



1 Be in charge...

As the teacher, and the adult, you are 'in charge'. It is your classroom and you must actively and consciously make the rules and decisions, rather than letting them happen out of habit, poor organisation or at the whim of the pupils.

Demonstrate your 'in-chargeness' by the position you take in the room; keep on your feet as much as possible and be where you can watch everything that is going on. Pupils should be convinced you have eyes in the back of your head! Pick up the good things they are doing (see number 3 below). Keep moving around the classroom to establish yourself as the focal point of interest and authority.

Remember that the pupils need to feel safe; they can only do this if you are in charge. Do not justify or apologise for your rules, your standards or your insistence on compliance.

2 Use positive classroom rules...

Pupils need to know what is expected of them in your classroom. Establish a set of rules, no more than 4 or 5, which make desired behaviour explicit; display them prominently in the room and refer to them frequently so that they don't disappear into the wallpaper!

The rules should tell the pupils what to do, rather than what not to do, eg

- ✗ Don't call out.
 - ✓ Put up your hand and wait to speak.
- ✗ Don't walk around the classroom.
 - ✓ Stay in your seat.
- ✗ Don't break things.
 - ✓ Look after classroom equipment.

Praise good behaviour and refer to the rule being followed. Use the rules to point out inappropriate behaviour, "Remember our rule about ..."

Have a 'feature' rule now and again, written on the board and tied to a special individual or class reward to be given to pupils who follow the rule.



3 Make rewards work for you...

Give pupils relevant rewards for desirable behaviours, starting tasks, completing tasks, following class rules, etc. The goal is to establish the HABIT of co-operation. Standards can be subtly raised once the habit has been established. The easiest, quickest and most appreciated reward is descriptive praise.

Other possible rewards, besides those used as a school-wide system are

- a note home to parents
- name on a special chart which earns a later tangible reward
- being given special responsibilities
- being allowed to go first
- having extra choices

4 Catch them being good...

Praise is the most powerful motivator there is. Praise the tiniest steps in the right direction. Praise often, using descriptive praise, for example, 'It can be annoying having to look up words in the dictionary. I can see you are getting impatient but the dictionary is still open in front of you. You haven't given up.' Or, 'I can see you don't want to come in from break, but you are facing the right direction for coming in.' Be willing to appreciate the smallest of effort and explain why it pleases you.

Pupils will not think you are being too strict and will not resent your firm decision making if you remember to smile, to criticise less and to praise more. Tell the pupils there will be positive consequences for positive behaviour, then follow through and show them.

Stick to your guns and don't be 'bullied' into giving rewards that haven't been earned.

Some positive behaviours are easily overlooked. Try to remember to praise pupils for

- homework in on time
- homework in late but at least it's in
- working quietly
- good attendance
- neat desk
- not swinging on chair
- smiling
- contributing to class discussion
- helping another pupil
- not laughing at another pupil's mistakes
- promptly following your instructions
- wearing glasses
- using common sense

Use the reward systems of the school consistently and fairly.



5 Be specific and clear in your instructions...

Get a pupil's full attention before giving instructions. Make sure everyone is looking at you and not fiddling with a pencil, turning around, looking at a book, etc. Only give instructions once; repeating can unwittingly train a pupil to not bother to listen properly the first time. Smile as you give instructions.

Don't be too wordy and don't imply choice when there actually isn't a choice by tacking 'Okay?' on the end, or sound as though you are merely suggesting, 'Would you like to ...?' 'How about ...?' 'Don't you think you should ...?'

Be very clear in all your instructions and expectations. Have a pupil repeat them back to you.



6 Deal with low level behaviours before they get big...

Low level, or minor, behaviour infringements will escalate if they are not dealt with quickly and consistently. A pupil's behaviour is reinforced when he gets attention for it, but don't be tempted to ignore it. Find a calm and quiet way to let the child know that you see exactly what he is doing and that there is a consequence, without making a fuss, getting upset or sounding annoyed.

Give your instructions once only. If the pupil continues to misbehave, instead of repeating your original instruction, try one or more of these actions

- point to a place (eg on the board, on a post-it in the pupil's book, a note on your desk) where you wrote down the original instruction at the time you first gave it
- use a description of reality, 'Alfie, you are tapping your ruler.'
- stop everything and look at the pupil pointedly and wait for them to figure out why
- descriptively praise those who are behaving appropriately, praise the target pupil as soon as he complies
- ask other pupils what is needed (the squirm factor)

Always follow through, even on minor infractions, so that pupils know there is no point in testing. They should know what will happen. Only give second chances after a period of good behaviour.

7 The consequences of non-compliance...

Help the pupil to do whatever you've asked him to do. If he has thrown pencils on the floor, help him to pick them up.

If a pupil does not obey instructions straight away, do not give up. Keep waiting. Praise every little step in the right direction, even the absence of the wrong thing. For example, if you've just asked a pupil to stand up and he's not doing it, you could say, 'You're not swearing now, thank you.'

Do not protect the pupil from the consequences of his action or lack of action. The pupil is making a choice and you will have told him this, and given a clear warning of the consequence.

A consequence should be uncomfortable and not upsetting enough to breed more resentment. The purpose of the consequence is to prompt the pupil to think, 'I wish I hadn't done that.'

Have a ready repertoire of easy to implement and monitor consequences. These might include

- loss of choices (eg where to sit)
- loss of break time
- loss of a privilege
- sitting in silence for a set amount of time

8 Find a 'best for both outcome' ...

Avoid confrontational situations where you or the pupil has to back down. Talk to the pupil in terms of his choices and the consequences of the choices, and then give them 'take up' time.

'Fred, I want you to leave the room. If you do it now we can deal with it quickly. If you choose not to then we will use your break time to talk about it. It's your choice. I'll meet you outside the door in two minutes.' Then walk away and wait.

'Joe, put your mobile phone in your bag or on my desk. If you choose not to do that it will be confiscated,' then walk away and wait.

9 Establish 'start of lesson' routines...

Never attempt to start teaching a lesson until the pupils are ready. It's a waste of everyone's energy, giving the impression it's the teacher's job to force pupils to work and their job to resist, delay, distract, wind up, etc. Often this task avoidance is a 'smoke screen' hiding worries about what you are going to ask them to do.

Have a routine way of starting a lesson; a quiet activity that pupils can get right down to, without needing any explanation. Handwriting, copying the WALT and WILF from the board, spelling practice (familiar key language from the current topic), mental arithmetic are good activities to set a quiet tone. Do not allow discussion or be drawn into discussion yourself – say there will be time for that later and make sure you follow this through.

If you take the time to establish this, lessons will start themselves! You won't have that battle at the beginning of every lesson to get yourself heard.

10 Manage the end of the lesson...

Do not run your lesson right up to the last minute and then have to rush because the next class is waiting. Allow time to wind down, answer questions, put equipment away, refer to WILT and how this has been met, outline plans for next lesson, etc.

Have a short, educational game up your sleeve if there is time to spare.

Manage the pupils' exit of the room, have them stand behind their chairs and wait to be asked to leave. Address each pupil by name and have them tell you some good news about the lesson, or you tell them something they did well today. Send them out one-by-one.

From TES , UK

