

Promoting positive behaviour

Strategies to support students

No single strategy is going to prevent all disruptive or challenging student behaviour, but the following suggestions will help to minimise problems.

Classroom management begins with establishing clear routines and having consistent expectations. A well-organised classroom provides order, structure and physical boundaries, as well as communicating a positive and caring approach. Encourage student connection and engagement by:

- maintaining consistency and predictability
- having sufficient resources and equipment for planned activities
- ensuring lesson content and instructional level matches student needs
- negotiating a fair and transparent set of classroom rules.

Explicitly teaching social-emotional skills and relaxation techniques will benefit all students while providing learning opportunities for students who may not otherwise be exposed to these important skills. Learning to manage responses appropriately in social situations, particularly stressful and anxious situations, is a life skill that can be introduced and practiced in a supportive classroom environment.

Beyond the basics

When the classroom has been organised for success, ground rules established and opportunities for skill building provided and encouraged, we can now consider some additional ways to manage inappropriate behaviour.

Remember: all behaviour is learned to meet a particular need, or purpose. Once the underlying need is identified, you can develop approaches to meet that need and teach more appropriate responses. This is the basis of positive behaviour support.

The context of behaviour is another key component. A situation that is difficult for student to manage may trigger negative reactions. Be ready to support students in these circumstances. Timely support can diffuse a situation and prevent behaviour escalating to a less manageable level. Use tactics such as re-direction, distraction or humour (never sarcasm) where appropriate, to break tension.

If, despite your best efforts, behaviour escalation is unavoidable be proactive in re-establishing good relations with the student, using a restorative approach. Do this as soon as possible after an incident, when you and the student are calm and able to talk rationally about what has occurred.