety of different schooling contexts; their stories are presented in text boxes along-side the evidence-based practices. Effective classroom management seeks to foster positive learning environments that promote engagement of learners by preventing disruptive and challenging behaviour from emerging in the first place; planning for potential challenges that may arise by establishing and negotiating clear expectations with students; and addressing discipline issues promptly, fairly and respectfully. In such a setting, student behaviour is proactively managed via redirection, and positive behaviour is reinforced (Egeberg et al. 2016). Positive learning environments are important for both students and teachers (Goss, Sonnemann & Griffiths 2017).

The importance of classroom management for students

Students learn best in organised learning environments where there are multiple opportunities for participation and engagement. In this sense, successful student learning and effective classroom management are “inextricably linked” (Hepburn & Beamish 2019, p. 82). Student engagement is crucial to this link. Engaged students perform better academically and also behave better in class. Student achievement is greater in classrooms where teachers use effective teaching practices and set high expectations for success (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) 2017).

Student engagement is typically considered in terms of participation in schooling activities, identification with schooling outcomes and a sense of belonging to the school (Willms 2003). A sense of belonging is positively related to a variety of student outcomes, including academic achievement (De Bortoli 2018). Recent PISA results indicate that Australian students report a poorer sense of belonging at school compared to the OECD average (Thomson et al. 2020). Unfortunately, Australian students' sense of belonging at school has declined – the percentage of

students who agreed with the statement *I feel like I belong at school* decreased by 10 percentage points over time, from 78% in 2012 to 68% in 2018. In the same period, the percentage of Australian students who agreed with the statement *I feel like an outsider (or left out of things) at school* increased by 12 percentage points (15% in 2012, 27% in 2018) (Thomson et al. 2020).

Analysis of data from the online survey *Tell Them From Me* conducted by CESE in NSW demonstrates that “students who report more effectively managed classrooms are more likely to report having a positive sense of belonging” (CESE 2020a). This finding demonstrates the crucial role of effective classroom management in fostering student engagement and, therefore, facilitating student achievement.

The importance of classroom management for teachers

Evidence indicates that teachers who experience high levels of work stress have lower job satisfaction (Klassen & Chiu 2010). Further, job satisfaction is linked to classroom stress from student misbehaviour (via self-efficacy in classroom management). In the 2018 round of the OECD’s Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), nearly 1 in 4 (24%) Australian teachers reported experiencing a lot of stress in their work (Thomson & Hillman 2020). The TALIS results also demonstrate a significant negative association between teachers’ level of stress and both their wellbeing and self-efficacy. Importantly, though the primary source of teachers’ stress in the 2018 TALIS results was workload issues (having too much administrative work (55% of Australian teachers) and marking (43%)), the next highest cause of stress were sources related to student behaviour (being held responsible for students’ achievement (37%), maintaining classroom discipline (28%), and being intimidated or verbally abused by students (13%)). The previous round of TALIS (2013) found that “job satisfaction and self-efficacy diminished as the proportion of students with behavioural problems increased” (Thomson & Hillman 2020).



📹 Responding to student behaviour in ways that address the underlying causes of the behaviour can be more effective in supporting classroom management.

Questionnaire-based studies conducted by South Australian researchers Sullivan et al. (2014) asked teachers to rank student behaviours on how difficult they are to manage in the classroom. The behaviours ranked as most difficult to manage were low-level disruptions such as disrupting

the flow of the lesson, using a mobile phone inappropriately and talking out of turn, and disengaged behaviours such as avoiding school work, being late for class and disengaging from activities (Sullivan et al. 2014). The 'low-level' moniker does not mean these behaviours are unimportant:

The prevalence of low-level disruptive and disengaged student behaviours is very concerning in classrooms. These behaviours occur frequently and teachers find them difficult to manage.

–Sullivan et al. 2014, p. 53

The studies found that teachers tended to turn to ineffective strategies to manage these troubling classroom disturbances by responding to student behaviour in ways that do not necessarily address the underlying causes of the behaviour. For example, reasoning with students or using a stepped approach to consequences are both unlikely to engage a disengaged student. When these strategies are used the problematic behaviours may continue or even escalate, further challenging the classroom teacher and disrupting the learning environment. Sullivan et al. (2014) suggested a shift is required from a focus on controlling discipline to fostering engagement, which may reduce reliance on reactive interventions (by prioritising proactive classroom management strategies). These findings highlight the importance of implementing evidence-based practices relating to classroom management to maximise the positive learning experiences of all students and minimise, wherever possible, learning disruptions and challenging behaviours.

Factors influencing successful classroom management

An effective learning environment is influenced by several factors. While some factors are within the control of classroom teachers, others are not. This section reviews seminal and contemporary research into the two major participants involved in classroom teaching and learning: students and teachers. The broader context is also considered, that is, whole school approaches to behaviour management and the influence of parents, carers and communities. This section examines four key factors that contribute to an effective classroom:

1. Student wellbeing and executive function
2. Teacher efficacy and experience
3. Whole school supporting approaches
4. Engagement of parents, families, and communities

While an optimal learning environment is a complex ecosystem of these factors, there are also constructs that cut across all factors, such as cultural safety and responsiveness. Since schools and early childhood education settings across Australia have contextual differences that influence the relationships between students and teachers, students and students, students and schools and the culture of engagement at the place of learning, this section draws on research from a variety of school systems, jurisdictions, and contexts.



“Reflect on your school’s data. If it shows that current approaches to behaviour management are not working, look at ways to be proactive, not reactive. Begin with the systems, support the professional needs of your teachers, build positive relationships with students and families, and ensure that your school meets the wellbeing needs of every student. Do this whilst keeping firm and consistent boundaries. Violence is never ok. Do not condone it, create a school culture where it is not an option and students have the space and skills to express their feelings in a more appropriate manner.”

Student wellbeing and executive function

Classroom behaviour is strongly influenced by the extent to which students enter the classroom in a physical, social and emotional state to be able to respond to instruction. Influences on student behaviour come from both the students’ internal beliefs about self, as well as from external factors such as teachers, peers, or family (Egeberget al. 2016). While teachers can have a considerable impact on student behaviour by creating a positive learning environment, it is important to also acknowledge what the students themselves contribute based on their personality, physiology, and life circumstances. While these impacts and influences may be more obvious in classrooms with older students, young children also bring their sense of self, values and behaviours to their learning environment.

Student wellbeing

Student wellbeing is an umbrella term for a large group of physical, social and emotional factors and represents a major focus in educational research because of the impact it has on student achievement and mental health (Noble et al. 2008). The significance of student wellbeing to successful teaching and learning is reflected in the notion ‘Maslow before Bloom’. Educators are aware that Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (physiological needs, safety, love and belonging, and esteem) need to be in place before learners can embrace academic goals, that is, Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Buksh 2020). Teachers who know their students well are more likely to recognise when basic physiological and safety needs, whether hunger, sickness, lack of sleep or abuse, are hampering their classroom behaviour.



“When students know that they are valued and respected they feel safe. If they know that their teacher is looking for their best work and concentration they will show it. Connecting with them over the simplest thing, acknowledging their efforts builds relationship and lets students know ‘we see and value them’.”

Establishing social skills and emotional health are important protective factors for children facing challenging school environments (Commissioner for Children and Young People 2020). A sense of belonging and esteem contribute to a positive self-concept and are important because “positive or negative self-evaluations are a critical motivating source behind the behaviour of an individual in any given situation” (Bodkin-Andrews, Dillon & Craven 2010, p. 25). Closely tied to belonging and self-concept, and equally important is cultural identity. Getting to know a student involves understanding their culture and how that influences their approach to learning and classroom interactions (Perso & Hayward 2015).



📌 Some key elements of student wellbeing include a sense of belonging, esteem and cultural identity.

These key elements of student wellbeing are influenced by the classroom teacher as well as schools, parents, and carers. A focus on student wellbeing is an important proactive approach as part of a comprehensive behaviour management strategy, and techniques to foster student wellbeing will be covered under focus area 4.4 Maintain student safety.

Executive functioning

As well as a sense of self and belonging, students need age-appropriate executive functioning to fully engage in the learning process. Learning involves developing foundational skills which continue to develop throughout childhood and into adult life. Executive functioning is a specific set of attention-regulation skills regarded as essential to effective learning. The three components of executive function are cognitive flexibility, working memory, and inhibitory control (or self-control) (Zelazo, Blair & Willoughby 2016).

Cognitive flexibility, which allows a person to consider another perspective or solve a problem in different ways, is a life skill that supports learning and relationships. Working memory is crucial to classroom-based learning, as students need to keep several pieces of information and instructions in mind and combine and manipulate them. Working memory involves the transformation of verbal and visual information; for example, being able to respond appropriately when having a conversation, carry out instructions, and remembering your place on the page when reading. Working memory continues to develop until mid-adolescence (Gathercole &

Alloway 2007) and students who have difficulty with working memory processes will often also have difficulty regulating their behaviour in the classroom. Teachers can use simple language and clear instructions to assist students who have working memory issues to understand what is expected of them in the classroom.



“I had a student who was highly anxious about school and thrived on strong routines. He was also very bright and could read very well. To help him walk into the classroom every day, it became a routine for him to read my daily teaching plan. If lessons or times were changed, I would make notes, draw arrows. He was then able to process what his day was going to look like and settle in. It worked for him and was not an onerous task to leave my daily programme out. If the timetable changed after he read the daily plan, I would tell him as soon as possible to allow for processing.”

There is a clear link between the goal of self-regulated learning and self-control, including the ability for students to ignore a distraction or refrain from an impulsive response in the classroom. While generally viewed as a positive trait, there is also a negative form of self-regulation in which a learner develops a defensive, self-limiting view of their learning which manifests in limited persistence (Zimmerman 1990) and an emphasis on “academic performance over personal mastery” (Walker & Hoover-Dempsey 2006, p. 666). Conditions for the development of self-regulation include warmth, feedback that promotes student’s sense of competencies, and appropriately challenging instruction and tasks (Walker & Hoover-Dempsey 2006).

Teacher efficacy and experience

Just as the student brings their qualities into the classroom, so does the teacher. Research indicates that a teacher’s self-efficacy, wellbeing and level of experience all influence their ability to successfully manage classroom behaviour. In turn, the way a classroom functions influences the wellbeing of the teacher, which improves teacher retention and prevents teacher burnout, as previously mentioned.

Educators are aware that students are innately attuned to any vulnerability, particularly in new or casual/relief teachers. It may be the level of teacher confidence, self-efficacy, instructional knowledge or experience that students can sense. What is clear is that students’ respect for their teacher influences their perception of the quality of the teacher. Students report that they prefer the following attributes:

1. Ability to establish positive interpersonal relationships with students, showing personal and academic caring
2. Ability to exercise authority and provide structure without being rigid, threatening and punitive, that is, strict not mean
3. Ability to make learning fun by using innovative and creative pedagogical strategies (Hoy & Weinstein 2006).

Teacher efficacy

Teacher efficacy, or a teacher's sense of their performance and skills, strongly affects their ability to manage student behaviour. Furthermore, teachers with high levels of self-efficacy experience higher levels of job satisfaction, lower levels of job-related stress, and face fewer difficulties in dealing with students' misbehaviour (Caprara et al. 2006). On the other hand, low self-efficacy in classroom management is linked to teacher attrition and burnout, as well as reducing student learning outcomes, with evidence that "self-doubts can over-rule knowledge and skills" (O'Neill & Stephenson 2011, p. 262). The studies on teacher self-efficacy typically focus on three dimensions of instructional quality: 1) student engagement, 2) instructional support and 3) classroom management (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy & Hoy 1998). These are all closely related in practice and indicate multiple areas in which a teacher might feel more or less confident.



"My advice to any beginning teacher is to sit down with your mentor or Behaviour Support Teacher/Leader and create a classroom management plan. You need to cater your approaches to the students in front of you. You cannot use an off the shelf or social media trend to manage the behaviours in your classroom. These are unique to your class and the children you have."

Out-of-field teaching research makes a connection between a teacher's reduced level of confidence and satisfaction when teaching out-of-field (Du Plessis, Carroll & Gillies 2015). The higher probability that early career teachers are teaching out-of-field gives them a double handicap in this area (Weldon 2016). Content knowledge is one factor in a teacher's toolkit, but one that needs to be accompanied by the pedagogical expertise to teach this knowledge at the level required by their class. Further, if there is an 'empathy gap' where an expert teacher cannot identify with the difficulties their learners might have in learning the skill or content, then there is a similar potential for frustration (Hattie & Yates 2014).



📹 Teachers with high levels of self-efficacy experience higher levels of job satisfaction, lower levels of job-related stress, and face fewer difficulties in dealing with students' misbehaviour.

Teacher experience

Classroom management can present challenges for both early career and experienced teachers. Years of teaching experience has been shown to contribute to teachers' ability to predict classroom management events (Wolff et al. 2015) and thereby their feelings of confidence in effectively managing problematic classroom behaviours (Kiggins 2007).



“Watch others that are effective managers of behaviour. Not only observe what they do, but ask them what they were thinking when they made those management decisions so that you can get insight into the reasoning behind behaviour management strategies. It is not enough to just watch and learn, ask for the underlying reasons for their management choices so you can understand the ‘why’ of the management of the behaviour.”

Teacher confidence in their ability to manage classroom behaviour can be enhanced through increased knowledge, coaching and reflective practice. Early career teachers, in particular, are a group that can benefit from additional training and support to building their knowledge and confidence in recognising what effective classroom management looks like. Commonly, pre-service teachers report low confidence in applying classroom management strategies, especially preventative strategies (Woodcock & Reupert 2017). Research conducted in various contexts has highlighted the nuanced ways early career and experienced teachers conceptualise and respond to classroom management. A study conducted in Germany with 40 teachers found that experienced educators are more likely to focus on preventative behaviour management than their less experienced colleagues. They are also able to suggest more courses of action in response to classroom management events (Stahnke & Blömeke 2021).

Early career teachers report relying on more experienced colleagues, including teaching colleagues, school principals and school councillors, during their first year of teaching to help them cope with the degree of challenging classroom behaviours they face daily (Kiggins 2007). They face a steep learning curve alongside other pressures, such as learning how to manage their day as a full-time classroom teacher and the initial realisation that they are responsible for a classroom full of students (Kiggins 2007). While years of teaching experience can make the challenges easier to face as teachers have a broader range of experience to draw on, the challenges of classroom management are constant, and each new cohort of students bring their unique challenges and rewards.

High-quality induction has an important role in supporting early career teachers to strengthen their teaching repertoire, and manage their own wellbeing to address the personal and professional demands of the job. Induction strategies, such as practice-focused mentoring by one or more expert colleagues, regular interactions with leadership and involvement in teacher networks, have been demonstrated to be effective in improving practice (AITSL 2016). Moreover, induction is a shared responsibility, including among educational leaders and teacher mentors, to help early career teachers understand the culture, practices and expectations of the local setting (AITSL 2016). Induction is also important for ensuring new teachers understand the whole school approach to behaviour management.

Whole school approaches

A shared understanding of expectations within the school and across the school community is important for effective behaviour support and management. While effective classroom management is critical to creating conditions conducive to teaching and learning, a consistent whole-school approach can enhance effective strategies and processes deployed at the classroom level. Moreover, it can strengthen the impact of the behaviour approach/intervention, help sustain the expected changes as well as “promote inclusion, improve school culture, engender positive role models, and clarify organisational principles” (Rhodes & Long 2019). In this way, whole school approaches do not replace classroom level and individualised interventions to support appropriate student behaviour, rather school wide consistency facilitates successful classroom management and supports the efforts of individual teachers.



“Working collaboratively across a school to implement systems that support proactive behaviour management is critical. When systems rely on punitive, reactive responses to behaviour, problems will increase, not decrease. When we can glean what works best from multiple, effective educators, we will be best placed to meet the needs of both teachers and students. No one of us has all the answers!”

Generally, whole-school approaches aim to support greater engagement in learning by developing a positive school ethos or improving discipline across the whole school (EEF 2019). Evidence indicates that school responses to disruptive behaviours that are punitive or exclusionary, such as suspensions, segregation with antisocial peers or expulsion, particularly

when they are perceived as unfair, have limited value (Osher et al. 2010). Contemporary research into classroom management has consistently found that proactive evidence-based practices, which focus on teaching and reinforcing expected behaviours, are more effective than reactive approaches, which focus on dealing with behavioural issues after they happen (Bennett 2017; Hepburn & Beamish 2019; Skiba et al. 2016). A meta-analysis of the effectiveness of psychosocial prevention ^{strategies} for reducing aggressive and disruptive behaviour suggest that school-based programs, implemented with fidelity, show overall positive effects, and appear to have greater treatment effects with high-risk students and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Wilson & Lipsey 2007).

Effective school wide approaches help establish some of the necessary preconditions for learning by:

- Prioritising caring and positive relationships between staff, students and parents/carers (ACER 2016)
- Providing structure and predictability for students, and support for casual staff who may not have the time or opportunity to build relationships and establish routines (CESE 2020a)
- Providing proactive wellbeing support for teachers, including accessible and appropriate professional development and coaching on classroom management, as well as administrative support (Hepburn & Beamish 2019)
- Facilitating relationships with parents and carers through clear communications, which in turn promote trust and respect among families and the wider school community (CESE 2020a).

Two widely used school wide behaviour management approaches focusing on engaging and supporting all students are: school wide positive behaviour support (SWPBS), which focuses on school wide systems of rules/rewards; and social emotional learning (SEL), which emphasises student self-management, decision-making and relationship skills (Osher et al. 2010). Both approaches are based on the view that conditions established in the classroom and school settings (for example, daily rituals, expectations, and co-constructed patterns of activity and actions) shape the individual and collective behaviours of children and youth occupying those spaces.

School leaders play an important role

School behaviour policies are helpful when they are applied consistently across the school. Leadership is key to ensuring students' behaviour and conduct feeds into and reinforces the school culture (Bennett 2017). Systems need to be in place to maintain that culture, such as staff training, effective use of consequences, and data monitoring (Bennett 2017). A large-scale UK study on low-level disruption in schools concluded that the role of school leaders was a major influence on a positive climate for learning: "In the best schools, creating a positive climate for learning is a responsibility shared by leaders, teachers, parents and pupils. Leaders in these schools are uncompromising in their expectations and do not settle for low standards of behaviour. They do not shy away from challenging teachers, parents or pupils, where this is necessary" (Office for Standards in Education Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) 2014, p.6).



“Following the school rules re: uniform, punctuality, homework etc is very important. Consistency is vital, especially within the same teacher and hopefully between teachers. If we say we are going to do something, then we should carry out that action. School culture also plays an important part. Ensuring that parents/caregivers are also part of the conversation builds this capacity further e.g., inviting parents/caregivers to afternoon tea for special interest groups or asking students to interview parents as part of homework activities.”

By working to set clear boundaries and improve consistency and coherence, school leaders support teachers and help reduce parent and student frustration. A commitment to regular training, review and induction for all new and casual/relief teaching and non-teaching staff will increase the impact of the policies and processes to manage and promote good behaviour (Ofsted 2014). School leaders also need to assess the effectiveness of their particular behavioural management approach against intended as well as any unintended outcomes (Rhodes & Long 2019).

Schoolwide approaches to behavioural management can only be achieved through dedicated and empowered school leadership teams. “Principals embrace inclusion and help build a culture of high expectations that takes account of the richness and diversity of the wider school community and the education systems and sectors. They develop and maintain positive partnerships with students, families and carers and all those associated with the wider school community” (AITSL 2014).



📺 School leaders can support teachers and help reduce parent and student frustration by setting clear boundaries and improving consistency and coherence.

The role of the system and systemic structures

School-wide approaches to behavioural management need to be supported within systems that provide an effective foundation for schools to function within. System responsibilities include providing appropriate funding and availability of professional development opportunities for school leaders and teachers, in order for contemporary evidence-based classroom management practices to be adopted in all schools.

High-performing education systems encourage continuous improvement across all elements of the system, of which schools are the most important but not the only part. Attributes of an innovative education system include welcoming change and experimentation, building on promising practice, and incorporating lessons from other disciplines/sectors (Gonskiet al 2018). Organisations outside the school, such as local businesses, community-based organisations and support services, can also provide schools the additional support they need for student learning, such as wrap-around services for high-risk and disadvantaged students, and to promote family engagement (Emerson et al., 2012).

Recommendations from the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools, chaired by David Gonski AC, identified the need for systems to:

- Strengthen school-community engagement to enrich student learning through the establishment of mechanisms to facilitate quality partnerships, including engagement in mentoring, volunteering and extra-curricular activities, between schools, employers, members of the community, community organisations and tertiary institutions.
- Provide school leaders with access to a variety of professional learning opportunities appropriate to their career stage and development needs and recognise and harness the skills and experience of high-performing principals by enabling them to share their expertise across schools and throughout the system (Gonski et al 2018).

Engagement of parents, families and communities

Parental engagement and involvement can contribute to a positive school climate and provide parents/carers with the opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge of the learning environment and show their children that education matters (Thomson et al. 2020). Family engagement positively influences students' classroom behaviour. "When parents and families engage with their child's learning, attendance increases, behaviour in school improves, homework return rates go up and, overall, children's achievement tends to improve" (Barker & Harris 2020, p.20). Parents and carers play a critical role in supporting and reinforcing appropriate classroom behaviour. However, it is important to recognise that not all students are in situations where parents/carers are able to play this role, so alternative support networks may need to be explored. Positive school environments are characterised by trusting and supportive relationships between all individuals in the school community, a set of common goals and norms, and collaborative relationships regarding involvement with the school. The prioritisation of building and maintaining positive partnerships and authentic relationships with parents, students, and the wider community can foster a culture of high expectations, sensitive to the richness and diversity of students.



“Having a close relationship with families and individual students helped me to know how best to support the students, what challenges they may face and importantly, what the student’s strengths and interests were so I could start from a position of strength, not deficit... Parent and student input from the start was vital. Getting a profile from those who know their child best allowed a picture to be painted. Then, engaging learning support teams, school counsellors, behaviour support teachers and other experts, enabled me to tap into expertise that I otherwise would not have access to. Engaging in targeted professional development on how to put plans in place for individual students enabled me to avoid reactive behaviour management and be proactive in my support for students.”

Building relationships with parents and carers is a valuable way to support student participation and establish a base from which to have challenging conversations if they are required in the future. In a major UK survey of parents and teachers in primary and secondary schools assessing the nature and extent of low-level disruptive behaviour, and effectiveness of school behaviour policies, three-quarters of teachers ranked “communicating high expectations about behaviour to both pupils and their parents” as the most important factor in building a positive culture, with engaging parents on issues about behaviour being the second most important (Ofsted 2014, p.18). In turn, many parents are interested in communication from the school about learning as well as about administration and behaviour.



“Listen to external providers, such as occupational therapists. Often, they put plans in place for families at home and it is great to communicate with them to learn their strategies. Sometimes their strategies can be useful in the classroom too. Talk to school counsellors, deputies and other staff to help you manage behaviours and give you tips or suggestions.”

Strategies for engaging parents/carers are more likely to be successful “when teachers know how to communicate effectively with parents, where dedicated school staff work with parents, and where there is strong support from the principal for this work” (Emerson et al. 2012, p. 12). Ongoing, respectful and relevant communications, along with constructive, meaningful feedback are important in building trust and shared learning goals. Teachers can enable parents to become involved in their child’s learning, pointing out the way that their attitudes are likely to influence their child, such as encouraging a positive attitude towards school, persistence in learning tasks, and a belief that effort is important.



📷 Building and maintaining positive partnerships and authentic relationships with parents, students, and the wider community can foster a culture of high expectations, sensitive to the richness and diversity of students.

Community involvement is especially important in developing culturally responsive classroom management practices. This involves teachers recognising how their beliefs, values, biases and cultural background influence how they perceive and interact with students in the classroom (Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke & Curran 2004). Recognising one's positionality and appreciating the importance of building multicultural competence has implications on the extent to which educators engage with families and communities to broaden their world view and increase their knowledge of students from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.



“The most important thing as a lower primary school teacher (and probably any teacher) is the relationship with the student. Without building a relationship there is no managing behaviour, of any kind. Sometimes you are also able to build a relationship with the parent - daily emails are a great way - quick, easy, but also factual, don't put emotion into it. Sharing the good and the bad is important so there is a whole picture of the child at school. I even sometimes let the child email Mum themselves to talk about their day. Even just a little handwritten note on a post-it goes a long way to let the parent and child know they are important. There are times when you can engage outside support services, medical, behaviour experts, community organisations, or church groups. I have even had contact with CHYMS - Child Youth and Mental Health when necessary. There are a lot of avenues out there that can add to your repertoire of skills you use daily.”

Resource List

Holistic classroom management approaches

1. A comprehensive literature review from the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) [\[\] Classroom management: Creating and maintaining a positive learning environment](#) covers preventative and reactive strategies for classroom management including how to implement schoolwide approaches.
2. Evidence for Learning summarises effective [\[\] Social and emotional learning \(SEL\)](#) approaches, with links to tips, strategies and professional learning options.
3. The [\[\] National School Improvement Tool \(NSIT\)](#) assists schools to review and reflect on their efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
4. Evidence for Learning summarises research on the effectiveness of [\[\] Parental engagement](#) in improving a child's academic success within the Australasian context, with links to further reading and resources on why it matters, key principles and how-to articles.
5. Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) provides practical guidance on implementing successful parent and family engagement practices in [\[\] Parent and family engagement: Implementation guide for school communities](#)
6. The [Family-School Partnerships Framework](#) and associated materials, includes practical advice, fact sheets, case studies and [\[\] resources for parents](#), to promote and guide partnership building between schools, families and the community.

Professional practice: Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments

The guidelines presented in this section interpret and apply the research discussed above against Standard 4 of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*. As teachers and schools work to 'create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments' there are several resources available to support their professional practice and development in classroom management. This section features a tight selection of evidence-informed and accessible resources from Australian jurisdictions and key international agencies and positions them in relation to this standard.

4.1 Support student participation

What the Standards say: *Establish and implement inclusive and positive interactions to engage and support all students in classroom activities.*

Supporting student participation is a proactive strategy that is a vital enabler for effective classroom management. The foundational goal is to establish a framework of reciprocal relationships, shared rights and responsibilities that ensures all students are connected and engaged in their learning.

Establishing relationships and reciprocal respect

This is an ongoing endeavour that has critical moments such as when a new class forms, when a new student or staff member starts, and any time when relationship issues start to detract from learning. As well as talking to students directly in the classroom, there are various other ways of collecting evidence to get to know students including:



“Relationships, relationships, relationships. Not as a mother or father, big sister or brother, or friend, but as an educator that truly cares for the wellbeing of every student in your class. Take a personal interest in all students: what interests them, what their strengths are, etc. The time you take doing this will pay off in the long run. Do a little exercise: Get the photos of all students that you teach. Next to each student, write three things: their name, the names of members of their family and something that interests them. If you can’t do that, it’s time to invest in getting to know your students.”

Evidence indicates that “the quality of teacher-student relationships is the keystone for all other aspects of classroom management” (Marzano & Marzano 2003). To establish relationships and respect, teachers first need to address Teacher Standard 1 to ‘know students and how they learn’ (AITSL 2011).

- Transition reports from previous teachers
- Surveys of students and families
- Diagnostic assessments
- Socialising and icebreaker activities



“They have to know you care. They have to know if you have been firm with them it’s because you care and because you want good things for them. They have to know they can trust you and even if they make bad choices, you won’t ever give up on them. You have to approach each situation, each student based on their circumstances - you have to know them.”

Surveys and focus group research over several decades from Australian and international researchers indicate that students' perception of teachers as 'caring' has a direct impact on their learning, particularly for low-achieving students. If a teacher is viewed as not caring, students report a lack of incentive to do school work or to participate in class (Egeberg & McConney 2018; Phelan et al. 1992). Student motivation to participate in learning is also affected by their perceptions of fairness in the classroom and during interactions with teachers (Caglar 2013). Fair treatment of students combined with a clear structure and a caring and supportive environment is critical to building genuine student-teacher relationships (Pedota 2007). Building relationships and reciprocal respect work to deliver a calmer, more productive classroom. By investing in relationships, teachers build up credit (and credibility) through connection and care for students, and in return receive students' trust and willingness to try.

Teachers who greet students individually and engage with them at the classroom door every day report a positive response. Research on this approach indicates it increases time on task and reduces disruptive behaviour when greetings are routine, but not procedural, that is when teachers seek to personalise their responses (Cook, Fiat & Larson 2018). Some teachers can interact with students outside the classroom through co-curricular activities such as sports teams, drama, debating and service programs. This enables them to build rapport through shared interests and experiences. It is also a way of creating a supportive environment in the classroom – supportive classrooms are characterised by respect, warmth and positive rather than antisocial interactions (CESE 2020a).



📷 Teachers who greet students individually and engage with them at the classroom door every day report a positive response.

One possible way of building productive relationships with students is the 'establish-maintain-restore (EMR) method. Initial evidence indicates this method is an effective way of improving both student-teacher relationships and students' classroom behaviour (Cook, Fiat & Larson 2018). The EMR method helps teachers focus on certain students (for example, those who are most in need of positive connections or who it is difficult to connect to) and requires around 30 minutes per week during normal schooling activities (Rhodes & Long 2019).

Table 1: Summary of the EMR method (Rhodes & Long 2019).

	Establish	Maintain	Restore (R ³)
Definition	Intentional practices to cultivate a positive relationship with each student (i.e. build trust, connection & understanding)	Proactive efforts to prevent relationship quality from diminishing over time (i.e. ongoing positive interactions)	Intentionally repairing harm to the relationship after a negative interaction (i.e. reconnecting with student)
Practical strategies	Set aside window of time to spend with student Inquire about student's interests Communicate positively Open ended questions Affirmations Reflexive listening Validation Reference student info Deliver constructive feedback wisely	5-to-1 ratio of positive to negative interactions Positive notes home Greet students at the door Relationship check-in Random, special activities	R ³ = Reconnect, Repair, Restore Take responsibility for negative interaction Deliver an empathy statement Let go of the previous incident & start fresh Communicate your care for having the student Engaging in mutual problem solving

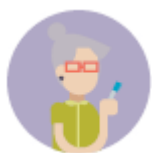
Engaging students in the classroom

Enhancing and maintaining student engagement is a core yet challenging aspect of teaching. Student engagement is the conduit between instruction and achievement. When students are actively engaged in their learning, then it is more difficult for them to engage in incompatible behaviours (Simonsen et al. 2008). Evidence indicates that students who feel connected to the school (like they belong) are more engaged and, critically, relationships with teachers facilitate feelings of school connection (CESE 2020a). Relationships between students are also critical for reducing feelings of isolation and alienation. A lack of friendships or breakdown in existing relationships between students can negatively affect student wellbeing, whereas strong friendships act as a protective factor that can prevent misbehaviour in class (Rhodes & Long 2019). As such, teachers should consider how best to encourage positive interactions between students, both in class and in the wider school context to facilitate friendships, which can provide a sense of belonging for all students.



“The behaviours I encountered early in the year by 4-5 year 1 boys was constant physical interaction in the classroom including hitting and hurting each other. Calling out, general disrespect, inability to remain on task, inability to attend to any task independently, fighting outside at every break, generally annoying everyone else!”

In addition to feeling a sense of belonging to school, student engagement relates to the level of active student participation in their learning. During a lesson, students may be actively engaged, where they are participating by writing or verbally answering questions, or passively engaged, where they are listening to instruction. Evidence indicates that student engagement is higher in classrooms with a balanced ratio of teacher-talk and student-talk, and emphasis on dialogue where students actively participate in collective exchanges (Hattie 2012). Active engagement can be boosted in a number of ways, for example, by providing ample opportunities to respond (OTR). An OTR is a prompt, question or command (for example, for students to reflect on lesson content) that invites students to actively respond. A teacher may ask an individual student a question, request a choral response (students answering in unison) or use some form of response cards like individual white boards to enable students to hold up their answer (Simonsen et al. 2008). Evidence demonstrates that “high rates of OTRs have been found to increase engagement and reduce disruptive behaviours in classrooms” (CESE 2020a). Using OTRs that invite whole class responses is an efficient and simple way to enable all students to participate in the lesson.



“Reception [Foundation] teachers knew that if you had a difficult concept or lesson to teach, you had to cover this content in the morning... Keeping lessons short, to the point, providing many ways to share answers (writing, speaking) all helped. Hands on activities, engaging units of work that incorporated their interests were key to successful lessons and learning. It was common practice that before any writing lesson, you would send the class out for a run first and then sit down to write. It was not uncommon to see every class out run a lap of the oval before and after a school assembly.”

The nature of student engagement will differ depending on the age of the class, the area of teaching, the curricula and school structures. Early years settings more often enable one-on-one time with children, and teachers of practical subjects can personalise attention based on preferences students express in their physical, artistic or technical activities and products. For primary teachers and secondary core subject classroom teachers, there need to be opportunities to structure learning routines that provide for small group and individual interaction and to enable peer to peer engagement wherever the learning may be taking place.

Some older students can become disengaged from formal schooling over time, especially when they feel an academic focus does not suit them. These students can become disengaged in their learning and choose to leave before they have completed Year 12 (Shergold et al. 2020). Those who stay may be difficult to engage.

“A traditional senior secondary school environment is not necessarily the best ‘fit’ for all students to build a strong foundation for their future.... To meet the needs of disengaged young Australians, it is critical that multiple pathways are available to them, as well as a planned ‘way back’ into further education at a time of their choosing (Shergold et al. 2020).

Some schools run applied learning or alternative pathways for young people who have disengaged or are at risk of disengaging from education. For students who leave mainstream schooling to attend vocational education and training elsewhere, they should be provided with assistance to plan their departure and have a complete understanding of the range of options available to them (Firth 2020). Regardless of where students choose to learn, they should be engaged in their learning through stimulating content drawn from appropriate curricula.



“Ensure learning tasks are at the right zone of proximal development and incorporate the interests of students. Make lessons engaging. If they are engaged, they are less likely to be disruptive.”

Students may lack respect for teachers who don't know the content they are teaching, and feel frustrated when a teacher refers them to a text and is unable to offer alternative explanations about difficult concepts. Lack of respect and frustration are two obvious triggers for non-productive classroom behaviour. Effective teachers show their enthusiasm for *what* they are teaching, as well as *who* they are teaching. They strive to show students how the content is useful and important and use a range of techniques to keep students interested, from varying their tone of voice and their teaching strategies, to moving around and getting students moving. Importantly they keep things 'challenging but achievable' (Lewis 2008, p. 35). When tasks are sufficiently academically demanding student engagement is higher (Hattie 2012). That is, effective teachers ensure learning tasks are neither too difficult, nor too easy – where tasks are perceived as dull or extremely challenging, boredom, disengagement and disruption are likely to follow (Landrum & Kaufman 2015). A viable and appropriate curriculum is a necessary foundation from which the content is drawn. Both the curriculum and content selection are critical in ensuring tasks are both academically appropriate and engaging for students.

Research linking student achievement (NAPLAN scores) with teaching practices and student-related factors (like motivation), suggests that when teachers are organised, supportive and focused on ensuring student comprehension of lessons, particularly complex and challenging ideas, student engagement (and achievement) improves (CESE 2017a).

In addition to maintaining positive student-teacher relationships that prioritise both social and academic aspects, teachers can improve the following practices to best facilitate student engagement and learning:

- Organising lessons well
- Paying particular attention to how important ideas are taught and helping students understand their significance
- Requiring students to demonstrate mastery, especially of difficult ideas
- Allowing students to ask questions and ensuring responses are clear and have been understood.
- Telling students what they will be learning, and being clear about the purpose of tasks

- Ensuring students are given time to engage with the learning process and receive clear and timely feedback (CESE 2017, p. 11)

Student identity and maintaining a culturally sensitive space

All groups require socialisation, shared norms, leadership, and a sense of purpose. Student participation in maintaining classroom discipline can lead to decreased distractions and fewer discipline issues (Lewis et al. 2008). When students feel a sense of belonging at school, their engagement is often enhanced; when they don't, behavioural problems often follow.



“Build positive relationships. Build them with the student. Find their story. Each behaviour tells a story, but you need to find that story to understand and act accordingly.”

Ensuring students feel they are safe and that they belong, is imperative for them to be able to engage in their learning and be receptive to any classroom management processes. A focus on inclusion, student identity and maintaining a culturally sensitive space for all students is an important prerequisite to student participation.



“I find a combination of high expectations - making sure they students know you expect the best from them because you believe they are capable of good behaviour. Firm and consistent boundaries backed up with consequences and rewards. Conversations - you have to talk through things with them - both good and bad choices they make. And the most important, relationships.”

Culturally responsive classroom management helps teachers create a learning environment in which all their students feel safe, regardless of their cultural or linguistic diversity. Creating this environment requires teachers to employ a unique set of strategies and practices to ensure that all students feel acknowledged and safe. It also asks teachers to recognise their biases and reflect on how these may inhibit their interactions with and expectations of students.

There are five essential components of culturally responsive classroom management, and each has an associated strategy that teachers can employ to make them meaningful in their own context:

- recognition of one's own cultural lens and biases – write a personal identity story to explore how you fit into a multicultural world

- knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds – work with students to develop family history projects and encourage them to share them with the class
- awareness of the broader social, economic, and political context – study student behaviours deemed as inappropriate and consider whether they might be examples of student resistance to what they perceive is an unfair system
- ability and willingness to use culturally appropriate management strategies – display welcome signs in students' home languages
- commitment to building caring classroom communities – be aware of and acknowledge important events in students' lives (Metropolitan Center for Urban Education 2008; Perso 2012).

Resource List

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers Focus area 4.1: Support Student Participation

1. [!\[\]\(072b85bca7e3c3f0df32e9cb1d6321d2_img.jpg\) A positive learning framework for classroom management](#) chapter from [!\[\]\(c08b2954ced52bd12b7d0886396aa8f5_img.jpg\) ClassroomManagement: Engaging Students in Learning by Tim McDonald](#) focuses on positive approaches to classroom management including strategies to supporting student participation. The new edition of the book addresses all seven [!\[\]\(2518f1e19e7fb7ef181a867081a31458_img.jpg\) Teacher Standards](#) and helps teachers to create quality learning environments with students.
2. *Teaching Indigenous Students: Cultural Awareness and Classroom Strategies for Improving Learning Outcomes* by Thelma Perso and Colleen Hayward, includes a chapter on managing and setting expectations for relationships and behaviour and has been synthesised into practical information on [!\[\]\(729e10e84db853a809370fe7baefddc2_img.jpg\) Knowing your students and knowing Country](#) by the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO).

4.2 Manage classroom activities

What the Standards say: Establish and maintain orderly and workable routines to create an environment where student time is spent on learning tasks.

The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) has created a guide on [Focused classrooms - Managing the classroom to maximise learning](#) that supports the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* Focus area 4.2: Manage Classroom activities.

This helpful guide indicates that the following four practices applied consistently across the school create a strong foundation for well-managed classrooms:

1. Establish a system of rules and routines from day one: Students should have predictability and structure that provide them with certainty about what is expected.
2. Explicitly teach and model appropriate behaviour: Students need to know how to perform the roles expected of them.
3. Hold all students to high standards: Students should feel valued and supported in their learning and know that they are capable of achieving their learning goals.
4. Actively engage students in their learning: Students should be encouraged to actively participate.

In establishing a system of rules and routines, preferably in collaboration with students, teachers provide a consistent set of positive behaviours and routines that are understood by students and can be drawn upon when there is distraction or disruption to learning. The key to explicitly teaching and modelling appropriate behaviour is to encourage positive adoption of the rules by providing consistent and clear responses that draw attention to expected behaviours, such as providing on-the-spot praise or offering positive or corrective verbal feedback tied to a specific behaviour (AERO 2021). Importantly, any system of rules and routines should be situated within the broader context of the whole school approach to behaviour management to ensure consistency in implementation across classrooms.



“Having spent my early years of teaching in the city, I was faced with challenging behaviours including class refusal, violent outbursts and non-compliance. I learnt from that experience the importance of ensuring I always have a classroom management plan. The same way I would spend time thinking about my lessons, looking at best practice, I knew I needed to apply the same concept to my classroom management.”

One strategy that can support the teacher's role is to use positive peer reporting. This is a peer-mediated strategy where students are encouraged to make written or oral reports about other class members' positive behaviours rather than 'tattling' about breaches of the class rules. A meta-analysis of 21 studies suggests peer reporting strategies are effective in improving student behaviour on outcomes of disruptive behaviour, academically engaged behaviour, and social behaviour (Collins et al. 2020). They also offer a low-cost, time-efficient strategy that can address the behaviour at a whole class level. The physical layout of the classroom can also influence student behaviour particularly student participation (Fernandes, Huang & Rinaldo 2011).

Resource List

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers Focus area 4.2: Manage Classroom activities

1. The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) has created a tried and tested guide on [🔗 Focused classrooms - Managing the classroom to maximise learning](#)
2. The NSW Department of Education provides a set of resources for early career teachers covering [🔗 classroom management](#).
3. Teacher Magazine reviews the research on [🔗 classroom layout](#) and the effect of different classroom seating arrangements on student participation.
4. The Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) has released an [🔗 In the classroom series](#) featuring full-length lesson footage with audio of the lesson and teacher commentary that demonstrates effective teaching techniques that successfully engage students.

4.3 Manage challenging behaviour

What the Standards say: Manage challenging behaviour by establishing and negotiating clear expectations with students and address discipline issues promptly, fairly and respectfully.

A spectrum of behaviour

Students exhibit a variety of behaviours in school, from positive, pro-social learning behaviours that demonstrate engagement, to negative misbehaviours that disrupt the learning environment. Negative behaviours range from low level disruptions such as talking out of turn and inappropriate mobile phone use to highly disruptive, antisocial behaviours like physical aggression and verbally abusing peers/teachers (Moore et al. 2019; Sullivan et al. 2014).



*“One day, a student was looking in the direction of another student. The student yelled ‘what the **** are you looking at’, ran over to the other student and punched the other girl several times in the head and back.”*

This spectrum from low to high disruption encompasses the range of challenging behaviours teachers need to manage in classrooms. On the more extreme end of this spectrum are behaviours of concern that may jeopardise the safety of students/teachers, such as students attending class under the influence of drugs or carrying a weapon with intent to cause, violence or damage. All behavioural issues, from low to high disruptions may be caused by a complex interplay of health/environment factors, requiring specific and holistic interventions (Education

Rights n.d.). The nature of challenging behaviour, including the causes, context and specific circumstances of the behaviours, will largely determine the teacher's reaction however, the safety of the teacher and other students should always be prioritised.

There are some ways to structure classrooms and student-teacher interactions to reduce the instances of challenging behaviour. For example, in highly disruptive classrooms, the layout of the class may require modification to prevent common distractions (for example, from other peers), to define learning spaces and improve accessibility/access to materials (Guardino & Fullerton 2010). In addition to the physical classroom layout, there are key strategies teachers can use to prevent and manage misbehaviour. Together with the practices outlined in sections 4.1 and 4.2, this section considers some simple to implement, evidence-based approaches to proactively reducing misbehaviour and addressing challenging behaviour when it occurs. The emphasis on proactive strategies to reinforce positive behaviour is intentional -evidence consistently demonstrates that interventions aimed at addressing challenging behaviour are more likely to have positive effects when the focus is on "positive responses to the challenge of misbehaviour—training teachers to positively encourage learning behaviours and putting in place reward systems—rather than primarily focusing on punitive measures" (Rhodes & Long 2019).

Understanding students and their behaviour



classroom.”

“One on occasion, a boy was trying to complete a worksheet. As I walked over to him, I asked him how he was going. He got up and threw his chair toward the whiteboard, pushed over his desk, ripped the posters off the wall and proceeded to trash the rest of the

As discussed in section 4.1, relationships between students and teachers are critical for the prevention and management of student misbehaviour. Building student-teacher relationships is an effective proactive classroom management strategy and can reduce instances of misbehaviour (Marzano, Marzano & Pickering 2003). These relationships are also important when misbehaviour does occur. When teachers know their students – their contexts, experiences, motivations, and interests - teachers can tailor responses to misbehaviour to best address the needs of the student. In this sense, a one-size fits all approach to misbehaviour is unlikely to be effective since different behaviours serve different functions. For example, consider two students - one who is disengaged and is misbehaving out of boredom, and another who is misbehaving to gain attention from the teacher. Giving the student a timeout would reinforce the first student's behaviour, but likely address the second's. Conversely, reprimanding the student and reorienting their focus to the task would address the first student's behaviour but reinforce the second's (Rhodes & Long 2019). This example demonstrates how important it is for teachers to know their students and tailor responses to ensure they are reorienting rather than reinforcing misbehaviour. Evidence suggests strategies that are not linked to the cause of the misbehaviour, may increase the occurrence of the problem by inadvertently reinforcing it (Epstein et al. 2008).

When teachers understand the behavioural hot spots in their classroom in terms of timing, setting, and instructional activities, for example, they can proactively develop class-wide and individual student strategies (such as a change in instructional groupings, the seating plan, or the order or pace of...instruction) to reduce the contribution of these classroom factors to students' problem behaviours.

–Epstein et al. 2008

Knowing student needs and how they learn is particularly critical in situations where misbehaviour is highly disruptive, or the student is exhibiting behaviours of concern. This is because students who need intensive support are more likely to benefit from specific, targeted interventions that may require additional training for teachers and/or a coordinated approach that involves teachers, leaders, carers, health professionals and other support staff (like psychologists, occupational therapists and speech therapists). Importantly, any targeted interventions should neither contravene the school's behaviour policy nor lower expectations for the student (Rhodes & Long 2019). Moreover, students (especially adolescents) have a strong sense of fairness and are therefore unlikely to respond well to any perceived differential treatment (Rhodes & Long 2019). Any intervention should be aimed at maximising the student's opportunity to participate in their learning and the wider school community. For example, specific strategies for children with additional needs will be part of an Individual Education and support Plan (IEP) that is developed in conjunction with parents and specialists. Wrap around planning, engaging relevant stakeholders combined with adequate whole of school structures/approaches will support students to regulate, relate and reason. Understanding a student from the perspective of neurodiversity and how the brain influences learning is central to the success of targeted individualised planning.



“Every day in the classroom is a new day. You never forget, but you must always forgive misdemeanours. We all make mistakes, and our students should understand that we will always give them a second chance (or third or fourth). We need to make a connection with our students, develop a relationship, before we can teach them anything.”

Some students, including students with disabilities, may have difficulty communicating their needs and therefore feel understandably frustrated when their needs are not met. They may also be using patterns of learning that require adjustments and supports across multiple contexts in which students move towards functional learning outcomes. In these cases, challenging behaviours may be exhibited as a way of communicating needs or a mechanism of dysfunctional learning patterns and can become reinforced when the behaviour successfully yields the desired result. This is not to say that challenging behaviours should be ignored. Rather it is important to acknowledge that students with diverse needs, for example, students on the autism spectrum, may benefit from strategies to support communication, social and sensory regulation needs, having well organised, predictable and structured environments and learning activities that build on a person's strengths (ASPECT 2015). For example, students with developmental disability may benefit from exercise throughout the day to decrease instances of challenging behaviour. A research study by Canella-Malone, Tullis and Kazee (2011), found that by providing students with

the opportunity to exercise several times per day (ranging from 1-20 minutes), challenging behaviours substantially reduced in students with a developmental disability and emotional disorders. They concluded that the use of exercise impacted the release of brain hormones that positively support regulation and the connection of neurotransmitters.



“There is always a reason for a behaviour, but it may not always make sense to you. Anxiety may show itself in poor self-control or excessive or loud behaviours, fidgeting or inability to sit still.

Remember that students want to build a relationship and may not know how to build one.”

It is also important to remember that language matters and there is no value in labelling or blaming students for challenging behaviour. Such an approach can be alienating and harmful to students with challenging neurodiversity and modes of operating. Strength based and resolution focused approaches build the capabilities of all stakeholders to understand the unique characteristics of the learners and will keep the focus on supporting the students to regulate, relate and engage in learning. Then where there is challenging behaviour, teachers can work with parents/carers and other specialists to provide a supportive and positive environment for the student. This may involve the development and implementation of IEPs and behaviour support plans. It may also require significant adjustments in the design of classroom and outdoor learning spaces.

In cases of repeated and complex challenging behaviour or diagnosed behaviour disorders, planning for regular complex case management and reviews will allow the team working with the student to build their understanding of what strategies, support the student to regulate, relate to others and reason, that is, to engage in learning. Teachers are integral to this planning because of their capacity to adjust the teaching and learning environment to positively impact the student. Building capable teams around a student with complex challenging behaviour are central to student growth.



“Don’t worry about falling behind and rushing to finish the planned lesson. Stop, wait and correct behaviour. Having students re-perform tasks such as lining up quietly and taking their seat again brings you great dividends in the long-run.”



📹 Where it's possible, teachers can use strategies such as the layout of the learning space, including access to key resources, to minimise disruptions and challenging student behaviour.

Functional behaviour assessment (FBA) may be beneficial to ensure the most appropriate behaviour support strategies are implemented for the student. An FBA identifies the triggers, contexts and consequences of behaviour as well as the function of the behaviour (that is, what it achieves for the student and how it may assist them to communicate their needs) and the information collected during an FBA helps design an individualised behaviour support plan (Leif & Ahlgren-Berg 2019). For example, completing a sensory profile, with the support of occupational therapists will provide insights into how a student is engaging in their world and where to target teaching and learning adjustments.

Recommendations for understanding student behaviour

In a review of research on class and schoolwide behavioural interventions, Epstein et al. (2008) developed recommendations for educators to reduce instances of problem behaviour in classrooms. Their first recommendation is to “identify the specifics of the problem behaviour and the conditions that prompt and reinforce it” (p. 6). They do not recommend all general classroom teachers carry out formalised functional behaviour assessments for all students who exhibit misbehaviour. Rather, teachers can benefit from using data on when/where and why behaviour occurs to inform their decision making on how to intervene to prevent misbehaviour in future. The authors recommend a three-step process that can be kept simple by limiting data capture to several days (or weeks, depending on the frequency of the behaviour/s) and using a chart/tally or schedule to monitor and collect the required information (Epstein et al. 2008):

1. Concretely describe the behaviour problem and its effect on learning. For example, rather than a general description (Sam is constantly disruptive in class), be specific – Sam disrupts the flow of a lesson by blurting out answers without raising his hand.
2. Observe and record the frequency and context of the problem behaviour. Note the time of day the misbehaviour occurs, where it occurs in the class/school, the subject/lesson content and type of learning activity, the task difficulty and the presence/participation of other students. Teachers could also consider checking with parents/carers to establish whether this is a pattern of behaviour in other settings.

3. Identify what prompts and reinforces the problem behaviour. Using data collected in steps 1 and 2, consider the triggers and payoffs of the student's behaviour. Epstein et al. (2008) suggest there are three common environmental triggers of misbehaviour

1. Curriculum triggers – tasks may be too difficult/easy or not structured in ways best suited to the student's learning style
2. Social triggers – the presence of certain peers or adults, specific group settings/activities
3. Setting triggers – specific contexts including time of day/week, or home factors including fatigue/illness/hunger.

Reflect on the payoffs for the student's behaviour including both teacher and peer reactions, to establish how these consequences may be reinforcing rather than redirecting the behaviour. Over time, patterns will become evident in the data collected.

The information collected through this process will help teachers mitigate future instances of misbehaviour and enable consistent corrective responses that reinforce appropriate behaviours.

Increasing positive interactions to reduce challenging behaviour

Evidence indicates the use of positive reinforcement is effective in reducing challenging behaviour (Browne 2013). This strategy assumes behaviour is learned and positive behaviours can replace negative ones through learning via positive reinforcement such as praise and rewards (for example, a tangible object or a desired activity). Importantly, the success of positive reinforcement depends on the precision and contingency of application, that is, the reward/praise must be given only when the desired behaviour has been displayed (Landrum & Kauffman 2006). It is also important to be specific about the behaviour being rewarded/praised and to praise the action rather than the person or a certain trait. Be sincere and acknowledge the student's response to the praise/reward (Greenberg, Putman & Walsh 2014).



"I have found that working proactively with families and other service providers produces the best results. [Student's] family regularly receives negative communications. To balance this out I provide as many positive emails/phone calls about positive situations, decisions and progress. As a result, the parents are mainly working with us rather than against us."

One promising method is to boost the use of behaviour-specific praise by considering the ratio of positive to negative interactions between teachers and students. "The 5:1 ratio theory is that for every criticism or complaint the teacher issues, they should aim to give five specific compliments, approval statements and positive comments or non-verbal gestures" (Rhodes & Long 2019). Evidence indicates this method of increasing positive interactions can improve students' on-task

behaviour, particularly in disruptive classes. Recognising and praising student achievements and strengths is also an effective way of raising student expectations of their success (Goss, Sonnemann & Griffiths 2017).

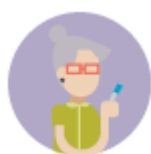
Another simple and low-cost strategy to increase positive interactions with students is to greet students at the door at the start of class. As discussed above, this is also an important strategy for positively engaging students in their learning. Personalised greetings promote appropriate transitions into class and learning time and help build connections between students and teachers (Rhodes & Long 2019). This approach to positive greetings is likely to work best when applied consistently at the school level, particularly in secondary education.

When misbehaviour occurs

Teachers need a range of strategies for “de-escalating confrontation, resolving conflict, redirecting unproductive (or destructive) behaviour, and reacting to antisocial behaviour in a just, productive and proportional way” (Bennett 2017). Reactive strategies involve calmly correcting inappropriate behaviour in ways that are consistent, clear, and proportional to the misbehaviour. For example, evidence indicates that explicit and direct correction/reprimand following instances of misbehaviour can decrease the behaviour in future – such corrections are most effective when delivered consistently and in a brief, calm and discreet manner (Simonsen et al. 2008).

Remaining calm in the face of challenging behaviour is critical as it reduces the likelihood of escalating the misbehaviour and increases the efficacy of corrective responses (CESE 2020a; Simonsen et al. 2008). Emotional and aggressive outbursts from students can be confronting for teachers, and vice versa. Whether this behaviour takes the form of physical aggression or verbal abuse, teachers need a framework for responding quickly to support the student and de-escalate the situation. The goal for the teacher is to avoid negative emotion and escalation, which can be particularly challenging while also teaching the rest of the class. Roffey (2011) offers a framework for responding to anger or strong emotion from students:

- Acknowledge the emotion being expressed
- Speak quietly and calmly and show sincere concern
- Show belief in the student's ability to manage their anger/distress
- Ask what would help the student at the moment, possibly a ‘timeout’, suggest a place to go
- Deal confidently with potential dangers
- If the student continues to be out of control ask another student to go for help (Roffey 2011).



“It was my first year as a Year Coordinator. I was in a rural school and still quite young and inexperienced. One day a Year 9 boy was sent to me for being rude to his HSIE teacher. Both he and the teacher were absolutely hopping mad. The male teacher was also quite young and there was obviously a lot of face-saving going on. The boy was determined to keep arguing his point and the teacher was just as determined! The boy was well known for having a short fuse and there was no way either of them were going to back down. When the boy was delivered to me, I was in class, so I asked him to wait outside for me (I didn’t want my class to get in on the act!). The time outside

allowed the student to cool down. I didn't realise the huge impact this would have on the way forward. He was a different student when I came back outside to talk with him. I allowed him to tell me his side of the story...

You should always allow a student to calm down if they are really angry and frustrated. Once calmer, they will almost always see reason (this has been my experience over and over and over throughout the years)."

Once the incident is resolved it is important for the teacher to reaffirm the limits of acceptable behaviour in the classroom and to reinforce the student's understanding of the reasons for the corrective response chosen at the time (such as a time out or reprimand). That is, following up with students after instances of misbehaviour helps them to reflect on what they can do in the future to avoid inappropriate behaviours (Roffey 2011). There are cognitively based strategies that teachers can use themselves, and teach to their students to develop self-monitoring and control, such as Marzano's 4-step strategy (Marzano, Marzano & Pickering 2003):

- Step 1: Notice when you are becoming angry, annoyed, frustrated or overwhelmed and stop whatever you are doing.
- Step 2: Ask yourself, what are the different ways I can respond to this situation?
- Step 3: Think about the consequences for each of your options
- Step 4: Select the action that has the potential for the most positive consequences

When students exhibit challenging behaviour, the whole class can be affected. In fact, evidence indicates that even when class-level (such as size, socio-economic status) and student-level (parental education, prior achievement) factors are controlled for, there is a significant, negative correlation between students' reports of classmates' disruptive behaviour and student achievement (Blank & Shavit 2016). That is, student achievement can be negatively impacted by classmates' misbehaviour.

Resource List

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers Focus area 4.3: Managing challenging behaviour

1. The UK Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has developed a guidance report and six recommendations for [!\[\]\(dc7e51158ef1f522a52c3cb2f4782fdb_img.jpg\) improving behaviour in schools](#)
2. As part of The Toolkits, Evidence for Learning (E4L) outlines the impact and cost of [!\[\]\(13784c51c4adf4fc55f27e83d56589a8_img.jpg\) behaviour interventions](#)
3. In the [!\[\]\(3f691d83851eed5b8632e71436dca9da_img.jpg\) behaviour support policy](#), the South Australian Department for Education outlines how to support positive student behaviour
4. The NSW Department of Education outlines their vision for inclusive education and effective behaviour support and management in the [!\[\]\(a43fe309867bd09c0bd6a4190bd1e222_img.jpg\) student behaviour strategy](#).

The following resources include strategies and activities teachers can use in their classrooms at specific points of time to address problem behaviours or encourage positive behaviours. Some of this guidance is tailored to students with additional learning needs or disability, and again offer specific point in time strategies teachers can utilise:

1. The US What Works Clearinghouse offers five recommendations and a guide for the prevention, implementation, and schoolwide strategies that can be used to reduce problematic behaviour
2. As part of the policy and advisory library, the Victorian Department of Education and Training offers guidance on student behaviour
3. Researchers at Monash University outline Functional Behaviour Assessment
4. Resources related to positive behaviour support from PBIS, Autism Spectrum Australia and Monash University.
5. In a series on classroom discipline, Dr Bill Rogers discusses how to follow up with a student beyond class time. Other podcasts in the series discuss discipline plans, and how a teacher can move into 'on-task' learning time.

4.4 Maintain student safety

What the Standards say: Ensure students' wellbeing and safety within the school by implementing school and/or system, curriculum and legislative requirements.

Student safety and wellbeing is a fundamental goal of classroom management. Through a schoolwide code of conduct and carefully implemented classroom rules, schools can maximise both the learning and safety of their students. School leaders play an important role in aligning these policies with system, curriculum and legislative requirements, and ensuring school staff are informed on legal and ethical issues related to classroom and behaviour management.

While teachers may find outwardly aggressive behaviours particularly challenging, of increasing concern is the incidence of disengagement and vulnerability, and an associated decline in mental health among Australian students. Maintaining student safety includes their social and emotional safety, and schools are prioritising wellbeing and engagement in learning as part of their schoolwide policies.

Prioritise wellbeing and engagement

Student wellbeing is strongly linked to learning. A student's level of wellbeing at school is indicated by their satisfaction with life at school, their engagement with learning and their social-emotional behaviour (Noble et al. 2008). Classroom emotional climate refers to the quality of social and emotional interactions that take place in the classroom between learners and the teacher and among students. Teachers who create a positive emotional climate are demonstrating to their students that it is a safe and valuable place to be. They can strengthen their classroom's emotional climate by being sensitive to their students' needs, engaging in

warm, caring, nurturing and congenial relationships with their students, taking their students' perspective into account, and refraining from using sarcasm and harsh disciplinary practices (Reyes et al. 2012).

Teachers whose classrooms have a positive emotional climate are aware of their students' emotional and academic needs and choose activities that encourage self-expression and accommodate their students' interests and perspectives. Students that feel their emotional wellbeing is supported in a classroom are more likely to self-regulate their behaviour and be engaged in their learning (Reyes et al. 2012). When teachers across a learning environment all endeavour to create a positive classroom emotional climate, they are thereby implementing a school-wide approach to students' wellbeing and safety.

Trauma-informed practice

As discussed above, there are a variety of influences on a student's behaviour. For example, for students who are trauma-affected, school can be a difficult place as trauma can affect a person's ability to learn, build relationships and self-regulate (CESE 2020b). There is increasing awareness and evidence of the impact of trauma on children and young people's development, particularly on executive function and behaviour, as "traumatised children may develop behavioural strategies to cope with their emotional responses to new stimuli or stressors in their environments" (Tobin 2016, p.9). While there is evidence in both psychological and neuroscience research of an association between childhood trauma exposure and cognitive functioning, the causal pathways between factors are still unclear (Hart & Rubia 2012). Trauma-informed practice offers educators a framework to understand, recognise and respond to trauma in ways that maximise the ability of trauma-affected students to learn while supporting their wellbeing (CESE 2020b). An evaluation of a small-scale Victorian pilot of the Berry Street Education Model, a trauma-informed strengths-based approach to education, affirmed a positive impact on student wellbeing, achievement, behaviour and engagement (Stokes & Turnbull 2016). This finding highlights the importance of adopting approaches to teaching and learning that are sensitive to student circumstances and encourage student safety and inclusion.



"My classroom management plan also included my red zone behaviours. All those high level behaviours and what I would do should they arise. This area included school policy plans, positive behaviour approaches and suggested consequences. This ensured I had a well thought out plan to ensure I remained calm as a teacher and knew what to do should the situation arise."

Addressing bullying and harassment

Bullying is a threat to student safety and wellbeing that can negatively impact their engagement at school. Teachers and schools can use behaviour interventions to improve student achievement by reducing antisocial and challenging behaviours, such as aggression, violence and bullying (Evidence for Learning 2020). Teachers play a crucial role in bullying prevention and intervention,

both within the classroom and in the wider school environment. Systemic, school-wide approaches to bullying prevention and intervention that are based on the understanding that all members of the school community are responsible for collective wellbeing are recognised as being the most effective (Veenstra et al. 2014). Teachers' confidence in addressing bullying and their perceived self-efficacy in handling such incidents are effective predictors of whether they will notice instances of bullying and whether their intervention will be effective (Barnes et al. 2012; Dedousis-Wallace et al. 2014). These factors also influence students' perceptions of bullying (Veenstra et al. 2014; Yoon & Bauman 2014). Therefore, the likelihood of bullying behaviours occurring is impacted by student perceptions of teacher responses to such incidents.

According to a review conducted by the CESE in NSW, the most effective anti-bullying interventions:

- Take a holistic, whole-school and whole community approach, which includes promoting awareness of anti-bullying interventions
- Include educational content in the classroom that allows students to develop social and emotional competencies and learn appropriate ways to respond to bullying, both as someone who experiences bullying and as a bystander
- Provide support and professional development to school staff to enhance understanding, skills and self-efficacy in addressing and preventing bullying
- Ensure systematic implementation and evaluation (CESE 2017b).

These strategies can help teachers and school leaders ensure that their school is a safe and inclusive environment for all their students. By taking a proactive approach to classroom management, teachers can help to limit instances of bullying and provide a nurturing environment in which all students feel they can thrive.

Schools also play a role in ensuring students are safe from gender-based violence, including sexual assault/harassment. Whole school approaches to fostering respectful relationships are crucial to promoting gender equality and preventing gender-based violence from occurring.

Maintaining the safety of marginalised students

Schools face important challenges in ensuring they are safe and inclusive spaces for students who belong to marginalised groups, for example, students with disability and students who are gender diverse.

Children with disability are more vulnerable to harm and abuse. In a survey conducted by Mission Australia, more than twice the number of young people (aged 15-19) living with a disability had experienced bullying in a 12-month period (43%) compared with respondents without disability (19%) (AITSL 2020). This can be due to a variety of reasons, including social isolation, communication difficulties, inaccessible pathways for students to raise issues, or lack of proper support (Commissioner for Children and Young People n.d.). Evidence from a variety of sources continues to demonstrate that students with disability (and their families) face exclusion and in some cases victimisation in Australian schools (AITSL 2020). This is particularly common for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD and ODD (Education Rights n.d.). As such, children with disability need special care and protection to ensure they are safe (Commissioner for Children and Young People n.d.).

Schools have a responsibility to ensure educational services and programs support all learners, so students with disability can feel they belong, are accepted by their peers, and are connected with friends and adults. Teachers, leaders, parents, students and support teams need to work together to offer personalised learning and support. Schoolwide positive behaviour support and proactive classroom management strategies are some of the effective processes to enhance the learning experience of students with disability (for resources, see AITSL 2020).

A survey of over 700 high school students from across the country found that the majority of students were learning in a school environment in which marginalising (e.g. homophobic/transphobic) language was common (Ullman 2015). Furthermore, the research found that staff were not responding to instances of homophobia and transphobia consistently. In instances where this language was used within earshot of school staff, they intervened less than 5% of the time. Close to half (45%) of students indicated they had witnessed physical harassment of classmates based on perceptions of their sexuality or gender on school grounds, with more than one in 10 (12%) indicating they witnessed this weekly. Where these instances occurred in front of school staff, only 12% of students indicated that they always intervened (Ullman 2015).

Teachers can help to make their classrooms safe spaces for students irrespective of their sexuality and gender identity, by actively addressing homophobia and transphobia in their classrooms. By establishing a classroom environment in which students feel safe to advocate for curricular inclusions and to report marginalisation, teachers can help to combat ambiguities, silences and oversights that can limit student wellbeing. A whole-school approach to making classrooms safe spaces for all students makes this an effective and genuine experience for students throughout their day, no matter which teacher they have or which classroom they are in.



📺 Teachers can help to make their classrooms safe spaces for students irrespective of their sexuality and gender identity, by actively addressing homophobia and transphobia in their classrooms.

Exclusionary practices don't work

Teachers and principals spend an incredible amount of time and effort supporting extremely complex student behaviours to ensure all students have the opportunity to attend school and engage in learning. While in extreme circumstances, exclusionary practices may be necessary, especially if the student poses a safety risk to teachers or other students, overall exclusionary processes are considered a last resort as they remove the opportunity for the student to improve on their behaviour, exclude the child from learning and may cause feelings of alienation against school, further exacerbating the problem.

Research examining exclusionary policies and practices in Australian schools and the impact they have on vulnerable children suggests unfair suspensions and exclusion of certain students, particularly boys, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and students with disability is occurring. Data from 2019 shows that school exclusionary practices are being disproportionately applied towards particular groups of students, such as:

- In Queensland, Indigenous students received a quarter of all fixed-term and permanent exclusions (25.3% and 25.4%, respectively), despite making up just over 10% of all Queensland's full-time state school enrolments.
- In Victoria, students with disability funding received 14% of all permanent exclusions yet constituted only 4.5% of all government school enrolments.
- In South Australia, over three-quarters of all suspensions were given to male students (77%), a ratio of over 3:1 compared to females (Sullivan et al. 2020).

In addition to being used disproportionately among certain cohorts of students, exclusionary practices can also result in significant learning loss, especially if home environments are not conducive to learning and reflection. Some strategies, like time-outs, may work well under certain conditions, but they can also serve to reinforce disruptive behaviours if a student is engaging in them to avoid classroom work (Goss et al. 2017). While exclusionary practices are part of the classroom management tools available to teachers and schools, as principals and teachers are aware, they should only be used as a last resort (Goss, Sonnemann & Griffiths 2017).

Schoolwide acknowledgement of exclusionary policies and practices, and a shared commitment to addressing and overcoming these are important in helping all students feel safe in their learning environment. Teachers also have an important role to play in their classrooms, in modelling appropriate behaviour and making all students feel safe, welcome and a part of their learning environment. This can enable them to support student safety and wellbeing for all learners, regardless of their similarities or differences.

Resource List

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers Focus area 4.4: Maintain student safety

1. The [!\[\]\(6807f3b3955a2567165e0e3d9ed59a05_img.jpg\) Australian Student Wellbeing Framework and Student Wellbeing Hub](#) aim to support schools to promote student wellbeing, safety and positive relationships so all students can reach their full potential.

2. The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth has developed [🔗 The Nest](#), a national plan for child and youth wellbeing.
3. The Australian Childhood Foundation and the Queensland University of Technology have developed [🔗 National Guidelines for Trauma-Aware Education](#).
4. The NSW CESE has published a summary of evidence on [🔗 trauma-informed practice in schools](#).
5. The NSW Government has released a resource on [🔗 classroom management and students with special education needs](#).

4.5 Use ICT safely, responsibly and ethically

What the Standards say: Demonstrate an understanding of the relevant issues and the strategies available to support the safe, responsible and ethical use of ICT in learning and teaching.

Technology is an integral and integrated part of young people's lives, with widespread use of smart phones, computers and other devices for social, educational and recreational activities. Increasingly, young people do not differentiate between the online and offline world. The majority (79%) of 5-8-years-olds have access to the internet, and this proportion grows to almost all of 9 to 11-years-old (96%) and 12 to 14-year-olds (97%) (Burns 2017).

The extended periods of online and remote learning that have occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic make discussions around the safe, responsible and ethical use of ICT in learning and teaching incredibly important. Current learning arrangements have further accelerated the introduction of ICT into classrooms and learning environments. ICT now forms a crucial part of a student's learning experiences.

Online safety

Many young people experience aggressive and confronting behaviours online. It has been estimated that one in five (20%) Australians aged 8-17 experience cyberbullying in a 12-month period (Katz et al. 2014). This may range from passive aggressive behaviours to aggression and cyberbullying (Corcoran, Guckin & Prentice 2015), noting that there is significant overlap between traditional face-to-face bullying that often occurs at school and cyberbullying (Katz et al. 2014). During periods of remote learning, many children and adolescents are spending extended periods of time unsupervised in online spaces. As a result, their safety can be compromised as they experience cyberbullying and other forms of harassment. Evidence suggests that cyberbullying has become increasingly prevalent during the COVID-19 pandemic (Barlett et al. 2021).

While some students may be at risk from online interactions with strangers, harassment from fellow students is far more common. Unfortunately, many young people do not know what constitutes inappropriate behaviours or how to respond to inappropriate online behaviours. Research conducted with over 1,600 school students from 6 Australian states and territories

found that when students do experience bullying, they are more likely to seek help from their peers or parents/caregivers than teachers (Rigby & Johnson 2016). It is therefore important that schools monitor and recognise signs of cyberbullying in virtual and remote spaces.

School-based strategies, as part of a comprehensive schoolwide behaviour management approach, is often effective in addressing cyberbullying (Cross et al. 2011), and should be underpinned by empathy which enables teachers to foster strong relationships with students across their school (El Sayed 2019). Overall, schools tend to respond to allegations of cyberbullying within the school context. Most reported incidents of cyberbullying occur on social media platforms, and young people who experience bullying are most likely to be aged between 13 and 15 years. Common school responses include informing parents, discussions and counselling with the students involved, general warning and classroom discussions, formal punishments in line with school policies, and, in more serious instances, referrals to the police (Katz et al. 2014).

Research has found teachers can employ the following strategies to help their students be safe online:

- Encourage students to take responsibility for managing their digital reputation
- Support and enable students to treat each other respectfully, online and offline
- Reinforce the importance of students protecting their passwords
- Educate students to remain safe and supported online by using technology in shared spaces in their homes
- Encourage students to think about where they are travelling online and whether it is safe
- Help students to be aware that people can pretend to be anyone they want online, so it is best to have friends online that they also know offline
- Encourage students who are bystanders to bullying to support anyone they see being bullied
- Enable students who experience or witness cyberbullying to tell an adult, at school or home (Cross et al. 2011).

As the school and classroom contexts increasingly involve online learning and engagement, teachers and schools need to tailor their responses to bullying and cyberbullying to suit these changing contexts as part of their classroom management approach.

Different classroom contexts

As noted earlier, AERO has outlined four evidence-based classroom management practices: establish a system of rules and routines from day one; explicitly teach and model appropriate behaviour; hold all students to high standards; and actively engage students in their learning (AERO 2021). These four tried and tested practices can also be applied when students and teachers are faced with disrupted or new classroom contexts, such as online learning, in which it is just as important to establish a system of rules and routines to provide students with predictability and structure. While some of these routines may be different from their traditional classroom, they still require explicit teaching and modelling of behaviour appropriate to the online environment. While remaining sensitive to personal circumstances, teachers can continue to actively engage students in learning to ensure students feel valued and supported.



“My context was a little different [Primary Distance Education] however I feel the following advice applies to the everyday classroom environment:

- *Build relationships. Relationship building is the key (slow and steady) student/parents. Share a sense to the child that they are safe, valued, loved & supported (in this teaching environment/ context).*
- *Be flexible. Don't hesitate to modify the curriculum to ensure engagement, fun, love of what you are learning. Each situation/context is different (trial and error).*
- *Be realistic. Don't get disheartened; seek out positive support (mentor/leadership) to help keep you positive in this journey (it can be very draining).*
- *School leaders. Allow for flexibility in your workforce (encourage alternative ideas/behaviour strategies). Support your teachers; invest in their process, their wellness & praise & celebrate their accomplishments.”*

Early research shows that classroom management factors that support remote teaching include collaboration between teachers to prepare and ensure a consistent experience across the school, effective technology support, and digital practices including:

- Developing an understanding of online etiquette
- Implementing strategies to monitor learning and provide feedback
- Modelling whole-class interactive learning from face-to-face approaches
- Providing individual remedial assistance and feedback
- Providing non-digital options and enabling the use of multiple devices
- Development of guidelines assisted in managing parental expectations (Kearney et al. 2021, p.6).

While online learning environments can present new challenges to both teachers and students, the foundational principles of classroom and behaviour management remain relevant. Creating spaces in which students feel safe, valued, included and therefore willing to come forward to seek support from trusted adults when they are struggling is just as important in physical classroom spaces as it is online.

Resource List

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers Focus area 4.5: Use ICT safely, responsibly and ethically

1. The eSafety Commissioner has released [online safety resources and training for teachers, schools and communities](#).
2. The Digital Technologies Hub aims to support the implementation of quality digital technologies programs and curriculums in schools and to support after school activities. It has [resources for teachers, school leaders, students and families](#).
3. The Evidence Institute and researchers from the University of Technology Sydney have developed a suite of [case studies exploring effective and innovative digital learning practices](#).

Australian teachers on classroom management preparedness and perceptions

Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) results from 2018 indicate that while managing classrooms is a common requirement for all teachers, there are some international differences in training, perceptions, need for professional development and time lost due to disruptive behaviour in schools.

In Australia, 84% of teachers reported that “student behaviour and classroom management” was included in their formal education or training, far higher than the OECD average of 72%. In terms of confidence, 45% feel “well prepared” or “very well prepared” for student behaviour and classroom management, which is just below the OECD average of 50%. This indicates that while teachers have received education on how to manage their classrooms, they don’t necessarily feel confident in doing so.

There are differing views on teacher preparedness to respond to classroom management challenges. Some research suggests beginning teachers are under-prepared to face these challenges, while other research has found no differences between the capabilities of beginning and experienced teachers.

Research conducted with 216 first-year primary school teachers across Australia in 2012 found they felt only ‘somewhat prepared’ in some elements of classroom management, for instance managing classroom disruptions, non-compliance among learners, and problems stemming from disorganisation. Crucially, their perceived preparedness to manage such behaviours had decreased significantly since completing their ITE course (O’Neill & Stephenson 2013). More recent research involving 80 beginning (0-3 years of experience) and experienced teachers (3+ years of experience) found no significant differences between their provision of emotional support, classroom organisation, and instructional support (Graham et al. 2020).



📹 In Australia, 82% of teachers feel that they can control disruptive behaviour in their classroom, compared to the OECD average of 85%.

TALIS results also indicate that only 5% of Australian teachers report that they have a high level of need for professional development activities in student behaviour and classroom management, in comparison to the OECD average of 14%. The percentage of teachers for whom “student behaviour and classroom management” was included in their recent professional development activities was 44%, in comparison to the OECD average of 50%. While teachers may be unsure of their preparedness, they are not necessarily seeking out professional development to complement their formal education or training in classroom management.

In Australia, 82% of teachers feel that they can control disruptive behaviour in their classroom, compared to the OECD average of 85%. Looking at the percentage of teachers who “agree” or “strongly agree” that they lose quite a lot of time because of students interrupting the lesson (26%, equal to the OECD average), it seems that Australia has similar difficulties with student behaviour as other countries.

Of the two TALIS questions on classroom climate, relations between teachers and students are generally positive, with almost all Australian teachers (97%) reporting that teachers and students usually get along on with each other, strongly comparable with the OECD average of 96%. However, more than one third (37%) of Australian principals report regular acts of intimidation or bullying among their students, which is considerably higher than the OECD average (14%) (OECD 2018).

While the problem of managing disciplinary issues is pressing and an impediment to instructional quality in schools across the globe (TALIS 2018), the issue is not comparatively worse in Australia.

International approaches to classroom management

As is the case in many issues in education, different countries take different approaches to classroom management. These approaches are informed by countries' unique social, cultural and historical characteristics. Below, we explore research on approaches to classroom management in the United Kingdom, Singapore, Finland, and New Zealand. While educational systems in these countries vary in their likeness to Australia's approach to education, these findings highlight the effectiveness of different approaches and demonstrate how classroom management is often informed by broader societal characteristics.

United Kingdom: reward- and sanction-based strategies for classroom management

As is the case in Australian schools, relationships between teachers and students are largely positive in the UK, with 97% of teachers indicating that teachers and students generally get on well with each other. One in five (21%) principals report regular acts of intimidation or bullying among their students, which is not statistically significantly different to the OECD average (14%) and is less than the proportion reported by Australian principals (37%) (OECD 2018; Viac & Fraser 2020).

Teachers in the UK face similar classroom management pressures, with two thirds (63%) of teachers reporting frequently calming students who are disruptive, which is broadly in line with the OECD average (65%) and the proportion reported by Australian teachers (60%).

Schools in the UK are required to utilise whole-school behaviour policies that are based on a system of rewards and sanctions. This approach is based on the belief that reinforcement and punishment are effective motivators for behaviour change among learners (Payne 2015). Students are informed of the school's behaviour expectations and the rewards they can expect if they meet expectations, and the sanctions they will receive if they fail to comply with the school's behaviour policy. By rewarding students for desirable behaviours and punishing them for undesirable behaviours, the intention is that undesirable behaviours will eventually cease to occur in the classroom. However, critics of this approach argue that it continues to rely on the notion of a "passive" learner and fails to consider the range of internal and external motivators that influence learners' behaviour in the classroom (Payne 2015).

A study examining the use of rewards and sanctions amongst 1,100 students aged 11-18 years found the single most successful strategy was contacting students' homes, i.e., their parents or carers, with positive feedback. Not only did this promote good behaviour and hard work, but it also benefited the teacher-student relationship. Incentives such as school trips were also found to be effective in encouraging good behaviour. Holding students back in class over break times to complete work had the potential to trigger negative responses from students, both in relation to their behaviour and their task-based work (Payne 2015).

A study comparing pre-service teachers' use, confidence and success in using various classroom management strategies found that pre-service teachers from the UK use significantly more strategies to promote or guide positive student behaviour than Australian pre-service teachers.

Specifically, pre-service teachers from the UK were more likely to use strategies related to differentiation, prevention and rewards. The research partly accounted for these differences through ITE experiences: in the UK, classroom management issues are embedded in other subjects, while in Australia ITE students often complete a discrete classroom management subject (Woodcock & Reupert 2017).

While pre-service teachers from the UK were more confident in using preventative strategies than their Australian counterparts, Australian pre-service teachers were more confident in using rewards and differentiation strategies. However, the relationship between usage and confidence amongst the cohorts was unclear. Overall, both cohorts found prevention-based strategies to be most successful in promoting positive and productive student behaviour and more intrusive corrective strategies to be the least successful (Woodcock & Reupert 2017).

Singapore: traditional approaches to classroom management

Teachers in Singapore broadly employ more traditional approaches to classroom management. Students and teachers are understood to have different social statuses and students are expected to always obey and respect their teachers (Cheng 2014). Classroom management is underpinned by the understanding that teaching is talking, learning is listening, and authority is hierarchical and bureaucratic. Overall, discussion within the classroom is teacher-dominated and performative in nature (Hogan 2014).

Like in Australian schools, relationships between teachers and students are generally positive, with 98% of teachers agreeing that students and teachers usually get along well. Furthermore, only 4% of principals report regular acts of intimidation or bullying among students, which is lower than the OECD average (14%) and far less than the proportion reported by Australian principals (37%) (OECD 2018).

However, as is the case across the OECD, classroom management is a prevailing issue for Singaporean educators. Approximately two thirds (64%) of teachers report frequently calming students who are disruptive, which is in line with the OECD average (65%) and slightly higher than the proportion reported by Australian educators (60%).

A study of 41 Singaporean beginning teachers and 13 of their mentors found that beginning teachers' attitudes and beliefs around people, instruction and classroom management are generally control-oriented. The beginning teachers involved in the research largely believed interventionist strategies are crucial to effective classroom management. Interventionist approaches to classroom management are based on the understanding that students' growth and development are driven by external regulations, which means teachers explicitly outline expected student behaviours, reinforce appropriate behaviours, and stop inappropriate behaviours (Quek 2013). These findings do not necessarily align with Australian research, which has found that students' classroom behaviour is strongly influenced by their physical, social and emotional state. This state is influenced by their internal beliefs about self, as well as external factors such as teachers, peers and family (Egeberg et al. 2016).

As mentioned previously, how teachers interact with students is often based on their personal beliefs and attitudes, such as about discipline and how children develop, as well as pedagogical and cultural traditions, which influence teachers' perceptions and belief orientation on what

effective classroom management looks like (Egeberg et al. 2016; OECD 2009; Quek 2013). Teachers' beliefs on classroom management approaches can be characterised as a continuum of control from low (e.g. student-centred, non-interventionist approaches) to high (e.g. teacher-centred, interventionist) teacher control, with the beginning teachers in the Singapore study leaning toward the interventionist view (Quek 2013). In Australian classrooms, students are generally regarded as active participants rather than passive recipients of their own learning (OECD 2009).

Finland: community-based approaches to classroom management

In Finland, the teaching profession is very highly regarded and teachers hold a high social status. Educators are delegated a high degree of decisional autonomy and education policies promote the status of educators. This, in turn, leads students to strongly value their school as a social institution (Arnesen, Elstad & Christophersen 2017). Students are also well-regarded within the education system - it is based on the view that children are one of the country's "most precious natural resources" (Wilkins & Corrigan 2019).

Students usually begin formal schooling at the age of seven and the same educator teaches the same cohort of students through primary school, i.e., students have the same teacher from Year 1 to Year 6 (Rytivaara 2012). Like in Australia, relationships between students and teachers are generally positive, with 97% of educators agreeing that students and teachers usually get on well with each other. However, relationships among students in Finland appear to be less positive, with 29% of principals reporting regular acts of intimidation or bullying among their students, which is twice the OECD average (14%), but is still less than the percentage reported by Australian principals (37%) (OECD 2019).

Classroom management takes a significant proportion of time for both Finnish and Australian teachers, with more than half (60%) reporting having to frequently calm students who are disruptive, which broadly reflects the OECD average (65%).

In Finland, the classroom environment is supportive, non-competitive and collaborative. Teachers carry out their instruction based on the assumption that all students can and will learn, and that they, as educators, need to be willing to support their students through their struggles and to provide all students with the time they need to learn (English 2018). Students are also given responsibilities inside and outside of the classroom that gives them meaningful ownership of their learning: they hold authority over parent-teacher meetings and can run for positions on school boards. Overall, teachers expect their students to be the "primary agent" in their learning journey (Wilkins & Corrigan 2019).

The Finnish approach to the teaching-learning relationship is underpinned by the concept of pedagogical love. This is manifested in a strengths-based approach to learning, which acknowledges that learners have particular strengths, such as emotional intelligence, creative imagination, and academic and physical ability, that can be addressed and enhanced through teaching and learning. Pedagogical love, therefore, aims to tap into students' strengths and interests and use these to enhance their self-esteem and self-image as active learners (Stehlik 2016).

This approach goes beyond learning and the curriculum, with trust, a sense of community and high expectations of students, the school and the wider school community featuring prominently in Finnish schools. For example, it is not uncommon for teachers and students to eat lunch together, allowing teachers to observe social behaviours and peer groupings while building a sense of trust and community. Some schools entrust their senior students with a key to the school, allowing them to access facilities as they please, including on weekends, further embedding the school as a positive part of their social network. Classroom management is embedded in a broader sense of community, responsibility and trust (Stehlik 2016).

New Zealand: positive approaches to classroom management

Like in Australia, relationships between teachers and students are largely positive in New Zealand, with almost all (97%) teachers agreeing students and teachers usually get on well with each other, the same proportion reported by the OECD average (OECD 2019). However, other statistics indicate that classroom management takes up a considerable proportion of teacher time. More than half (59%) of teachers in New Zealand report frequently calming students who are disruptive, similar to the proportion reported by Australian teachers (60%), and lower than the OECD average (65%). Furthermore, more than one third (35%) of principals report regular acts of intimidation or bullying among students, slightly lower than the proportion reported by Australian principals (37%) but more than double the OECD average (14%) (OECD 2019).

New Zealand schools use an evidence-based program of behavioural interventions called Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L), which is an adaptation of the international initiative Positive Behavioural Intervention and Supports. The school-wide component of PB4L aims to build a positive school-wide culture built on shared values and behaviour expectations that support learning. School staff engage in training days and cluster meetings with local schools and have access to School-Wide Practitioners who provide implementation support. An evaluation of the PB4L program found that it supports positive changes to school culture and has resulted in a decrease in major behaviour incidents among students (Boyd & Felgate 2015).

The Incredible Years Teacher program is also delivered under PB4L. It provides educators who teach 3-to-8-year-olds with behaviour management strategies that aim to foster a positive learning environment. The program aims to prevent and treat young children's problematic behaviours and promote their social, emotional and academic competence. An evaluation of the program has found that after participating in the program, students exhibited less disruptive behaviour and were more focused on their learning work, had better self-regulation, displayed more problem-solving skills, and could ignore the negative behaviours of others more (Wylie & Felgate 2016).

Conclusion

Effectively managing the classroom to create a safe, positive learning environment for all students is a core element of teaching, one that poses a perennial challenge to educators, no matter their level of experience, background, or context. Teachers consistently report that managing the range of classroom behaviour displayed by students, especially low-level disruptions and disengaged behaviours, is a constant challenge. The complexity of the task reflects the importance of effective classroom management for both student engagement and achievement.

There are a host of factors that influence the classroom environment, including teacher efficacy and experience but also student motivation and self-regulation, as well as the whole school context and parent, carer, and community engagement. While many of these factors are outside the control of teachers, there are concrete, evidence-based strategies teachers can use to proactively manage their classroom environments to minimise instances of challenging behaviours, and reactive strategies to help manage misbehaviour when it does occur. The evidence demonstrates the importance of establishing strong student-teacher relationships, engaging students in their learning, knowing students and their needs and setting out clear rules, routines and consequences for misbehaviour.

Consistency in the classroom and at the school level is critical to maximising the success of any intervention or strategy seeking to reduce and prevent misbehaviour. It may also be valuable to engage parents/carers to discuss the student's behaviour at home and establish consistency in approaches to managing their behaviour across contexts. Overall, there is no simple recipe that is guaranteed to de-escalate and fix every situation. While evidence consistently demonstrates that proactive strategies are most effective for reducing the likelihood of misbehaviour, reactive strategies are also important for assisting students who have misbehaved to improve their behaviour in future (Rhodes & Long 2019). A one-size fits all approach to this process is unlikely to work. As discussed throughout this Spotlight, students bring their own context into the classroom - their behaviour is an individualised manifestation of their experiences both inside and outside class. When students exhibit challenging behaviours, from low level disruptions to outbursts or aggression, it is important to consider the antecedents of the behaviour and, wherever possible, seek to address its root cause.

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In this Spotlight “classroom” refers to a learning space, particularly within primary, secondary or composite schools. Some research may be extrapolated to apply to early childhood settings or special schools, but not all research referred to will be applicable in these contexts.

Tell Them From Me is an online survey system that enables schools to capture the views of students, teachers and parents. It provides school principals and school leaders with insight into student engagement, wellbeing, and effective classroom and teaching practices at their school. It covers school and family factors that are known to influence student learning (CESE 2020a).

Psychosocial prevention strategies include packaged curricula and home-grown programs that address a range of social and emotional factors assumed to cause aggressive behaviour or instrumental in controlling it (e.g. social skills, emotional self-regulation). They use broad intervention approaches along with behavioural programs, social skills training, counselling/therapy etc (Wilson & Lipsey 2007).

Variable that is controlled or changed and assumed to impact the dependent variable.

Variable being measured that is ‘dependent’ on the independent variable.