



Your Classroom Management Plan (1)

Rules

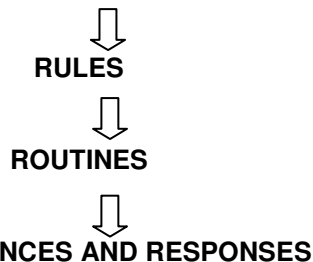
“He who fails to plan, plans to fail”

Businesses depend on business plans, pilots rely on flight plans and generals need battle plans. If you want to win at the classroom behaviour war it makes good sense to have a Classroom Management Plan.

I'm a big believer in preventing problems whenever possible – as the saying goes, it's easier than trying to constantly find a cure. Together with positive teacher-pupil relationships, a classroom management plan *prevents* problems. It provides the structure and consistency needed to address everyday concerns which would otherwise open the door to confrontation, or cause the need for increased attention. A classroom management plan will save you valuable time, reduce potential sources of stress and make your teaching job a whole lot easier. So let's get started by looking at one of the key elements – Rules.

The Classroom Management Plan

NEEDS-FOCUSED PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES



1. Rules

Rules make your expectations and principles clear. They stipulate the exact behaviour you expect to see in the classroom and give pupils the firm boundaries they need.

Guidelines for Creating Rules

1. **Have a maximum of five or six positively-phrased rules.** Any more than that becomes confusing and intimidating – the more rules there are the more diluted their effect and the harder they become to uphold. To avoid sounding as if you are ordering them around, which most pupils rebel against, make sure you state what you need pupils to be *doing*, not what you want them to *stop doing*.

For example, a long negative list such as this...

No talking when the teacher is talking
No throwing items
No shouting across the room
No leaving your chair
No swinging on your chair
Don't chew in classrooms
Don't argue with the teacher
Don't run in corridors
Don't forget equipment
Don't interfere with other people's work

...while covering many of the behaviour problems we are likely to encounter, is authoritarian and 'prison-like'. We can address these same potential problems while providing boundaries which seem fair by taking a more fundamental and positive approach as will be shown in the five sample rules below.

2. Use *specific* wording.

Rules such as 'Sit properly', 'Talk quietly', 'Listen attentively' and 'Show respect' are vague and open to misinterpretation. What is 'quietly'? To some pupils it is a whisper, to others it is normal volume. Some kids come from homes where shouting is the norm so their interpretation of 'talking quietly' is a raised voice without the frown and gritted teeth. What is 'respect'? What does it mean, what does it look like? If you have no idea of this as a concept, how are you supposed to display it as behaviour?

We need to give pupils as much clear guidance as possible in terms of the behaviour we want to see; we need to be specific and tell them *exactly* what we expect them to do.

Here are five simple rules:

1. Always face the teacher when he or she is talking.
2. Follow instructions first time.
3. Take part in activities and complete set tasks.
4. Use materials correctly and safely.
5. Use polite language.

Explanations to be given for each rule...

Pupils will always question rules and it is important to give them positive reasons for having the rules. Here are some examples of this style of response:

1. By facing the teacher you are showing respect – this skill is needed throughout life, regardless of who you are talking to. By listening you stand more chance of succeeding and gaining important information. You will need to know how to use equipment properly and safely, you will need to know about forthcoming trips, visits and deadlines and you will need to know how to do certain tasks. We want you to do well, so it makes sense to listen.
2. Life is full of rules which we have to follow in order for the world to operate smoothly. E.g. why do we have traffic lights? What would happen if we ignored the red light?

This approach eliminates the tendency to slip into power struggles and having to repeat instructions and commands over and over again. It also eliminates the need for lots of complex rules such as “No calling out” etc. because it can be re-stated in response to any infraction once an instruction has been given. Finally it allows pupils more responsibility to choose their behaviour and prevents them feeling they are in an overly restrictive environment.

3. I understand that some people work faster than others so I will give you a set task each lesson to be completed. The only way you will succeed in life is if you actually take part and by taking part in the lesson activities you have the best chance of completing your task.

4. We have this rule so that equipment does not get broken – nobody wants that, otherwise we can no longer do certain lesson activities that rely on the equipment. We also have this rule to stop anyone getting hurt.

5. Nobody likes being sworn at - we have this rule to stop people from being verbally abused. Also, it gives us chance to practice communicating in the correct manner – an essential skill as you go through life if you want people to take you seriously and view you favourably.

Introducing Rules to the Class

Despite the fact that young people need boundaries, they will tend to buck against anything they feel to be controlling. We’ve eliminated the chances of this to some extent by the way we’ve phrased our rules but the way we present these rules to the class is crucial if they are to be accepted without mass disagreement. To introduce your rules, this is what you could say...

“My job is to help you succeed every day – I am here to help you by giving each of you the best conditions and chances of doing well. For this to happen we will need to have a classroom where you can come without fear of being ridiculed, embarrassed or threatened; where equipment won’t get trashed and where you can learn new things.

For these reasons I have a set of rules which will help ensure that we have a safe, orderly and enjoyable class.”

So there we have it. We’ve created some rules and we’ve introduced them to the pupils. In order to teach those rules we need..... Routines.

These will be covered in Part 2.