

14. How can you manage disruptive behaviour?

Some pupils can be disruptive in class. Often disruptive behaviour happens because a pupil is finding the work difficult, or because their needs are not being met adequately. It is important that you always first try to identify a cause for a pupil's behaviour. For example:

- Are they trying to avoid doing work they find difficult?
- Can they see or hear well enough?
- Are they restless because of hunger?
- Do they feel insecure or scared about anything?

You should observe and write down when any disruptive behaviour takes place – this may provide clues about why the pupil is behaving in a particular way, and help you decide what action to take.



What can you do as a teacher to manage disruptive behaviour in a positive way?

- Pupils will often show warning signs of disruptive behaviour starting. If you can identify these, try to divert the pupil: for example, move closer and place your hand on his or her shoulder as you continue with the lesson. Or give the pupil something useful to do, like giving out or collecting in books.
- A pupil may benefit from having time out of class when he or she can rest. It is better for a pupil to behave appropriately all of the time he or she is in class, than to stay in class but behave inappropriately because of not being able to concentrate for long periods. You can then try increasing the length of time that the pupil spends in class.
- Try repositioning the pupil in the classroom.
- Give over-active pupils meaningful tasks to do, such as giving out work and tidying the room so that their energy is directed towards appropriate behaviour.
- Encourage, praise and reward appropriate behaviour. If you only tell them off for behaving badly, they will only learn what they are not to do, but will not learn what they should do.
- Rewards often work better when the whole class earns a 'treat'. This puts peer pressure on a disruptive pupil to behave appropriately.
- Use your tone of voice, facial expression and short simple sentences to convey your displeasure at a pupil's behaviour. Always remain calm and in control – do not shout.
- Punishments are only effective if pupils can understand the link between the punishment and their behaviour, and if it is something they do not like (for example, missing playtime). For some pupils who want to avoid doing work, standing outside the classroom may feel like a reward. Likewise do not set extra work as a punishment, as the pupil will then associate it with bad behaviour.

- Do not threaten a pupil with a punishment unless it is something you can carry out and are prepared to go through with. Make clear to the pupil the consequences of his or her behaviour. For example, if a pupil hits another pupil, then he/she will stay in the classroom with you and not play outside.
- Try to avoid handing over your authority to others. For example, sending a disruptive pupil to the head teacher gives the message that you are not as important as the head. It is much better for you and the head teacher to see the pupil together.
- Try to find out from a pupil's family if the pupil shows the same behaviour at home. If so, you can work with the family to develop a consistent approach to responding to the behaviour.
- Remember – an approach that works for one pupil's behaviour, may not work with another. Planned and consistent responses are the keys to success.

Reference:

Adapted from:

UNESCO (2001) *Understanding and Responding to Children's Needs in Inclusive Classrooms*, France: UNESCO

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001243/124394e.pdf>

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