CHAPTER 4: YOU AND YOUR CLASS

This chapter is about establishing the relationships you want to have with all your students. The ideas and approaches here help prevent difficult situations from arising in the first place. They maximize the chances of everyone having a good time.

In your teacher role you are in a position of authority. How you demonstrate that authority is important. This chapter encourages you to think through the positions you might take with your class group and their potential outcomes. It shows you how to stay in charge of proceedings but also develop respectful interactions that provide for some choice and enhance self-control.

Many studies outline the qualities of an effective teacher. These include skills, personal characteristics and classroom climate (Hay McBer, 2000). Characteristics include being infectiously optimistic, a good listener, showing commitment, a taker of blame and a celebrator of others and having a clear philosophy (Brighouse, 2000, cited in Sharp, 2001). This chapter outlines how to develop approaches and skills that produce an optimal classroom climate.

Think positive

The vast majority of students are OK. They may be noisy, lively, cheeky and a bit challenging but with the right approach you will get along together and they will not make your life a misery. Take the 'wrong' approach and you will be digging a hole for

yourself. There is every reason to believe that unhelpful or unskilled responses from teachers exacerbate and entrench some difficulties that would otherwise evaporate. The emphasis here is on what is meant by 'the right approach'.

There will be a few kids having a rough time because of what is currently happening in their lives. Difficult students are usually dealing with difficult circumstances and school needs to be a safe place. Although you and your biggest challenges are the focus of Chapter 7 read this chapter first. Good practice for all students is good practice for challenging students and vice versa. Your response to students who are hard to manage will impact on the rest of your class.

Your primary approach to all students need not, however, be determined by the potential impact of a few. Your days do not have to be prescribed by fear of what might happen if you don't keep a tight rein. You have a choice. Either you go into the fray prepared 'to get the better of them' or you think about how to encourage self-discipline in your students within an atmosphere of positive relationships and mutual respect.

You can see the classroom as a battleground, where the strongest win and the toughest survive. Plenty of teachers embark on the next round every time they go through the door. Others have given up and believe the kids already have the upper hand. Their aim is just to get through the lesson: somehow, anyhow. They make little effort to make the lesson lively and interesting because 'what's the point?' The battlers, the bereft and the cynics in the staffroom agree -- it's hell out there.

But many teachers do not believe this is the case, and have chosen to view their interactions in the classroom differently. There are certainly issues of power and control in the classroom, but there are several ways of thinking about this. It is wise to take action on the basis of considered alternatives. This chapter provides you with information on which to weigh up your options: it shows which factors facilitate a positive outcome and which make it more difficult.

Expectations

One of the difficulties for new teachers is to be clear about what behaviour they require in the classroom:

- Is it important that students are quiet and listen? Always? If not, in what circumstances?
- Should everyone do as they are asked immediately?
- When does a question become an argument? What does this mean?
- Is bad language OK so long as it isn't intentionally abusive or do you make a point of pulling kids up on every four letter word you hear?
- Should students be allowed to eat in class?
- When is helping each other cheating?

You can find answers to some of these questions by checking behaviour policies (see Chapter 5). If specifics are not included then find out what other teachers do. You need to work as far as possible within the culture of the school and most of that will not be written down. What is acceptable in an inner city high school is unlikely to be the same

as a primary school in a wealthy suburb. You cannot address everything. Some things are important for the effective running of your class and some are best ignored.

Small children come into school with a range of different experiences and expectations. Some have routines and values that mirror those of the school, others do not. It is important to teach children what is expected and give them opportunities to practice and be rewarded for compliance. Too many pupils in their first school get labelled as 'behaviour problems' before they have had a chance to discover some good feelings about other ways of being (Roffey and O'Reirdan, 2001). Teenagers, too, benefit from some basic instruction on expectations. High school teachers who spend time with students practising coming into the classroom in an orderly way are more likely to have settled classes sooner and save time in the long run.

Expectations are more than complying with specific routines. If you expect your students to be just wonderful this can be a self fulfilling prophecy -- if you expect them to be the worst in the school they will live up to the reputation and expectation.

> *One year six class was encouraged to think of themselves as the best in the school and that they had been allocated their particular teacher because of this. The students will tell you that they were hand picked. The results they are achieving compared to the previous year are amazing. The truth is that, for several reasons, they were a class that was failing. The change is in expectations of themselves and what they felt their teacher required of them.*

Focus on what is going well and reinforce the behaviour you want

Acknowledgement is highly rewarding. Give attention to what you want, not to what you don't want. Comment positively on students who are doing as you have requested. Avoid a simple 'well done' but state ' well done for….'. Thank /acknowledge conforming students before you comment on non-compliance, especially those near students having more difficulty. This is known as 'proximity praise' and works a treat (Canter and Canter, 1976).

If students are still not conforming remind them before reprimanding them. 'What have I asked you to do ' is less confrontational than 'Why aren't you doing what I told you?' Asking questions that gain a definite 'yes' response lead to a more cooperative class. For example: 'Is everyone clear about the instructions?'; 'Has everyone got a pencil*?'*

Almost everyone responds well to positive feedback but be careful how you do it. Some children just don't respond well to praise. Comments should be brief, genuine and specific. Just a thumbs up can be useful sometimes. Second hand praise is especially effective. Tell a parent /other teacher /anyone (!) about a student's achievements either in their hearing or where you know the positive messages will get back to them.

Another way to focus on the positive is to occasionally give out raffle tickets for specific behaviours -- such as excellent clearing up, kindness to others. In a primary class the raffle is called on Friday afternoon and five students get small prizes -- such as chocolates or special pencils. In a secondary school classes the raffle could be held

every half term and the prizes perhaps fewer but worth more -- perhaps a voucher for a local café. It is important that children who have most difficulty complying get sufficient rewards to motivate them.

Some teachers find whole class reinforcement even more useful. The 'marbles in the jar' strategy means dropping a marble -- or button -- into a jar every time a specific behaviour is noted from an individual or group. The whole class gets a treat when the jar is full. The teacher monitors how quickly the jar gets filled. This has to be soon enough to maintain interest but not too easily achieved either. Marbles do not get taken out for any reason! (Canter and Canter, 1976)

Rules, regulations, rewards and sanctions

Spend time with students at the beginning of the year working out the ground rules for interaction in the classroom. What do they think is reasonable? Ensure that everyone gets a say, so that decisions are not dominated by a few loud voices.

Encourage rules beginning with 'do' rather than 'don't' and keep the list brief. Spend time talking about what these mean in practice and defining words such as 'respect'.

Students do need to know there are consequences for continuous unacceptable behaviour. It should be clear what these are. It is important to grade rewards but even more important to grade sanctions/consequences. Research shows that it is the consistency of sanctions that is effective, not the severity. Strong punishment for a

minor misdemeanour leaves nothing in reserve for serious incidents (Comerford and Jacobson, 1987). Always give choices to comply and warnings before consequences are imposed.

Though you may never need it, having a safety net of agreed school strategies for extreme behaviour can be reassuring, You will know what to do if and when necessary.

Testing you out

Be prepared! Nearly all student groups test out new teachers to find out how they respond. This is not necessarily all the students in a class, but some take on that role while the rest watch with great interest. Expect to be challenged, cheeked and checked! Shock, horror and defensiveness are rarely helpful responses. You need to keep your cool and composure. You will establish credibility if you respond with lightness and humour while making it very clear what you consider acceptable or not. This enables you to stay in control of yourself and the situation. Becoming angry, defensive or embarrassed indicates that you have, to some extent, lost it.

Links between pedagogic and parenting styles

Within the school environment teachers are 'in loco parentis'. They are supposed to take the place of parents in caring for students responsibly.

There has been much research carried out on various parenting styles and their outcomes (Baumrind, 1971, 1991; Steinberg et al 1994) and it is worth making connections with teaching styles. Note that these are described here in stereotypical forms. Most parents and teachers have elements of these styles. The first two described here are more likely to surface under stress (see Chapter 3 for reducing stress levels).

Permissive parenting

This style is warm and responsive but does not set any clear expectations or boundaries. Children are not unloved but are all over the place. Basically they are allowed to do much as they like and demand what they want. Parents may be human doormats: walked all over by tyrannical toddlers or jumping at their older child's beck and call. There is little tuning into the process of parenting, which means that expectations do not change with age and development. No one helps children to make good decisions or to problem-solve effectively. There is poor consistency and consequently not much sense of security. There is little expectation that others have to be taken into consideration or that waiting for something is perfectly acceptable. This parenting style may have its roots in a philosophy of child-centred development and the importance of freedom of expression. More often it comes about because parents don't know what else to do or are too stressed and exhausted to stand their ground or follow anything through.

FIGURE 4.1 ABOUT HERE

The permissive teacher: the child-sitter role

Such teachers are likely to say that the kids are just great -- to start out with at least. Being liked by the students is often important to them so they don't make any demands that might rock the boat. In these classrooms 'anything goes'. Teachers may be friendly and responsive but are not very pro-active or organized. Things happen haphazardly and before long students may turn the classroom into an indoor playground. Students might like this at some level but it does not raise their self-esteem and eventually their behaviour simply deteriorates. Learning takes place incidentally rather than in structured ways. School students might like such teachers but do not respect them. Even good students become demotivated by classroom chaos.

> *Andy was getting on for 40 but he did his best to wear what the high school kids were wearing, including a couple of piercings. He patted the boys on the back and called them 'mate' and talked football and horse racing to a select few who shared his passions. He rarely took much time to prepare for lessons so the exercises he did give were simply copied from texts. He got round to marking these eventually. Some of the more committed students got through his lessons this way and achieved exam passes. He managed the more difficult kids by letting them talk about music or films or sport. They didn't do well. Andy thought he was a great teacher.*

Some teachers end up being 'permissive' by default. They have tried to assert control and it hasn't worked. These teachers are often those who were not very confident to start with and quickly lose the will to establish order.

Outcomes

If age appropriate demands are not made on children they have nothing to respond to. If other people do things for them all the time they do not learn to stick at anything or become independent. This leads to immaturity, over dependence and impulsive behaviour. The research indicates that negative outcomes are particularly evident for boys who do not achieve well. (Baumrind, 1971) Children need structure and consistency if they are to become independent learners. The permissive teacher is not doing the students any favours. Pupils are likely to recognize this and lose their respect.

Authoritarian parenting

This is where we see high control but also low warmth. In an authoritarian family children are expected to do as they are told -- or else. It is the 'do as I say, not as I do' school of parenting. There is a high value on conformity and obedience and little value placed on negotiation or flexibility. Adults are supposed to be respected just because they are adults. Authoritarian parents do not take into account that children have different needs at different ages. It is not surprising that they most often resort to punishment.

FIGURE 4.2 ABOUT HERE

The authoritarian teacher: the police officer role

You can sometimes hear authoritarian teachers as you walk around a school. They are the ones who are shouting and laying down the law. Rules are not agreed or negotiated

but imposed. Whatever the volume of their voices you do not see these teachers do much listening. They do not ask, they tell. Such individuals are primarily concerned about maintaining control within the school organisation; they are not interested in developing relationships. Consequently they are not likely to see strengths as well as deficits in individuals. It is easier for an authoritarian teacher to label and blame rather than accept the ambiguity of a whole person. They can be bullies to both students and other staff alike. Authoritarian teachers who mirror authoritarian parents will frighten smaller children and may be on a collision course with adolescents. Many teenagers are intent on rebelling against authority of any sort -- you may be headed for some time consuming challenges if this is your chosen approach.

> *Mustapha, aged 14, was frequently absent from school. His mother could not speak English and often kept him home to translate for her when she went to the doctor's or to the housing office. The family were struggling to afford proper school uniform and this was another reason for his absences. One of the senior teachers suggested that Mustapha came to school in his ordinary clothes until the issue of uniform could be sorted out. The next day Mustapha came into school late to be met by another of the senior management team. Without giving the boy a chance to explain he shouted that the school rules were not to be flouted and Mustapha was not going to be allowed into school without the appropriate clothing. Mustapha swore at him and did not come to school again for a term.*

Outcomes

Younger children may be anxious, even fearful of authoritarian approaches. They are often withdrawn and certainly unhappy. As they get older they become more and more angry. Sadly they relate to others in a hostile way and may be isolated from their peers. There is a potential gender difference where girls lack the willingness to explore the world and boys show high levels of defiance. Children who live in families where there is violence show similar outcomes. The boys' anger and defiance, however, often masks a high level of depression and anxiety (Sternberg et al, 1993; Jaffe et al 1986).

Students may behave well out of fear when an authoritarian teacher is present but when they are not there the kids run wild. Bullying behaviour is modelled as permissible. Pupils who are always told what to do are denied the opportunity to learn self control and decision making. They develop an 'external locus of control' which means not taking responsibility for their own actions.

Authoritative / facilitative parenting

Authoritative parents make reasonable, age-appropriate demands on their children but are also warm and responsive to their needs. Relationships and communication are valued highly. Authoritative parents have clear expectations and values and are consistent about boundaries. Children know where they stand. These boundaries however are not fixed in stone for all time and are flexible and negotiated according to age and level of responsibility. Children are encouraged to be involved in decision-making. Facilitative parents give their children the skills to become independent. Rather than being controlling they encourage the development of self-control. They model

appropriate social behaviours and provide a foundation for problem solving and other life skills. Authoritative families pay great attention to the process of parenting rather than goals. Children are encouraged to be the best that they can be, not what parents have pre-determined they should be.

FIGURE 4.3 ABOUT HERE

The authoritative / facilitative teacher: the conductor role

Such teachers have high expectations of students but are also sensitive to classroom dynamics and to individual needs. They are able to be flexible in delivering the curriculum. Students are guided and encouraged, not dictated to. This enables students to develop self-control in the classroom rather than having control imposed. Teachers who are like conductors are very aware of what is going on. They pick up on potentially difficult interactions and take quick action to prevent escalation.

In a five-year study looking at differences between effective and ineffective teachers Kounin identified that it was the way that teachers pre-empted troublesome behaviour that made the difference (Kounin, 1971). He summarized these teacher skills as 'withitness'. 'overlapping', 'momentum' and 'smoothness'. All of these indicate high awareness of what is going on in the classroom and of being in charge of procedures. Such a teacher:

- has well established routines for students: e.g. how to gain attention, enter a class
- is well prepared and has clear expectations for the lesson

- gives clear instructions to the class group while moving towards students who are beginning to disrupt
- gives attention to individuals and small groups without having his back to the rest of the class
- scans the class frequently
- has brief interactions with many students rather than lengthy ones with a few
- changes the direction and pace of a lesson if students are becoming restless
- prepares students for transitions between activities -- gives notice that they are coming to the end of one activity and concise instructions about the next task
- lets students know by presence, eye contact or gesture that he is aware of any unwanted behaviour
- pays minimal attention to minor disruptions, however, so as not to disrupt the flow of the lesson.
- informs students regularly how they are doing
- gives positive feedback
- keeps all students involved and active
- encourages 'accountability' or demonstrations of engagement such as asking questions.

Kounin also coined a term he called 'the Ripple Effect'. This refers to how a teacher's way of handling unwanted behaviour affects others in the class. Giving a rationale for behaviour works well: 'Silence while I give instructions means no-one loses out'. Firmness and a concerned emotional engagement rather than blandness in interactions

both have a positive ripple effect. Showing anger or irritability does not promote wanted behaviour from other students.

Outcomes

Children who grow up with authoritative parenting have the best outcomes. Because they are expected to think for themselves and make decisions they develop a sense of self-efficacy and self-confidence. Authoritative teachers bring the students along with them and provide them with the skills to learn self-discipline. Some students are not used to this and at the outset may run wild when they see someone not be disciplinarian. Clear, consistent negotiated boundaries are the way to begin.

The following shows some of the different ways a facilitative teacher might operate.

A purposeful classroom:

Arrive at your class punctually -- it gives messages about your own organisation and also about caring for the students. They matter enough for you to be there on time.

Establish ways of entering the classroom and getting settled. Everyone pushing and shoving does not set up a helpful ambience. Ask students to give you a certain signal when they are ready to start, perhaps just seated and looking your way.

There are hundreds of interactions a day between pupils and teachers and you can't pay equal attention to all of them -- it is exhausting. It is valuable to spend a little time establishing regular routines in your classrooms. This means making sure that

expectations are clear, consistent and predictable so everyone knows what to do and how to do it. This contributes to an atmosphere of stability, reassurance and success. Phrase expectations positively and display a short list, no more than seven, at eye level centrally in the class.

Your students will be more engaged with learning if you are well prepared. This includes:

- curriculum content: what you intend to cover
- relevance and meaning: ways of tuning into student interest
- differentiation: providing for the different learning needs in your class
- materials and equipment: having all you need in working order.

You need to know what your lessons will be covering in terms of the curriculum and how you are going to incorporate your students' lives so that they can relate to the material. There is good evidence to show that making content meaningful in some way to students and building on their knowledge, however unconnected this may seem to be, initiates engagement with the curriculum and this in turn limits behavioural difficulties (Assor, Kaplan and Roth, 2002).

Do not begin the lesson until you have the attention of your students. This does not necessarily mean everyone should be completely silent and looking your way but nearly all are fairly quiet and looking expectant. If you have students who have a struggle settling down engage them actively as soon as possible -- perhaps to give out materials.

Be clear about what you expect:

- Give students the 'Big Picture' at the beginning of the lesson, This is what the learning aims are, what you will be covering and what you hope they will be achieving. If your lesson is properly prepared you will be able to do this easily.
- Do not give too much information at once about what to do -- especially for anyone who learns more slowly. No-one can manage more than seven pieces of information at a time and most of us are more comfortable with much less.
- Give information in both verbal and visual modes (Smith, 1998)
- Ensure that everyone can participate in a way that ensures they have some success as well as challenges.
- Students are most likely to comply with requests that are clear, direct and courteous (Kellerman and Shea, 1996).

Remember the following ancient Chinese saying -- it still holds true:

- We hear and we forget
- We see and we remember
- We do and we understand.

Communicate procedures about what should happen when students are unsure what to do – for example: 'Check what you have been told or is written down, ask the person sitting next to you, put your hand up to indicate you need help and if you still don't know come and ask'.

Let students know what they are expected to do when they have completed work:

- Choice of activity -- which activities can they choose from?
- Extension work?
- Help others?

A democratic classroom

This classroom fosters fairness, an equal say and responsibility within the group. Do your best to treat everyone equally. There are bound to be students you warm to more than others but it is unwise to show you have favourites. 'Teacher's pet' is not comfortable either for the favoured student or the others. This also applies to challenging students with whom you are trying to develop positive relationships (see Chapter 7). Similarly, do not jump to conclusions about who might be a culprit in an escapade. Pupils will complain unfairly that they are being picked on but on occasions this really is the case. Be as even handed as possible.

Making things equitable and fair means making sure everyone gets their turn. For special responsibilities and privileges make a chart so that individuals can see when it will be theirs. Do not withdraw routine privileges as a sanction.

Invite and encourage everyone to participate. Foster self-reflection and self-evaluation so that students do not become overly dependant on praise received for 'pleasing the teacher' Make positive feedback specific.(Larrivee, 2002).

Ensure students have opportunities to make choices where possible; even simple things like the order in which assignments are done can give students a sense of control in an otherwise teacher controlled environment.

Questions fuel thinking -- do not always have the answers, let the kids show you that they know things you don't sometimes. Acknowledge their superior knowledge!

Walk the talk

- Behave at all times in ways you want the students to: you then have every right to say ' It is unacceptable for you to speak to me like that, I do not speak to you that way'
- Model negotiation and compromise
- Be prepared to say you are sorry if you think you did not handle something well

Do not demand that students say sorry to each other -- it is usually meaningless. Most pupils have a very acute sense of fairness, especially in middle childhood. Ask them to come up with a suggestion to show how they are going to even things up. Doing sorry is better than saying sorry.

Many students come into school expecting to be told what to do all the time. Changing the culture of the classroom is not an easy task. It may take time but do not believe the cynics who tell you that students are not capable of making good decisions for themselves. It is likely to be only true of those who have never had the chance.

A caring and inclusive classroom

Although teachers often say they are caring, pupils do not always appreciate this (Grote, 1995). It needs to be demonstrated in practice. If you convey to students that you value them you will be off to a good start. This includes certain expectations of work and behaviour - which you will help them meet. Listening to students is also central.

> *'One obvious way to show students respect is simply to listen; listen to their complaints, listen to their triumphs and listen to their fears. It is amazing how many beginning teachers are so concerned with 'teaching', disseminating information and with lesson plans that they forget that a roomful of children wants to interact with them and to be listened to. In many classrooms, most students are never heard from. Their emotions and ideas are bottled up, Students in these environments think we just don't care about them, or we just don't want to hear what they have to say.' (Lockwood, 1995).*

Start lessons by asking students a question. This gives the message that you are initiating a dialogue, not a monologue and that their contributions are both expected and welcome.

There is more on listening in Chapter 7.

Caring also means helping. Students who are unclear what to do, need to know how to access guidance. Be clear about your procedures with this (see 'a purposeful classroom').

However exasperating they may be, telling students to 'shut-up' is demeaning and may fuel unnecessary rage. Also avoid saying work is 'easy' if they find it difficult -- they may assume you think they are 'stupid'.

Personal bests

It is hard for those individuals who are never a 'winner' to feel included. Competition need not always be between students. A system of 'personal bests' means that a student competes against himself. Can he do better than last time? This reduces fear of failing compared to peers. Keeping a personal diary of 'personal best' achievements boosts self-esteem and self-efficacy. Individual achievement can continue to be celebrated for everyone.

Statements which incorporate care for an aggressor as well as care for the aggrieved promotes an ethos of empathy: 'You are not allowed to hurt another student, other students are not allowed to hurt you'.

> *One college student, now training to be a teacher herself, commented on how she owed her future to one teacher. She was having difficulties at home and beginning to feel that school was a waste of time. This teacher showed belief in her and said he was not going to let her waste her ability. 'He cared about me,*

> *he made me work harder, made me feel that it mattered to him. I wouldn't be here at university if it wasn't for him'.*

A caring classroom is also a safe and friendly one. This means that friendliness needs to be actively developed and any bullying behaviour immediately addressed (Roffey, Tarrant and Majors, 1994).

Differentiation

Volumes have been written about differentiating the curriculum for an inclusive classroom. All students need to have appropriate learning expectations and experience success. The downside of differentiation is that it can take up considerable time in planning. Get into a routine pattern so that it becomes easier for you and expectations for your students are clear.

A peaceful classroom

Avoid conflict by having enough of the right equipment or a clear rota for use of scarce materials.

Allow time for activities to begin and end. Give pupils with the most difficulty warning of transitions.

Some students, particularly younger children, will react more to the sound of your voice than to the words that are said. Shouting raises the emotional level. Some teachers manage to get attention without shouting. Here are some of the ways they do this.

Younger Students

- When you first enter a class make it clear what you will do to gain attention. Ask the students if they have any ideas
- Ask students to pass messages to the others that you are ready to speak
- Give signals that each person then copies until everyone is waiting quietly. Raise your hand and everyone raises theirs and looks at you -- hands on head or fingers on noses do the same thing!
- Clap in a rhythm and ask the students to copy
- Patting your knees can work well too -- everyone joins in
- Proximity praise -- comment to those who are waiting well.

High School Students

- Say you will give students many opportunities to speak and contribute and that you will listen but you cannot talk to them while they are talking to each other
- Negotiate how to do it
- A hand in the air -- a message around the class (see above)
- Sports teachers often use whistles to good effect -- you could also use a something similar but less piercing in the classroom -- like a small bell or a light gavel on the desk. Alter what you use for fun sometimes -- a tambourine or a hooter perhaps. Get students to bring something in

- With very difficult classes it may be better to get students settled in groups
- Give plenty of opportunity for discussion in the class.

Teach simple mediation skills to address minor conflicts between students. Many schools have trained peer mediators to help address less serious issues. This is the very basic outline -- read about methods in more detail before you put this in place (Cornelius and Faire, 1989):

1. Both students need to agree to mediate
2. Each has the opportunity to say how they see what happened, what they feel and what they would like to happen now
3. Each student listens to the other
4. They are asked to brainstorm solutions
5. They agree on one to put into practice.

You can use quiet music to help re-establish a sense of calm and relaxation activities may also be helpful at times.

A fun classroom

New teachers have an advantage over others who have been in the job much longer and may have become a bit stale and tired. Students respond well to enthusiasm. A teacher with energy and ideas has a better chance of engaging pupils than one who is jaded. Students respond less well to teachers who are so anxious they cannot think creatively

or flexibly. Particularly in the primary classroom, teachers who are 'larger than life' may have the edge.

Humour can be a great way of generating positive classroom atmosphere. It can enhance inter-personal relationships and a feeling of belonging. Everyone having a laugh at the same thing bonds people together: it also relieves stress. Ensure that no-one laughs at someone else's expense.

Teachers who are able to make fun of themselves from time to time, admit they don't know something and apologise for sometimes not getting things right are more likely to have positive interactions with students.

Classes in fun classrooms have pace and diversity. There are a variety of activities to reinforce the curriculum content. These include toys, tricks, magic, acting and games.

Paula Pane

A child is drawn on the window of the primary classroom. Addressing Paula Pane depersonalises critical messages to the whole group: 'Oh Paula, what should I do, there are at least three children here who aren't taking any notice at all'. It can also be used to reinforce positive feedback. 'Hey, Paula, what do you think of this class eh? Have you ever seen such good clearing up?'

The downside of the fun classroom is keeping a lid on excitement. Some students may see a fun activity as an opportunity to go wild. Pre-empt this by making your expectations very clear and giving a calming activity before the end of the lesson.

Circle time philosophy and practice for democracy, caring, inclusion and fun

Known in different places as circle time, the magic circle, and sharing circles this class activity provides a forum for promoting self-esteem, a positive class ethos, inclusion, peer support, emotional literacy and pro-social behaviours. It is most common in primary schools but has been successfully adapted for use in kindergarten and in high schools. Many teachers say it has turned their class around in giving students a greater sense of belonging and feeling good about being in school (Mosley, 1993; Weare, 2003). Other evaluations have shown that it enables students to reflect upon and regulate their behaviour (Robinson and Taylor, 1999), increases tolerance and develops empathy (Moss and Wilson, 1998). Behavioural difficulties decrease as a result (Doyle, 2003). Some teachers have circle time weekly, others more often. For small children 15 to 20 minutes is sufficient, 30-40 minutes for older students. It is important that circle time is not too long. Pupils appear to give circle time almost unqualified approval -- they love doing it. Teachers are sometimes surprised by the impact on even the most difficult individuals.

The philosophy of the circle is crucial for its success. The teacher does not control the circle; he or she facilitates what happens. This approach enables students to feel safe and take responsibility for any problem solving. Everyone sits in a circle to promote

equality. No student is excluded unless they choose to be. No 'put-downs' are allowed, everyone gets a turn to speak while others listen, issues can be raised but individuals not named, everyone has an opportunity to pass. The class are given reminders of these rules at the beginning of every circle.

The following is a basic outline of how a primary class circle time session might look.

- Circle time begins with a simple greeting activity such as everyone introducing their neighbour or 'passing the smile'
- Participants are then mixed up so that they sit next to different people. This happens several times during circle time. There are many ways of doing this such as everyone who is wearing green or all those who caught a bus to school change places.
- Students may then have a structured paired activity such as finding out what TV programs they both enjoy or how many brothers and sisters they have. Everyone takes turns to feed back findings to the whole group.
- Students all have a turn to complete sentences from simple stems, such as: 'the best thing about this school is …'; to more personal ones: 'I feel happiest in school when …'; to problem solving ones: 'to stop bullying in this class we could …'
- Sometimes it is useful to have small groups brainstorm ideas and then feed back to the whole group. Ask for as many contributions as there are students in the group so everyone has a chance to speak.

- Self-esteem boosters are powerful. Some circles celebrate 'star of the day', where each individual gets a turn to receive positive accolades from their peers. As everyone gets their turn this creates an incentive to develop a class repertoire of positive statements.
- Once the class is skilled in the procedures and routines of circle time the circle can deal with issues that impinge on the class ethos, from bullying to borrowing.
- Sometimes it is easier for individuals to make statements about their experiences in 'silent statements', such as: 'everyone who knows that bullying happens in this class change places'.
- It is helpful to close circle time with a calming activity such as a relaxation exercise or visualisation.

If a pupil is 'silly' they are thanked for their contribution and then given the opportunity to say something else later. If a small group starts to be off task, a mix up activity can prevent this continuing.

If you think this is something that you would like to do in your class then ask for training and/or read one of the excellent books that are available before you start. (see Chapter 8 for suggestions). It is a good idea for several teachers to embark on circle time together to support each other and share ideas. Circle time is at its most effective, however, when taken up by the whole school.

Casual staff

Some new teachers find themselves in casual employment after training and have to deal with new situations time and time again. There is little chance to build up the relationships which underpin good management. The following might help:

- Buy sticky labels and ask students to write their names on them so that you can at least address them by name. Do the same for yourself.
- Identify as quickly as possible who are the most influential students in the group and actively work with them to optimize the chance of peer pressure in your favour.
- Ask students about previous work and what they enjoyed about it. It shows interest and respect and you will clue into them as a group more quickly.

Summary

This chapter reminds you that as most students do not present with challenging behaviour your class management should not be dictated by fear of the few. Pupils will, however, test you out to see what you are like and how much they can get away with. Your first task is to promote the behaviour you want.

This chapter explores various teaching styles in relation to maintaining order and demonstrates how optimum outcomes are linked to authoritative/facilitative styles. The most effective teachers remain in charge and aware of everything that is going on while

offering choices, elements of control and respect to students. Such teachers are often able to intervene to stop disruptive behaviour before it takes hold. The chapter concludes with ideas to maximize student motivation and involvement in learning and raise your own sense of efficacy and well being in your teacher role.