

How to combat low-level student disruption?

Every teacher encounters low-level disruption because it is so prevalent in classrooms around the world. The challenge for us as teachers is to ensure we remain in charge by behaving professionally and appropriately so learning is not interrupted, and disruption doesn't escalate but ceases.

As busy teachers, we sometimes forget that low-level disruption can occur when learners are unclear of 'the basic'. Ineffective routines, delayed learning or relaxation of rules all provide opportunities for it to happen. This is why it is important at the start of every academic year to share your expectations with every class. If you have taught learners before, they should already be well-versed in what you want, but you must still take the time to remind them of routines for the start and end of lessons and your rules for classroom and learning spaces. Doing this ensures you begin the academic year (and every lesson within it) positively because learners will know to expect of you and what you expect in return. So at the start of term, I make sure my learners are clear about:

- Lining up outside and then entering a learning space in a calm and orderly fashion
- How lessons start and end, using available resources in-class and being ready to learn
- Seating plans
- Asking questions, seeking help and calling out
- Completion of in-class tasks, activities and homework
- Group work and smartphone usage
- Respect for one another and our environment

Modelling what you require through your own behaviour and language in your classroom provides learners with consistency and reinforces expectations. Don't forget the power of an unruffled voice, courteous language and appropriate body language when it comes to diminishing low-level disruption and poor behaviour. So, always be positive and calm. In particular, use the language of choice to give learners alternative options: stop the behaviour because you have asked them to, or choose a consequence that involves discussing the matter after the lesson. For example:

"Student name, I've asked you to settle and focus on the task, if you continue to choose not to do this then you are choosing to see me at the end of the lesson (you are the teacher so you always decide 'when') to discuss this."

By giving them a choice, learners are not pushed into a corner and most will choose not to see you later.



10 Tips for dealing with disruptive behaviour

01.

Encourage a positive learning environment by being clear about your expectations of learners. Establish this by creating 'rights and responsibilities' for your classroom.

02.

Insist on an environment that is based on mutual respect and tolerance.

03.

Use effective, calm and positive verbal and non-verbal language.

04.

Use a range of strategies and techniques consistently.

05.

Address discipline issues privately not publicly in the classroom or beyond it.

06.

Build positive relationships through continued conversations and clarity of expectations.

07.

Deal with low-level classroom disruption efficiently and effectively. Always follow-up.

08.

Be consistent when applying praise, rewards and sanctions as well as when it comes to your expectations.

09.

Focus on the positive and 'tactically ignore' minor negatives so you 'catch them being good'.

10.

Don't be afraid to ask for help, advice and support from colleagues about managing the behaviour of a student or class. Introducing a different perspective can work wonders.

Watch out for...

Inconsistency. When you have established your expectations and classroom rules be consistent in their application. It might help to remind yourself of your school's policy or seek support from colleagues, so you get off on the right foot.

Reacting in the moment. We are all human, even learners, so don't expect them to always do what you want immediately. Give them the chance to do as you have asked by tactically ignoring minor issues temporarily.

Creating additional tension inadvertently. Try not to react negatively to non-verbal student behaviours by sighing, huffing, eye-rolling, leaning back in your chair or forcing learners to look at you.

Forgetting to smile. Yours might be the first smile a learner has seen that day, so make sure you put on a happy face when you welcome them into your classroom or talk to them. Definitely do this at Christmas.



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Further reading

<https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2013/may/21/classroom-disruption-top-tips>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/379249/Below_20the_20radar_20-20low-level_20disruption_20in_20the_20country_E2_80_99s_20classrooms.pdf

<https://osiriseducational.co.uk/staffroom/article/diverting-away-from-low-level-disruptions/>

Communication for excellent classroom behaviour
https://www.veema.co.uk/media/event/201809051500_webinar

Four steps to success:



Consult

Only by fully understanding a school can you properly evaluate and determine its unique set of needs. It is our deep consultation process that enables us to deliver solutions that focus consistently and effectively on enabling pupils to achieve their full potential.



Tailor

Because all schools are different, a 'one size fits all' approach is not appropriate, which is why each of our programmes can be personalised to fit your school's exact requirements and objectives.



Train

Experienced expert consultants assigned to deliver bespoke programmes with carefully devised timetables that allocate training over an agreed period.



Reflect

To ensure that learning is fully embedded, we provide follow-up material that enable on-going exploration of subjects beyond the initial training days along with guidance and tools you need to assess the impact of the training.