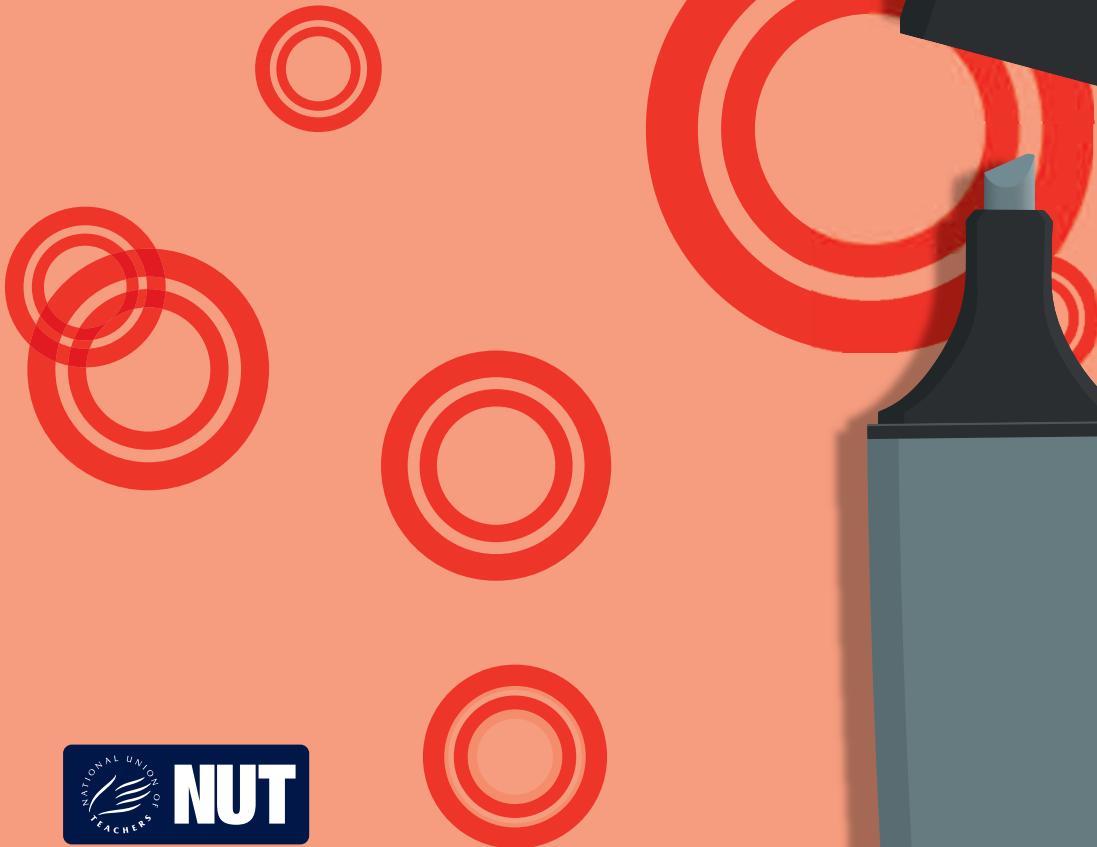


# Managing behaviour



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# Dear colleague

All teachers, whether they are new to the classroom or with many years of experience, can sometimes find pupil behaviour challenging and undermining. It has happened to all of us but remember that behaviour management skills improve with experience.

It is important that you quickly familiarise yourself with the school's own behaviour policy and practice as each one may have different procedures and expectations of staff.

This guide provides some behaviour management tips to assist you. They address concerns expressed by many new teachers.

We are proud to bring you a wide range of continuing professional development and training opportunities whilst you are on your way to gaining QTS. The Union regularly runs courses on behaviour management. For all our courses visit [www.teachers.org.uk/courses](http://www.teachers.org.uk/courses)

Yours sincerely



Christine Blower  
Outgoing General Secretary  
National Union of Teachers

This guide was compiled with the help of Dreyfus Training & Development [www.dreyfusltd.co.uk](http://www.dreyfusltd.co.uk) working with the NUT continuing professional development programme.



## Using the CASPER approach

The CASPER approach can help you remember key ideas about behaviour management. Think – Calm, Assertive, Status Preservation, Empathy and Respect.

**Calm:** You should always try to appear calm, even if you are not feeling calm. The first step in a difficult situation is to create thinking time, take a deep breath.

**Assertive:** Have good eye contact, state your needs clearly and use ‘I’ statements, eg “I need”, “I want”.

**Status preservation:** Pupils operate within a peer group. When correcting behaviour, always be aware of this and use private rather than public reprimands.

**Empathy:** Show empathy. Avoid challenge questions such as: “What do you think you are doing?”

**Respect:** Model appropriate behaviour to reinforce your expectations. Always show children and young people respect, even if they are disrespectful.

## Taking control

You are the class teacher and to show that you are in control you should:

- ensure that lessons are engaging and cater for different learning styles
- be aware of different abilities to concentrate
- build on pupil interests wherever possible within curriculum confines
- establish a reward system that children and young people value
- ensure that inappropriate behaviour is dealt with consistently and fairly
- enlist the help of a senior staff member to advise on behaviour issues.

## Managing entry to the classroom

How pupils enter the classroom can set the tone for the entire lesson or session. Some schools have set procedures whereas others leave this to the discretion of individual teachers.

If your pupils don't stop talking when entering the room:

- establish routines outside the classroom, eg line up outside class, let pupils in one at a time
- rehearse the rules with the whole class
- give pupils a challenge on paper as they come into the classroom. This way they have something to do as soon as they come in.

## Seating plans

Seating plans serve a number of purposes:

- they subtly communicate that the teacher has control over and/or responsibility for managing the classroom environment
- they assist the teacher in managing that environment and learning names, which is very useful in the early stages
- they enable the most efficient and least disruptive grouping of pupils.

So, what do you do if the seating plan does not seem to be working?

- if the problem involves several pupils, reinforce the plan by displaying a copy
- if the issue is with an individual's non-compliance, use a measured approach that includes assertive 'I' statements, "I need you to move to ... so that you can learn better"
- be consistent, "No you can't move". The broken record – they get bored of asking
- do not be deflected by promises to be good. If you need someone to move, you need someone to move. Giving in may restore immediate peace but will be a store for future problems. Pupils may come to view you as a teacher who doesn't mean what she or he says and doesn't provide secure structures.

## Positive encouragement

Here are some approaches you could try with a pupil who does not always respond well to praise:

- use small, understated praise, to the individual not the whole class
- involve the parent/carer, eg send positive postcards home
- implement a whole class reward system to avoid singling anyone out
- ask the child to choose a target for the lesson and give reward/praise if met (even if other behaviour was inappropriate)
- give the pupil a role/responsibility within the class
- praise work done rather than behaviour
- set a personal/social/emotional target
- encourage the child to keep a diary of positives/negatives
- have one-to-one or group confidence/self-esteem-building activities
- organise circle time appropriate to their needs.

## Using your voice

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

- signals anger to the pupils
- teaches pupils that it is acceptable behaviour
- will make a noisy class noisier
- isn't good for you. Losing your voice is a real danger, particularly during the early stages of your career.

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

Remember to teach and model the different noise levels and voices that are appropriate for the context. For example, silence; pair voices; group/table voices; classroom voices; to project their voices when making a contribution to the whole class or answering a question; and playground voices, which are unacceptable in classrooms.

## Positive engagement with pupils

If you find yourself getting drawn into arguments with pupils:

- don't accept the invitation
- use the partial agreement technique, eg "I understand that you want to sit next to your friend but your place is over there"
- have planned responses
- state the instruction and walk away. Allow the student time to conform and assume that they will
- don't display your stress. Always appear calm and in control
- take a deep breath
- use the language of choice and consequences.

## Following the school's behaviour policy

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

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

## Being assertive

To be an assertive teacher:

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

## Staying on task

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

- provide a choice of two or three tasks, this may help if the reason for disengagement is boredom with the set task
- deliver gentle reminders to individuals or groups. Standing by them and saying nothing may work without you having to use a lot of emotional energy
- pause the activity and select pupils to feedback what they have done so far
- use positive encouragement, "You've made a good start. Now what do you need to do next?"
- set and stick to time limits for tasks
- make changes to your seating plan
- ask open questions, "What should you be doing now?"
- review the task. Was it interesting, relevant, appropriate? Did the pupils have the resources they needed to do the task well?

## Low level chatter

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

- give pupils legitimate opportunities to talk, eg talk to partner, small group work
- introduce a 'teacher puts their hand in the air' signal. When pupils see this, they work in teams quickly to put their hand up and stop talking
- use challenges to get them all to be quiet as quickly as possible, eg "That took 30 seconds. That's good but, next time, see if we can halve it"
- clap your hands/sound a horn/use a musical instrument
- write instructions on the board
- set a task as soon as they enter the room. They might be more willing to listen as a result
- use engaging short tasks
- set rules, eg "When I ring the bell, that means I need you all to be quiet"
- build relationships. Pupils are more likely to respond to a teacher they like and respect.

## Managing calling out

To manage inappropriate calling out from pupils:

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

## Answering back

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

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

## Responding to attention seeking behaviour

In response to pupils whose behaviour is attention seeking:

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

## Engaging reluctant pupils

To deal with a pupil who is reluctant to take instruction, eg move seat, return to work after they have received a warning:

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

## Managing pupil comments

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

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

## Working with parents

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

- clarify the school's expectations that should be set out in the home/school agreement
- develop positive relationships with the parents
- explain that the school seeks to work in partnership with parents
- let them know when their child has behaved well
- let parents know that their views are valued
- keep a reasonably detailed and factual record of incidents like, "Ethan left his seat, went across the classroom and hit James on the back" rather than, "Ethan disrupted the lesson and prevented others from learning"
- seek advice on school procedures for meeting parents from your mentor.

## You're not alone

No member of the NUT should feel alone when facing pupil behaviour which is threatening or undermining. All teachers at various points in their careers need guidance and support from colleagues, from specialist services or from their union because of pupil behaviour.

Schools should provide systems of support for teachers. The school behaviour policy should explain what teachers can and should do when they are experiencing persistent disruptive behaviour, or violent or threatening behaviour, from pupils.

If you need support and advice about how to engage with a particular pupil or class, speak to your mentor or a teacher colleague.

## How do I get in touch?

As an NUT member you have access to excellent advice and support.

Your first point of contact for advice and support from the Union is your NUT workplace representative. If there is no NUT representative in your workplace, in England you should contact NUT AdviceLine and, in Wales, NUT Cymru.

For advice and guidance in England contact:

### **NUT AdviceLine**

Tel: **020 3006 6266**

Email: [nutadvice@nut.org.uk](mailto:nutadvice@nut.org.uk)

In Wales contact:

### **NUT Cymru**

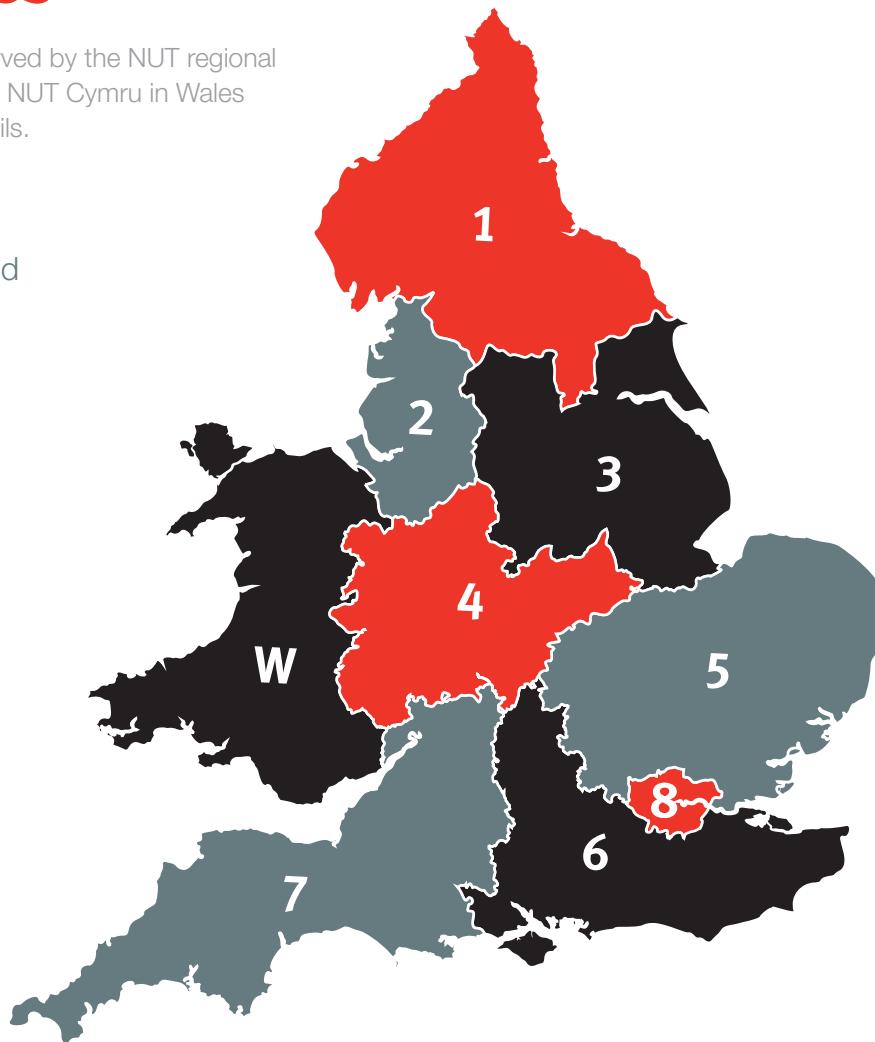
Tel: **029 2049 1818**

Email: [cymru.wales@nut.org.uk](mailto:cymru.wales@nut.org.uk)

## NUT regions and Wales

Here are the areas served by the NUT regional offices in England and NUT Cymru in Wales and their contact details.

- 1 Northern
- 2 North West
- 3 Yorkshire/Midland
- 4 Midlands
- 5 Eastern
- 6 South East
- 7 South West
- 8 London
- W Wales



**NUT Northern Regional Office**

Tel: 0191 482 7700

Email: [northern@nut.org.uk](mailto:northern@nut.org.uk)

**NUT North West Regional Office**

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Email: [north.west@nut.org.uk](mailto:north.west@nut.org.uk)

**NUT Yorkshire/Midland Regional Office**

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**NUT Midlands Regional Office**

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**NUT Eastern Regional Office**

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**NUT South West Regional Office**

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**NUT London Regional Office**

Tel: 020 8477 1234

Email: [london@nut.org.uk](mailto:london@nut.org.uk)

**Wales – NUT Cymru**

Tel: 029 2049 1818

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