

Introduction

An effective learning climate refers to spaces, places, attitudes, and relationships that pupils may encounter as they learn, practitioners should design, foster, and weave together learning environments to provide pupils with an engaging, supportive, and effective learning experience (Cardiff University, 2021). Thorn (2020) identifies that an effective learning climate is built upon safety, emotional warmth, and fostering both academic growth and well-being. Additionally, it is essential for educators to employ an effective learning climate. Key attributes may include predictable routines, collaborative spaces, positive teacher-student relationships, and high expectations. Once these key attributes have been fostered, this will encourage student motivation and participation (Thorn, 2020).

With this in mind, an effective learning climate is built upon three main factors; the physical environment, the social environment, and the emotional environment. Firstly, the physical environment refers to the tangible aspects of the environment which can affect a pupil's ability to focus and feel comfortable, educators should consider aspects of the classroom such as lighting and noise levels (Hawthorne, 2022). As well as this, the physical environment should be organised to help minimise distractions and create an atmosphere where pupils are more engaged and focused, which will increase their academic success. The physical layout of the classroom should be inclusive and friendly, allowing pupils to feel welcome, focused, and content (Hawthorne, 2022). Secondly, the social environment should consider an effective, whole-school approach to behaviour, which aims to eliminate unwanted behaviours from occurring. Within an effective learning climate, educational settings must effectively address any behaviours that undermines the academic and social success of the school and lowers the self-esteem of staff or pupils (Hawkins *et al.*, 2023). Within a report published by the Department for Education, Bennett (2017) presents that educational settings can minimise behaviour by distributing policies and procedures throughout the setting, support between leadership and staff, high expectations, clear understanding of school culture and values, and high levels of staff and parental collaboration in regards to strategies within the school. Thirdly, the emotional environment is a significant factor within an effective learning climate. The emotional environment directly impacts

learners, and it is vital that learning is constructed through respect, support, and encouragement (Hawthorne, 2022). It is significant for educators to build positive relationships, through supporting pupils' abilities, being prepared, and responding positively to all pupils' contributions to learning. Through developing an emotional environment, pupils are able to build their confidence and become resilient when faced with challenges within their learning journey (Hawthorne, 2022).

The elements of effective learning climates to be discussed will include growth mindset, behaviour management, and Assessment for Learning. This will be conducted through examining relevant literature, theory, effective practice, and barriers of each element within effective learning climates.

Elements of Effective Learning Climates: Growth Mindset

The growth mindset is the belief that an individual's ability, skills, and knowledge are not fixed traits, they can be developed and enhanced through learning, persistence, and dedication (Holmes, 2026). It is the belief that instead of an individual thinking they are either 'good' or 'bad' at something, having a growth mindset is the idea that individuals can improve with practice, effective techniques, and appropriate assistance and support (Holmes, 2026). Supporting this, the work conducted by Carol Dweck (2017) presents that there are two different ways to determine abilities, talents, and intelligence. Firstly, Dweck (2017) presents a fixed mindset which is the core belief that an individual sees these traits as static and innate, resulting in the individual believing that they are either good at something or not and this cannot be changed (NHS Health Education England, n.d.). Secondly, Dweck discusses a growth mindset, which presents that an individual sees ability and talent as traits which can be developed overtime, resulting in the individual believing that they cannot do something yet (NHS Health Education England, n.d.). Despite this, it is argued that the focus on individual effort overlooks significant external factors such as socioeconomic status, quality of education, as well as cultural, environmental, and systemic factors (Joppich, 2023).

Within educational settings, it is important to direct pupils towards a growth mindset rather than a fixed mindset (Leighton, 2025). The impact of a growth mindset enables

pupils to embrace challenges, being persistent in the face of setbacks, recognising efforts, and learning from negative feedback, which are significant factors within an effective learning climate (Leighton, 2025). With this in mind, Mueller and Dweck (1998) presents the effects of praise on performance. It is presented that praising effort rather than innate intelligence, fosters a growth mindset and in time, long-term performance. By praising innate intelligence, a fixed mindset may occur to pupils through fearing failure, avoid risks, and ignoring setbacks (Mueller and Dweck, 1998). Within classroom settings, it is significant to promote and teach incremental growth. This idea fosters pupils to become creative and innovative, through fostering a community where pupils feel appreciated for their development rather than focusing on academic results, which lessens performance anxiety (Marie, 2025). For educators, adopting a growth mindset means rethinking the way they approach teaching and learning. To support this, educators can install features to promote incremental growth, such as, discussing mindsets with pupils, why mistakes are good, the importance of challenges, and the focus on learning (Marie, 2025). This is supported through Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory, which allows individuals to embrace challenges, persist through obstacles, and view effort as a path to mastery (Lopez-Garrido, 2025). In contrast to Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory, it is argued that the theory may pose a risk of confusion regarding self-esteem and confidence. As the theory focuses on an individual's ability, this may hinder the understanding of an individual's self-esteem levels (Acabrera, 2023). To overcome a fixed mindset within classroom settings, educators should seek to look at mistakes as opportunities to talk with pupils about strategies, effort, and their understanding. As well as this, educators should encourage pupils to focus on learning as a process rather than a one-time performance, this can be achieved through providing specific feedback and they can improve and develop (Fowler-white, 2023). Furthermore, it is significant for educators to model a growth mindset, through demonstrating hearing the fixed mindset voice and talking back to it, and educators to share challenges and setbacks they have experienced (Fowler-white, 2023). Through educators fostering this approach, this enables pupils to embrace challenges and view mistakes as learning opportunities rather than failure (Yeager *et al.*, 2021).

Estyn (2017) presents effective practice of encouraging learners to achieve more than they expect of themselves, through a growth mindset approach. Oakleigh House school situated within the Uplands area of Swansea, offers independent education to boys and girls aged 2-11 years old. The school has adopted and adapted a growth mindset approach, based on the belief that pupils learning can develop and grow over time (Estyn, 2017). The school implemented this approach to develop pupils' learning skills which include; reasoning, taking risks, resilience, and perseverance. It is noted that every pupil receives the same encouragement and support within the setting, as well as practice and provision meeting the needs of all. In addition to this, staff within the school often implement the 6Bs, found through Dweck's (2012) work. The 6Bs include; be brave, be still, ask a buddy, backtrack, bits and bobs, and ask the boss. This is an effective way to apply a growth mindset within classrooms, as pupils can remind peers of the 6Bs and other strategies they can employ to help them succeed (Estyn, 2017). Despite successful practice of a growth mindset approach, Hodgson (2019) demonstrates that educators who implement a growth mindset within classrooms, solely focus on praising effort rather than the strategies or outcomes, which may lead pupils to feel misunderstood when effort does not lead to success, which ultimately will lead back to a fixed mindset.

In addition to this, implementing a growth mindset approach with classrooms supports collaboration and inclusivity. Through pupils understanding that everyone develops at different stages, they are more likely to support and respect their peers, as well as their learning journeys (Brown, 2016). In time, this will develop positive relationships, mutual respect, and a sense of belonging, which all contribute to an effective learning climate. This concept aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory, which presents that learners construct knowledge through social interaction and communication with peers (McLeod, 2025). Vygotsky's (1978) theory presents the Zone of Proximal Development which identifies that learners achieve more when supported by practitioners and peers. By implementing a growth mindset approach within educational settings, collaborative activities such as peer discussions, group work, and shared problem-solving, allow for learners to develop confidence and knowledge together (Brown, 2016). Additionally, this promotes inclusivity within the classroom,

through learners of different abilities supporting one another and progressing at their own pace (Kolyda, 2023).

Elements of Effective Learning Climates: Behaviour Management

Behaviour management refers to the strategies and techniques that practitioners and educators employ to foster positive behaviour and discipline within the classroom. It's a comprehensive strategy that includes both the development of a nurturing and stimulating learning environment, where all pupils can thrive as well as the correction of unwanted behaviour, which are crucial features within an effective learning climate (SAA, 2024). Welsh Government (2025) present that effective behaviour management is crucial for creating a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment, ensuring pupils are ready to learn. As well as this, effective behaviour management prioritises well-being and emotional regulation, reduces disruption, and promotes positive relationships. GOV.UK (2019) present a behavioural toolkit for educators to install effective behaviour management, a key factor presented within the toolkit is clear routines. It is presented that routines such as entry routines, class dismissal, corridor conduct, transitions between activities, and routines within assemblies, should be carefully and clearly taught at the beginning of the teaching relationship, reinforced and refreshed consistently (GOV.UK, 2019). In addition to this, Estyn present a thematic report on behaviour in schools in Wales. It was noted that settings within Wales should consider the approaches and understanding of challenges around behaviour of pupils in schools, such as the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), which is a significant element to be considered within behaviour management and how to support the child appropriately (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2025).

In addition to this, behaviour management contributes to an effective learning climate through fostering a calm and predictable environment, allowing teachers to teach and pupils to learn, without disruption (Spielman and Ofsted, 2019). Despite this, it is important to clarify behaviour management for pupils with Additional Learning Needs, ACEs, and behavioural and emotional needs. It is important to adjust approaches appropriately when engaging with pupils with specific needs, such as positive reinforcement, the use of visual aids, implementing a reward system, the use of positive language as well as body language (THRIVE, 2024). By implementing such

approaches, the focus stays on consistent and individualised strategies rather than reactive sanctions, which is significant for educators to recognise. Estyn (2018) presents effective practice of behaviour management strategies implemented within Ysgol Y Gogarth 'special' school. Within the setting, teachers, behaviour analysts, and other professionals work closely together to implement the schools' behaviour management and support system. The aim is to reduce barriers to learning and equip pupils with the skills necessary to reach their full potential. Behaviour analysts assist educators in creating programs that enhance communication, impart academic skills, and lessen disruptive behaviours that hinders learning (Estyn, 2018). The setting has developed four areas of practice; BESST (British Early Special School Teaching model), STEPS, individual behaviour plans, and a whole-school approach to positive behaviour support. Each element of practice has enabled the setting to implement a multi-disciplinary collaboration and identify the development of pupils' social, behavioural, communication and educational skills (Estyn, 2018).

Furthermore, Kounin' (1977) model of behaviour management focuses on proactive classroom management rather than reacting to undesired behaviours. Kounin (1977) proposed that effective educators prevent disruption through techniques such as 'with-it-ness', overlapping, and maintaining lesson momentum, rather than relying on punishment. The concept of 'with-it-ness' requires pupils to perceive that the educator is constantly aware of what occurs in the classroom, this is demonstrated through actions and verbal cues (EBSCO, 2024). Additionally, the idea of overlapping requires educators to manage multiple situations or activities simultaneously, for example, while reading as a group, the teacher may use hand signals to communicate with pupils who may be causing disruption in the classroom without stopping the reading session (EBSCO, 2024). However, there are criticisms of this model in practice. It is argued that there is a lack of direction for educators dealing with pupils who display undesired behaviours, while this model has elements of positive learning environments, there is no guidance or strategies for educators to redirect negative behaviours (Meinokat, 2021).

With this in mind, Welsh Government (2012) provide guidance on practical approaches to behaviour management within classrooms. The guidance suggests that behaviour

can be modified through 'conditioning'. In which there are two types, classical conditioning, and operant conditioning. Classical conditioning implies that the behaviour is linked to specific stimulus. For instance, a child experiences joy and excitement on Friday afternoons since it is 'fun Friday' for the entire class. Whereas operant conditioning rewards positive behaviour and issues sanctions for unwanted behaviour, in which the behaviour is linked and repeated (Welsh Government, 2012). This aligns with Skinner's (1937) operant conditioning theory, which suggests actions that result in positive consequences are more likely to be repeated, in which, reinforcement is used to encourage behaviour, while punishment is used to decrease it (McLeod, 2025). Furthermore, within the guidance presented by Welsh Government (2012), it is suggested that the foundation of effective behaviour management is the educator's capacity to establish a disciplined, well-managed classroom setting that facilitates learning, it may be difficult to teach a variety of children with various needs, behaviours, and attention spans. Despite this, children will learn more effectively when an encouraging and positive is established since they will understand what is expected of them (Welsh Government, 2012). Effective behaviour management within a well-managed classroom can prove successful by implementing expectations and guidance at the start of the year which are understood by all pupils, have agreed-upon rewards and positive reinforcements, making use of physical space, have established sanctions in place for unwanted behaviour, have well-planned lessons, have a variety of alternatives for handling disciplinary issues, and fostering respect and positive connections (Welsh Government, 2012).

Elements of Effective Learning Climates: Assessment for Learning

Assessment for Learning, also referred to as AfL, is a process in finding and analysing evidence to assist students and educators in determining where they are in their learning, where they need to go, and the most effective way to get there (Assessment Reform Group, 2002). Assessment is being carried out in every minute of the classroom, it is an essential component of the teaching and learning process. Assessment enables educators to gain an insight into pupils' comprehension and learning requirements, in which, effective evaluation is significant within teaching (GOV.UK, n.d.). There are two main components of assessment; summative and

formative. Summative assessments identify what a pupil has achieved over a period of time, this may be related to the learning aims and objectives and relevant national standards (National Foundation for Educational Research, 2023). Contrastingly, formative assessments identify what a pupil has achieved on a day-to-day basis during teaching and learning, this enables educators as well as pupils to assess the progress of what learners know and what they do not know (National Foundation for Educational Research, 2023).

Assessment for Learning is a key aspect of an effective learning climate. This is recognised by Johnson (2026) whom identified that Assessment for Learning enables educators to enhance their teaching strategies and approaches. As well as this, Johnson (2026) presented that Assessment for Learning supports pupils' development of metacognitive skills and strategies, which guides pupils to develop an active role within their learning process. Contrastingly, Brown (2019) comments that although Assessment for Learning is beneficial in some aspects, there are risks around assessments causing psychological, social, and educational consequences, this may cause distress among pupils when receiving test results or being assessed. Furthermore, Black and William (1998) present 'inside the black box' which argued that formative assessment is the most effective way to raise student achievement. According to Black and William (2018), the term 'classroom assessment' refers to both assessment of and assessment for learning, this is identified through the decision-making of specific assessments which lies solely with the educator. It is argued that improving daily classroom assessment through using feedback, questioning, and self-assessment rather than just 'ticking a box' transforms the learning as a whole (Black and William, 2018). While the theory presented by Black and William (1998) is strong, critiques argue that there is a lack of guidance for educators on implementing effective strategies to assess learning (Schildkamp, 2020). Black and William critiqued their own theory, suggesting that the term 'assessment' automatically led individuals to think of exams and tests. They argued that the term 'assessment' should be rephrased as 'responsive teaching' focusing on the evidence collected of pupils learning and how to progress and enhance this (Booth, 2017).

Assessment Reform Group (2002) present ten principles for effective Assessment for Learning within classrooms, emphasising that assessment should actively support and improve the learning process rather than measuring achievement at the end of it, which is a significant factor within an effective learning climate. The principles highlight that effective assessment should be embedded within effective planning of teaching and learning, through providing feedback, how learners will progress, and how they will assess their learning (Assessment Reform Group, 2002). It was highlighted that Assessment for learning should focus on how learners learn, as well as this, Assessment for Learning should be recognised as central to classroom practice which should involve both teachers and learners in reflection and decision-making of assessment. Additionally, Assessment Reform Group (2002) suggests that assessment should be recognised as significant professional skill for educators and assessment should be considered with care, due to sensitivity issues regarding the emotional impact of assessments. It should also involve the importance of learner motivation and assessments should promote dedication to learner goals through a shared understanding of the criteria in which they are assessed by. The principles additionally suggest that learners should receive constructive guidance on how to develop their learning further, as well as, become reflective of their own learning. Finally, Assessment Reform Group (2002) present that Assessment for Learning should recognise the range of achievements which learners attain. The ten principles for effective Assessment for Learning within classrooms is widely implemented within education, as they promote learner-centred teaching, independence, and reflective practice, all of which contribute to an effective learning climate if implemented correctly.

Furthermore, Estyn (2018) presents effective practice of Assessment for Learning within Gaer Primary School. The use of effective Assessment for Learning strategies were adopted based on previous work conducted by Hattie (2009) to promote learning through helping pupils with what they can achieve and how they can develop their learning further. Gaer Primary School implemented multiple approaches for effective Assessment for Learning, firstly the use of De Bono '6 thinking hats' were introduced. The hats enable pupils to peer and self-access through multiple ways, each colour represents a mindset to reflect the learning taken place. The yellow hat represents

what went well, the black hat represents what didn't go well, the red hat represents an emotion the pupil may be feeling, the green hat represents creativity, the white hat represents information retained during the learning, and the blue hat represents the next steps within the learning (Estyn, 2018). Additionally, the use of a success criteria was implemented throughout the school, often created with pupils, to ensure clarity with the expected outcome of the lesson, as well as adopting peer assessment models. Since the implementation of these approaches, the classroom culture has changed significantly as a result of the new procedures, pupils are actively involved within their education, confident in implementing different strategies to enhance their learning and develop from mistakes (Estyn, 2018). The Assessment for Learning approaches have contributed to the development of a sense of self-efficacy, confidence, and perseverance. By explaining concepts to others, the peer assessment process has assisted pupils in reinforcing what they have learnt, as well as pupils developing their oracy abilities through peer assessment (Estyn, 2018). To support this, the Curriculum for Wales (2022) demonstrates that the assessment of individuals is to support progress on a day-to-day basis, identify and reflect on individual learner progress, and understand group practice in order to reflect on practice (Welsh Government, 2022).

Conclusion

To conclude, it has been identified that there are multiple elements of effective learning climates such as growth mindset, behaviour management, and Assessment for Learning only to name a few. As identified, an effective learning climate should be built upon the physical environment, the social environment, and the emotional environment. The element of growth mindset within an effective learning climate is the idea that individuals can improve with practice, effective techniques, and appropriate assistance and support (Holmes, 2026). The impact of a growth mindset enables pupils to embrace challenges, being persistent in the face of setbacks, recognising efforts, and learning from negative feedback, which are significant factors within an effective learning climate, all of which is supported by work from Carol Dweck. Furthermore, Behaviour management is a crucial factor within an effective learning environment, as discussed, Welsh Government (2025) present that effective behaviour management is crucial for creating a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment, ensuring pupils are

ready to learn. In addition to this, work conducted by Kounin (1977) whom proposed that effective educators prevent disruption through techniques such as 'with-it-ness', overlapping, and maintaining lesson momentum, rather than relying on punishment. The discussion of effective practice around behaviour management also identified strategies for practitioners to implement within settings. Lastly, Assessment for Learning was discussed as an element of an effective learning climate, which identified that this approach enables educators to enhance their teaching strategies and approaches, as well as supporting pupils' development of metacognitive skills and strategies, which guides pupils to develop an active role within their learning process (Johnson, 2026). Each element discussed displays effective contributions to learning climates, as well as effective practice, barriers, and relevant theory.

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