

What Works Best 2025

Illustration of practice

Classroom management at Plumpton High School

Classroom management at Plumpton High School is embedded within the school's Positive Behaviour for Learning framework. Teachers explicitly teach consistent expectations and routines through a whole-school approach to foster positive student behaviour. The school also recognises the importance of explicitly teaching students the skills and abilities to help them meet these expectations. Time and resources are committed to developing beginning teachers' knowledge and skills in confidently implementing classroom management strategies. Teachers are supported to use a system of behavioural supports and strategies in the classroom to reinforce students' positive behaviour.

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation



What
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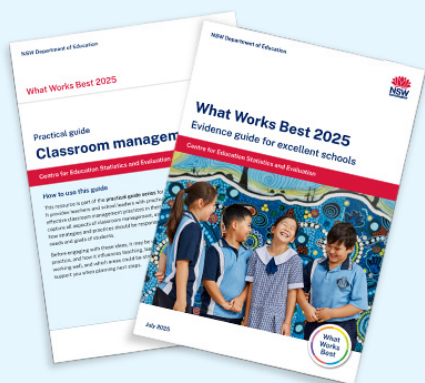
December 2025

How to use this resource

This resource is part of the illustrations of practice series for What Works Best 2025. It provides teachers and school leaders with descriptions of some of the key strategies used at Plumpton High School to implement classroom management. It is not intended to capture all aspects of classroom management at the school, and it is important for readers of this resource to consider how strategies and practices should be responsive to the learning needs and goals of students in their own school.

Teachers and school leaders can read, consider, discuss and implement strategies highlighted in this illustration of practice and its accompanying resources as part of school-developed High Impact Professional Learning (HIPL). The appropriate time to use this resource may differ for each school, leader and teacher.

Other What Works Best 2025 resources on classroom management



- [What Works Best 2025 evidence guide for excellent schools – Chapter 6: Classroom management](#)
- [What Works Best 2025 practical guide – Classroom management](#)



School context

- Plumpton High School is a co-educational secondary school located on Dharug Country in western Sydney.
- Plumpton High School is one of the largest schools in NSW, with staff priding themselves on having high expectations for their 1,187 students.
- The school has a culturally diverse student population – 8% of students identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and 59% of students are from a language background other than English (LBOTE) (13% are from a Filipino background, 10% are from an Indian background, and 10% are from a Pasifika background).
- The school has a FOEI of 125, with nearly 70% of the student population in the bottom 2 quartiles of socio-educational advantage.¹
- The school engages different cohorts and populations of students through dedicated roles such as an Aboriginal Education Officer (AEO), school learning support officers (SLSOs), a student support officer (SSO) and a co-coordinating English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) teacher.
- NAPLAN results for Years 7 and 9 were close to, above or well above students from similar backgrounds in all domains in 2023 and 2024.
- Plumpton High School has 90 full-time equivalent (FTE) teaching staff, 30% of whom are early career teachers within their first 5 years of teaching.² The school also has 23 FTE non-teaching staff, including administrative staff, SLSOs and an AEO.
- Supporting student wellbeing is foundational to Plumpton High School’s approach to classroom management. Teachers are provided with targeted professional learning to implement consistent wellbeing strategies across the whole school.

1 Distribution of socio-educational advantage (SEA) school-level data was obtained in April 2025 from My School, ACARA. Family Occupation and Education Index (FOEI) is a school-level index of educational disadvantage related to socioeconomic background. The average FOEI value is 100. A higher FOEI value indicates a higher level of disadvantage.

2 In 2022, 14% of the national teacher workforce were early career teachers in their first 5 years of teaching. Source: AITSL (2023) [Spotlight: Australia’s teacher workforce today](#).



Strategy 1: Explicitly teaching classroom expectations and behavioural skills across the whole school

Staff at Plumpton High School reflect that it takes a whole school to manage a classroom. Underpinning the school's approach to classroom management is a common and shared understanding of classroom behavioural expectations across the whole school. School leaders and teachers believe that having shared expectations for appropriate behaviours, rules and routines provides students with stability and reduces the need for students to adjust their behaviour across classrooms.

“ [Classroom management] needs to be consistent across the whole school ... that's what makes the kids feel the most supported. ... I'm doing one thing in my classroom, the person over in that classroom is doing the same thing, and the person upstairs is doing the same thing. I think that [consistency is] the biggest thing for us [at Plumpton High School]. ”

Cameron Honeysett, Technological and Applied Studies (TAS) Teacher

“ [The principal] would often speak about the expectation that if we've set this system and structure, that you need to be applying it not just for the sake of your own classroom, but you're also supporting the room next door where you might have a teacher who is in their first year. ”

Jess Page, Head Teacher, Teaching and Learning

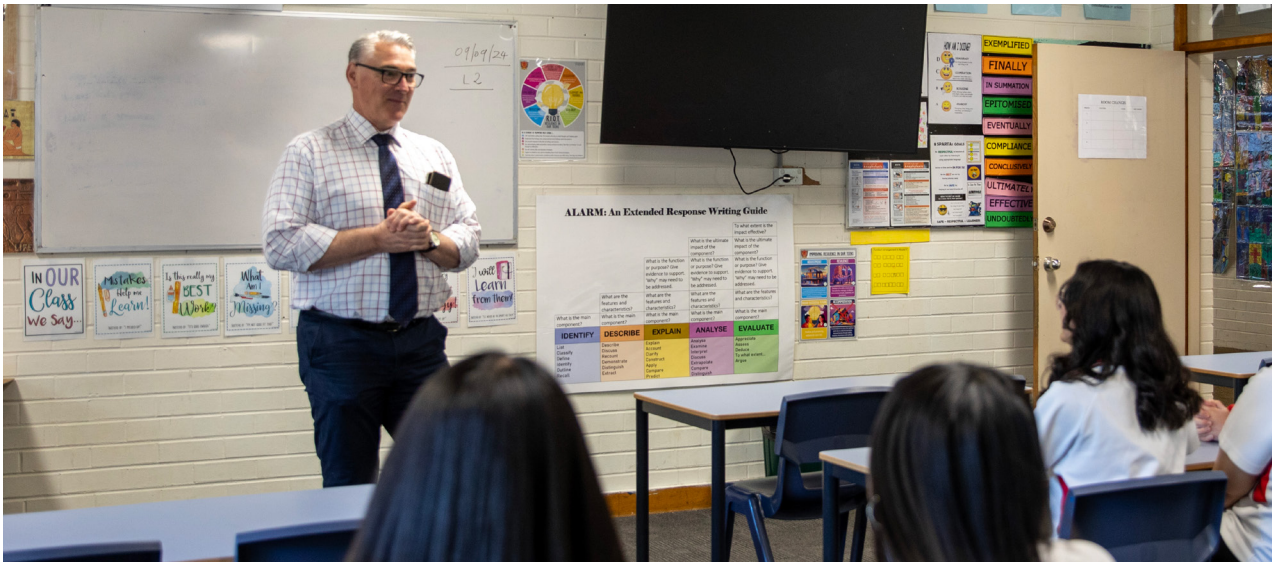
Building and maintaining a common and shared understanding of expectations involves explicitly teaching them across the whole school. Every school year at Plumpton High School starts with 'O-week', during which teachers dedicate lessons to establishing behavioural expectations and classroom routines. Teachers explicitly teach students what to expect in the classroom and what is expected of them in return. These expectations are reinforced throughout the year.

Practice point: Teaching and reinforcing classroom routines

“ I use entrance and exit routines, and that is something I carry across all my classes. ... There is a slideshow up on the TV every lesson when [students] walk in, which tells them the 4 steps they need to do as soon as they walk in. So whether it's put your bag down, put an apron on, leather shoes on and then grab your project out; that's the 4 things they have to do. They know, as soon as they walk in, that's what they need to start going and doing. ”

Cameron Honeysett, TAS teacher





During O-week, there is a whole-school focus on empowering students to take responsibility for their own learning. This is beneficial for students of all year levels, but especially for those starting Year 7, who may be navigating differences from primary school expectations about their responsibilities as a learner. Teachers use the language of the school's Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) framework to show students how expectations and routines encourage them to be a safe and respectful learner in the classroom.³ All students also become familiar with a consistent whole-school language – informally called ‘Plumpton speak’ – which is used by staff to reinforce the PBL expectations. For instance, students know ‘packed for learning’ means they have all the equipment they need for class.

“ With the O-Week, it’s about explicitly teaching behaviour right at the start. So we give them that time to go through expectations, what does that look like, and ... [that helps] especially with the Year 7 transition as well, which is really important.”

David Streatfield, Head Teacher, Wellbeing

Teachers and school leaders also recognise the importance of explicitly teaching students the skills and abilities to help them meet school expectations. A positive psychology approach lays the foundations for empowering students with these skills and abilities. Funded through the school's year advisor allowance, each year cohort has 2 ‘positive psychology’ teachers. Students are assigned to one teacher, who stays with them from Year 7 through to Year 12. This initiative aims to facilitate a positive relationship with a trusted adult throughout a student's schooling career to help them feel known, valued and cared for. Positive psychology lessons are held weekly for Year 7 students and fortnightly for the rest of the school. Following a planned scope and sequence, lessons focus on wellbeing, self-regulation strategies and building students' social and emotional learning capacities. Teachers believe that the positive psychology approach has had a beneficial influence on student behaviour in the classroom.

³ Positive Behaviour for Learning is an evidence-based framework that brings together the whole-school community to contribute to developing a positive, safe and supportive learning culture.

Strategy 2: Supporting beginning teachers to develop classroom management skills

A key feature of Plumpton High School's whole-school approach is supporting beginning teachers in developing classroom management skills. This is particularly important at Plumpton High School, as each year a number of their teachers are either new graduates or new to teaching in Australia.

Plumpton High School's beginning teacher program helps to build and strengthen beginning teachers' classroom management skills. School leaders allocate school resources and secure necessary funding (for example, socioeconomic background loading) to ensure that 2 beginning teacher mentors have release time to run the program. The program includes weekly hour-long afternoon meetings, regular professional learning sessions and one-on-one support throughout the year. The focus of meetings for an entire term is on classroom management. Professional learning on classroom management covers topics such as establishing positive relationships, behavioural expectations, consistent procedures and routines, setting up the learning space, active supervision and responding to disruptive behaviour. The topics covered have been identified by school leaders as areas that require revisiting, reinforcement or adjustment. The professional learning sessions also cover topics that interrelate with classroom management, such as culturally responsive and inclusive teaching practices and explicit teaching.

The professional learning sessions are designed to be 'bite-sized', offering a blend of evidence-based theory and practical discussions. Sessions are facilitated by experienced teachers from across the school, recognised by their colleagues as

experts in specific classroom management strategies. These sessions also foster informal coaching relationships by allowing beginning teachers to engage with the facilitating teachers at the end of each session.

“ The purpose of [the professional learning] is to make it that 'bite-sized' learning – here's a bit of pedagogy evidence-based practice, here's how you can use it, here is some time for you to now figure out how you're going to implement that in the classroom. I think that's the most important step, because it's so easy to be given the information and then walk away and you never have time to implement it, but having that dedicated time to then input that in your lesson.”

Annelise Picket, English and Positive Psychology Teacher

Beyond group sessions, the beginner teacher mentors organise more personalised support for beginning teachers, such as one-on-one meetings and classroom observations. This personalised support allows beginning teachers to address specific challenges, such as managing disruptive behaviour, with tailored strategies and feedback. Providing opportunities to observe experienced colleagues in the classroom enhances beginning teachers' repertoire of classroom management techniques. Exposing beginning teachers to a broader range of approaches demonstrates how different strategies can be used effectively across different classroom contexts.

“ If you're having difficulties with a certain student, [the beginning teacher mentors] can come in, they can sort of show you how they would do it, how they'd run it, or they can give you options, or see how you're running it and then give you feedback.”

Cameron Honeysett, TAS Teacher

Strategy 3: Embedding a system of proactive and responsive strategies to reinforce students' positive behaviour

Teachers at Plumpton High School use proactive and responsive classroom management practices within the tiered system of the school's PBL framework.⁴ This approach recognises that some students may require different types of interventions along a continuum of care to meet classroom expectations.⁵ School leaders also use the PBL framework to clearly communicate the differing roles and responsibilities related to classroom management across the school. Teachers report this contributes to them feeling confident to manage behaviour in their classroom, knowing there is a structured system to support them to meet the needs of their students.

“ We're empowered to [manage behaviour in the classroom] ourselves, because I don't want to lose that relationship with the student. I don't want them to think that I can't help them to meet their goals, whether it be learning or behavioural. The support [from school leaders] is there but it's not often that we do need it, because we've got other processes in place.”
Annelise Picket, English and Positive Psychology teacher

Classroom teachers use a range of preventative strategies to proactively promote positive behaviour. This includes

developing classroom routines that are consistent with school-wide expectations (refer to Strategy 1), considering the design of their classroom's learning space to encourage positive behaviours (for example, seating arrangements), verbally acknowledging positive behaviour, and establishing and maintaining positive relationships with students and their families. Teachers are provided guidance on how they can use connecting behaviours to build and maintain positive relationships with students (refer to Appendix).

Practice point: Good news phone calls help build relationships with families and reinforce classroom management

“ I really enjoy making those phone calls, and it's really nice for parents to hear some positive feedback. Because I feel like our default is that we contact about the negative things, but I think it's really important to celebrate the successes of the child.”

Annelise Picket, English and Positive Psychology Teacher

“ I've made phone calls home in Term 1, and then we've had parent/teacher interviews, and parents have come and seen me – who I've phoned home – and they're like, 'Oh, so great to see you,' and it's that relationship you've already built with them.”

Cameron Honeysett, TAS teacher

4 Tiered systems are also referred to as multiple tiered systems of support (MTSS).

5 The care continuum facilitates the implementation of a whole-school, prevention-focused and positive approach to behaviour support to meet the needs of all students. Students may require different types of intervention delivered in different ways along a continuum of care.



Teachers are also expected to use whole-school teaching and learning practices that aim to foster student engagement. For instance, learning maps are used in all lessons and considered a core practice for classroom management. The learning maps make learning expectations in each classroom explicit and transparent for both students and teachers. They show what will take place in the lesson and include the learning intention, the outline of the lesson and the success criteria, which are described in language that is specific and meaningful to students. They aim to help students understand the direction of the learning and are a way for students to assess their own progression. Teachers can use the learning map as a visual cue to remind students of what they should be doing if they get off-task.

“ You’re here to learn ... if you want to do something else, well then you’re going to be having discussions with teachers, parents, head teachers, deputy principals [and the] principal if required, and if there’s issues that we discover that you need assistance [with, then] we will support you in that, whether it’s undiagnosed disabilities, or significant learning gaps. Irrespective of what it is, we will then seek to support you by trying to uncover and get to the bottom of whatever the root cause is.”

Tim Lloyd, Principal

The driving principle of classroom management at Plumpton High School is ensuring the classroom is conducive to learning. If a student is not meeting classroom expectations, teachers are encouraged to try at least 3 responsive strategies before escalating. This can include techniques such as using body language and other non-verbal methods of communication to redirect and correct behaviour, as well as structured conversations that encourage students to reflect on and set goals for their behaviour in class. If the behaviour persists, a head teacher will support the teacher to manage the student’s behaviour. The deputy principal, principal and families are only involved for ongoing behaviours of concern or serious behaviours of concern, such as physical violence or threats.

Practice point: Reflection cards guide students through a self-assessment process on behaviour

“ In [the] English [faculty], we’ve developed a reflection card, so if there’s been a couple of issues in lessons I’ll sit down with the student, they reflect on their behaviour using ... the Raising Responsibility framework. We establish what they still need to work on, what skills they could use to help them, and then they set some goals. We then address these goals over the next couple of lessons to see if they’re meeting them or not.”

Annelise Picket, English and Positive Psychology Teacher

Teachers also work with the school's learning and support team, who are responsible for the development and coordination of targeted and individual behavioural interventions for students who need them. For example, collaborative learning and support plans are developed with some students. School leaders and teachers at Plumpton High School view these plans as a way to understand the student holistically, including their strengths, interests, cultural background and goals. The learning and support team works with the student and their family to create the plan together. The learning and support team also works with students to build their sense of agency and to help them communicate with their teachers in a way that builds connection and positive relationships.

“ [Students needing additional behaviour support] know that they can use me as a voice. ... They'll come and see me if they need help to try and work out how to say something to a teacher, and sometimes they'll actually say, 'Will you come with me?' I'll work it out with the teacher beforehand and say, 'The student wants to explain something to you, I'm going to be there with them', and then usually the teacher is like, 'I never thought of it from that point of view', and it also sometimes helps connect the relationship with the teacher as well.”

**Bronwyn Bailey, Head Teacher,
Learning and Support**

Resources

Strategy 1:

- NSW Department of Education (2024) [Social-emotional learning](#)
- NSW Department of Education (n.d.) [PBL resources](#)
- Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) (2025) [Entering the classroom: classroom management practice](#)
- AERO (2024) [Teaching routines: their role in classroom management](#)

Strategy 2:

- NSW Department of Education (n.d.) [Behaviour professional learning](#)
- AERO (2025) [Supporting a colleague with refining their classroom management practice](#)

Strategy 3:

- NSW Department of Education (2025) [The care continuum – care continuum guide](#) (🔒 staff only)
- NSW Department of Education (2024) [Building effective learning and support teams](#)
- AERO (2025) [Acknowledgement and praise: classroom management skill](#)
- AERO (2025) [Non-verbal correction: classroom management skill](#)

Appendix: Connecting behaviours to support classroom management

This appendix presents a brief description of Plumpton High School's connecting behaviours approach and how it supports classroom management.

What are connecting behaviours?

Grounded in Choice Theory, connecting behaviours encourage interactions that emphasise collaboration and mutual respect between teachers and students, fostering a supportive and engaging learning environment. Figure 1 describes 7 connecting behaviours that help to build positive relationships with students: supporting, encouraging, listening, accepting, trusting, respecting and negotiating.

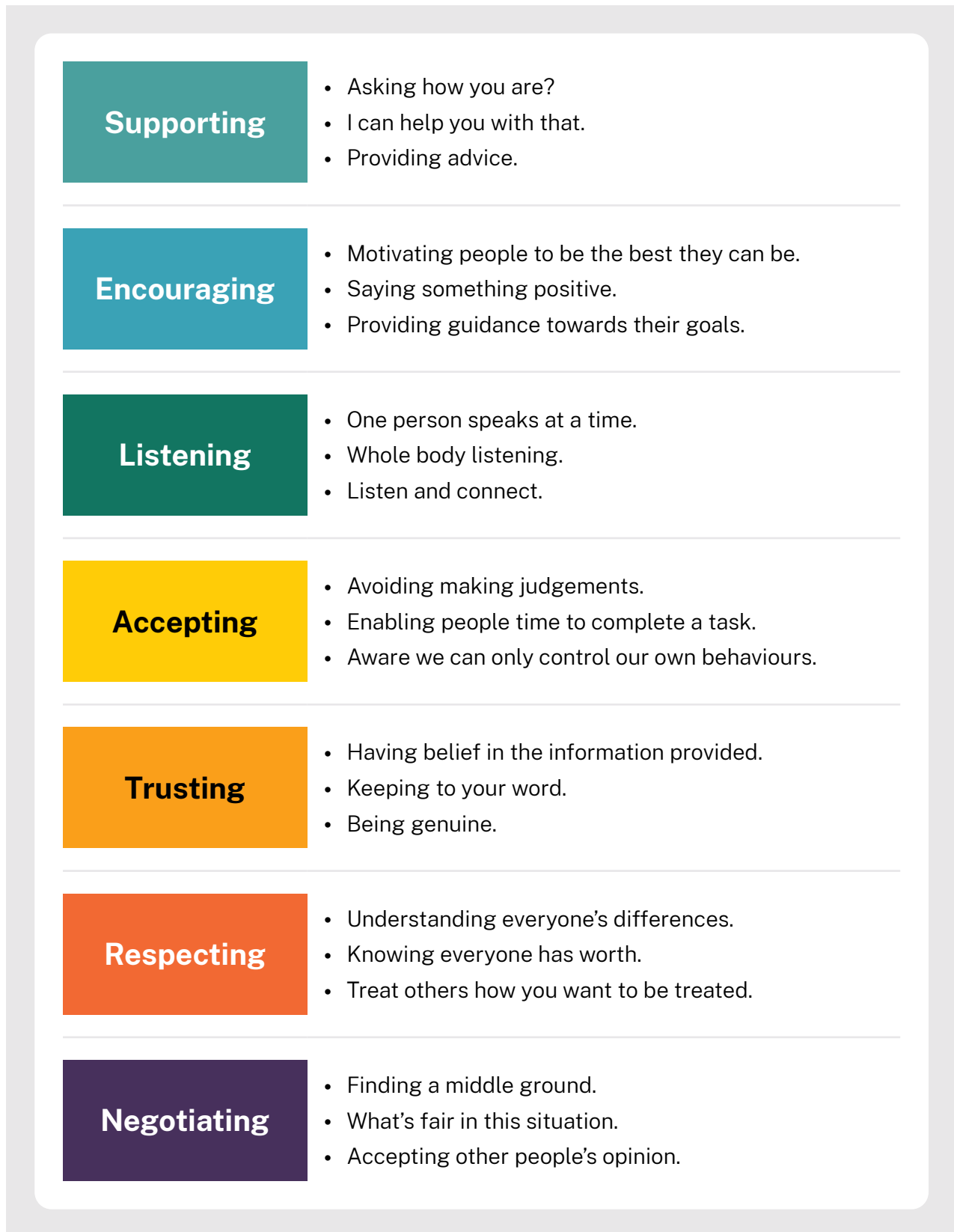
Why use it?

Connecting behaviours promotes a supportive environment where staff and students can both meet their needs constructively, which enhances wellbeing and creates a foundation for effective learning and a positive school culture. By adopting connecting behaviours, teachers can help create positive relationships with students, which influences student behaviour in the classroom.

How does it work?

Teachers can use the 7 connecting behaviours to reflect on and guide their interactions with students. Prompts for each type of connecting behaviour can be used to help teachers consider how to move from disconnecting behaviour to connecting behaviour. For example, demanding compliance or enforcing rigid rules can be seen as behaviours that create a disconnect between a teacher and a student. Replacing this with connecting behaviours such as encouraging and providing guidance towards students' goals can help to build and maintain positive relationships with students in the classroom and at school, as well as foster a positive school culture.

Figure 1: The 7 connecting behaviours that help teachers to build positive relationships with students

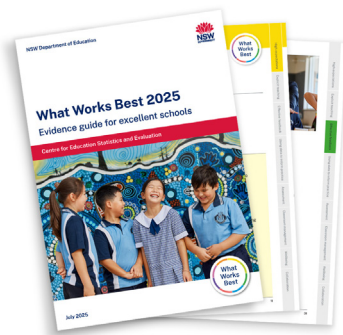


Access the full suite of What Works Best resources

What Works Best 2025 is a suite of resources for teachers and school leaders that outlines 8 effective practices that are known to improve student learning and wellbeing:

- high expectations
- explicit teaching
- effective feedback
- using data to inform practice
- assessment
- classroom management
- wellbeing
- collaboration.

The resources can be used individually or in conjunction with one another to implement evidence-based, quality teaching and learning practices and inform school excellence planning.



The What Works Best 2025 – Evidence guide for excellent schools provides an overview of the evidence that underpins each of the 8 themes.



The What Works Best practical guides translate evidence into practice by providing teachers and school leaders with practical ideas for implementing each of the themes in their classrooms and schools. The guides unpack not only ‘what’ should be done to successfully implement a theme, but also the ‘how’ and ‘why’.



The What Works Best illustrations of practice provide teachers and school leaders with examples of how some of our great schools from across NSW have implemented the themes.

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