

Classroom management is crucial for creating a focused, orderly and positive learning environment. When executed effectively, classroom management strategies can minimize behaviours that can disrupt the learning process ensuring a positive environment for both learners and facilitators. (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2014). However, managing a classroom effectively extends beyond maintaining order- it requires building relationships, promoting engagement and ensuring every learner feels valued and included. This essay critically analyses the inclusivity of classroom management strategies within the Welsh education system. It will be argued that while classroom management strategies increasingly reflect inclusive and humanistic values, significant barriers continue to challenge their effectiveness.

Traditional classroom management emphasised compliance through lectures, testing, and direct instructions, often ineffective for increasingly diverse learners (Spahiu and Spahiu, 2013). Skinner's operant conditioning emphasised reinforcement and punishment as tools for behaviour change. (Main, 2023). Modern learners often require approaches beyond punishment to address barriers to learning. (Swinson, 2023).

There are several key elements of classroom management, these include: Behaviour management, Organisation, Relationships, Engagement and Responsiveness. Additionally, to add to the challenges of developing effective class management techniques, "Teachers need to be aware of the classroom composition and needs of the students, such as cultural background, ability, grade level and so on". (Griffin, ND.) It should also be noted that needs may include a learning disability, physical disability, English as a first language (EAL), Trauma/Neglect and the exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES).

In 2015, The Welsh Government issued guidance to 'Person-Centred Practice' in education, which provides guidance and tools which helps focus on what is important to the individual, allowing facilitators to understand what matters to them, and discover the best ways to support them. One page profiles summarise a learner's strengths, needs and preferences, helping staff provide consistent support. Pupil-Centred approaches in education incorporates values of the humanist approach such as Carl Rogers. According to Gray and Woods (2022) Rogers emphasises positive psychology and solution-focused approaches, to identify individual strengths, rather than deficiencies, while encouraging co-constructed and realistic solutions.

Humanistic approaches including Rogers' concept of unconditional positive regard, emphasise valuing learners and building trust and empathy, contemplated by Maslow's hierarchy of needs also emphasising that safety, belonging and self-esteem are prerequisites for learning (Main, 2025). When used together, unconditional positive regard aims to meet the basic emotional and physiological needs of Maslow's Hierarchy, leaving learners in the best possible mindset to engage and be ready for learning.

The Welsh Government (2021) embedded a whole school-approach to Mental Wellbeing, whole-school wellbeing approaches in Wales reflects theorists' principles, though practical implementation is limited by resources. (Cornelius-White, 2007) Although both theories provide an excellent basis for inclusive practice by treating each learner as an individual, Successful execution depends on each school's commitment and ethos that should value wellbeing as much as academic achievement.

Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory emphasises that learning is inherently social and occurs through interaction, communication and co-construction of learning.

(McLeod, 2025). Vygotsky's ZPD and scaffolding highlight the importance of teacher support in enabling learners to achieve tasks independently (McLeod, 2025).

Vygotsky's theories encourage teachers to provide differentiated support so that all learners- regardless of ability, background or additional needs- can access learning opportunities. Lindner and Schwab (2020) notes that differentiation is designed to motivate students to achieve individual tasks and goals by aligning tasks with individual ability and interest. Although differentiation is theoretically valuable, it can overburden teachers with planning and materials (Delisle, 2015).

Positive Behaviour Support (PBS), Restorative Practice (RP), and trauma-informed approaches align with humanistic and constructivist principles, promoting empathy, self-regulation and collaboration. According to The Department for Education (2022) PBS mainly focuses on the underlying reasons for behaviour, teaching positive social skills, and reinforcing desired behaviours through consistent support. Legg and Thomson (2017) define PBS as a "multi-element framework" that seeks to understand the meaning behind challenging behaviour and providing appropriate interventions. Effectiveness depends on consistent training, staff capacity, and whole-school commitment (Denne et al, 2023). When successfully embedded, PBS promotes inclusion through collaboration, respect and shared responsibility for learning- reflecting the collaborative nature of Vygotsky's theory.

Restorative Practice (RP) is another widely adopted classroom management strategy that reflects the principles of humanistic and social constructivist theories. RP focuses on repairing harm and rebuilding trust rather than enforcing punishment and is deeply rooted in Rogers' (1951) emphasis on empathy, respect and positive relationships. Wales Restorative Approaches Partnership (n.d) defines RP as the prevention of harm and building, maintaining and repairing relationships. It encourages open communication between pupils and teachers, allowing learners to reflect on their actions and understand the impact they have on others. This approach intends to create emotionally safe and supportive environments in which pupils feel valued and learned, aligning with Maslow's' (1943) hierarchy of needs- particularly the psychological needs of belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualisation. In addition, RP closely connects with Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist theory by emphasising dialogue, collaboration and shared responsibility within the school environment. Through guidance, reflection and structured conversations, pupils co-construct solutions to behavioural issues developing ownership and mutual understanding. Public Health Wales (2022) concluded that overall RP can lead to positive changes across a wide range of emotional and mental well-being outcomes; however, evidence suggests inconsistency in implementations may limit these benefits. This highlights the need for whole-school commitment, ongoing professional development and consistency if RP is to effectively promote inclusion and emotional well-being.

Despite the inclusive intentions of classroom management tools such as Restorative Practice (RP) and Positive Behaviour Support (PBS), the realities of modern classroom contexts often present numerous barriers to their successful implementation. Barriers include teacher workload, limited professional learning, and inconsistent implementation. Systematic support, collaborative leadership, and ongoing reflective practice are required to embed effective inclusive strategies. (Cooper, 2011). These systematic and organisational constraints demonstrate that even the most inclusive classroom management frameworks require complete engagement and

collaboration from all members of the school community. As Ainscow (2020) emphasises, the success of inclusive practice depends on leadership commitment, coherent school structures, and continuous staff development to ensure the most effective embedment of inclusive practices.

A further barrier to effective inclusive classroom management lies in the availability, quality and consistency of teacher training. Collier-Meek et al (2019) states that the limited behavioural support training available to teachers is concerning, particularly as evidence suggests that teachers' psychological wellbeing has a direct impact on successful implementation of inclusive frameworks. High levels of stress and burnout are common negative factors that can reduce efficiency and consistency in applying these strategies. While Avramidis and Norwich (2020) found many educators express positive attitudes towards inclusive strategies, research indicates that confidence in implementing them in practice remains low.

The Welsh Government (2016) provided guidance stating that to promote inclusion schools should identify both common and additional needs of all children, use varied communication methods, and differentiate instruction according to individual learning style and emotional wellbeing. However, achieving this level of expertise requires specialised training, collaborative planning and reflective practice-conditions which are often limited due to workload and time restraints. Recent research underlines that professional learning programmes must go beyond technical skill: they must cultivate the cognitive, emotional and relational capabilities of teachers to embed inclusive classroom management effectively. (Nissim and Shamma, 2025). Without continuous professional development and institutional support, inclusive classroom management frameworks risk being applied superficially, undermining their intended impact. Recent Diagnostics in Wales from OECD (2021) further highlight that teacher professional learning must be systematic, collaborative and deeply embedded within school culture in order to positively influence inclusive classroom practice.

Behavioural, emotional and social factors also have a profound influence on classroom management. Many learners experience emotional or psychological challenges that affects their ability to engage and adhere to classroom expectations. Adverse Childhood Experience (ACES) such as abuse or neglect can affect self-regulation and engagement (Bellis et al, 2019). Trauma-informed approaches provide emotional safety and supportive relationships, helping learners develop resilience, self-esteem and coping strategies (National Education Union, 2024).

The Children's Commissioner for Wales (n.d) emphasises that behaviour is frequently a response to an unmet need and when children lack a trusted adult at home may communicate through behaviour in school. When educators respond to such behaviour with punishment or disregard, the learner's sense of safety and belonging may be compromised.

This perspective aligns closely with Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of needs, which emphasises that a child's basic physiological and emotional needs-such as love, safety and belonging must be met before cognitive development and learning can occur. Learners who do not feel safe, valued or connected are unlikely to reach the higher levels necessary for academic success. In this context, challenging behaviour may be a signal that a learners foundational needs remain unmet. Therefore, effective classroom management must prioritise creating an environment that fosters security, connection and emotional stability before academic expectations can be realised. Rogers (1951)

concept of *unconditional positive regard* also reinforce this notion, suggesting that educators must foster empathy and acceptance to enable learners to fulfil and build confidence, resilience and trust within the school environment.

Estyn (2020) highlights that resilience enables children to better manage adversity whilst promoting improved self-esteem, confidence and the ability to form positive relationships. However, as with many inclusive initiatives, the successful implementation of trauma-informed practice relies heavily on sufficient time, leadership commitment and adequate training opportunities. Public Health Wales (2022) further emphasises the need for consistent staff development and a whole-school approach grounded in empathy and care. Where these are lacking, staff may struggle to apply consistent relevant approaches, especially in high pressure and under resourced settings, which can limit the effectiveness of such approaches.

The Welsh Government (2021) recognises the importance of emotional and mental wellbeing within the Curriculum for Wales, embedding a whole-school approach to mental health that values relationships, empathy and respect. The Curriculum promotes inclusion by addressing behavioural issues through dialogue and understanding rather than punishment. Yet, despite policy progress, the realities of teacher workload, limited support and inconsistent training hinder the effectiveness of these principals in practice. Ainscow (2005) argues that inclusion requires more than individual teacher support but “structural changes in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies” as fundamental components to learning.

Another key challenge lies in the growing cultural and linguistic diversity of classrooms. In addition to varied learning needs in the classroom, Children from minority ethnic backgrounds or those with English as an Additional Language (EAL) may experience challenges related to behaviour, communication and engagement. Estyn (2022) argues that schools with no capacity for identification or interventions for EAL needs, learners are more likely to develop low self-esteem, lack of confidence and impact their academic progress. Faizah and Mahfuzah (2023) suggests that teachers who are sensitive to cultural differences create environments that value diversity, respect differences and teaches understanding of other cultures. Similarly, Gay (2018) describes culturally responsive pedagogy as an approach that integrates learners’ different cultural experiences, values and communication styles into everyday teaching practice.

The Welsh Government (2022) recognises that ethnic diversity across Wales varies widely but emphasises the importance of providing all learners with opportunities to engage with local Welsh history, identity and culture, alongside the study of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic history. Such approaches enable learners to recognise and appreciate both their own cultural identity and that of others, aligning with one of the four purposes of The New Curriculum for Wales 2022: to support learners to become ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world. (Welsh Government, 2020).

The principles of inclusion within Welsh education policy strongly align with the theoretical frameworks of Rogers, Maslow and Vygotsky, all of which emphasise the importance of meeting learner’s emotional, social and cognitive needs. The Curriculum for Wales (2022) promotes a holistic approach to education, aiming to develop learners who are “ambitious, capable, ethical informed and confident individuals” (Welsh Government, 2020). This vision closely aligns with Rogers (1951) humanistic belief that

education should nurture the whole person and that positive, trusting relationships are the core of effective learning. Similarly, Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs which prioritises safety, belonging and self-esteem as essential foundations of learning underpins the Welsh Government whole-school approach to wellbeing (2021). Collectively, these frameworks clearly demonstrate theoretical and policy importance that emotional security and inclusive relationships are fundamental to effective classroom management.

However, while policy intentions are grounded in sound theoretical principles, their implementation into practice remains uneven. Conn and Davis (2022) found that although Wales has made significant progress in outlining inclusive policy developments, there remains a persistent gap between policy and practice, with limited evidence of widespread impact in schools. The Welsh Governments (2021) Whole School Approach to mental health requires all schools to create safe and nurturing environments, Yet Estyn (2023) found that research suggests that success varies due to funding, staff capacity and leadership commitment. This embodies Ainscow's (2020) argument that inclusion cannot be achieved solely through classroom strategies but requires a systemic change involving collaboration and sustained professional learning. It also requires a change in the way educators view their role in the classroom, Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) further assert that inclusive practices require teachers to work adaptively and enable flexibility and collective problem-solving.

Constructivist approaches, such as Vygotsky's (1978) theory of learning through social interaction, also underpin key elements of the curriculum for Wales, particularly its emphasis on communication, collaboration and experimental learning. Classroom management frameworks such as Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) and Restorative Practice (RP) reflect these ideas by encouraging communication, shared responsibility and co-construction of solutions to behavioural issues. When implemented effectively, such approaches support learners to develop empathy, self-regulation and resilience skills that are essential for inclusive classrooms. Yet, as highlighted by Denne et al (2023) and Public Health Wales (2022), the success of these frameworks depends heavily on consistency, staff training and whole-school participation, conditions often undermined by time constraints, teacher workload and limited resources.

Moreover, the Welsh education system continues to face challenges in balancing inclusive practice with the realities of accountability pressures and curriculum demands. The Welsh Government (2025) acknowledge the significant pressures schools face in meeting the planning and collaboration requirements necessary for the successful realisation of the Curriculum for Wales. While policy frameworks promote relational and person-centred approaches, teachers often report feeling underprepared to implement such strategies effectively and instead prioritise measurable outcomes over holistic learner developments. This can lead to a disconnect between inclusive intent and classroom reality, reinforcing Ainscow's (2005) claim that genuine inclusion demands both structural changes and a fundamental shift in educators' beliefs and attitudes. To achieve this, schools must embed inclusion not as an additional initiative, but as a school ethos shaping of aspects of teaching, learning and behaviour management.

Inclusive classroom management requires empathy, adaptability and collaboration. Humanistic and constructivist principles underpin Welsh educational

policies, yet consistent implementation depends on systemic support, professional development and leadership commitment.

In conclusion, effective classroom management is a central pillar of a positive and inclusive learning environment. This essay has critically analysed how current classroom management strategies support or challenge inclusivity within modern Welsh education. The evolution from traditional, behaviourist approaches to more humanist and constructivist frameworks demonstrates a clear pedagogical and policy shift towards recognising the learner as a whole person, whose social, emotional and cognitive needs must be understood and met in order to enable academic success.

Traditional compliance-based approaches grounded in Skinner's theory of operant conditioning emphasised control, discipline and reinforcement (Main, 2023). However, as learner diversity and educational policy have evolved, such behaviourist models have been critiqued for their limited inclusivity. (Spahiu and Spahiu, 2013). Modern education requires approaches that address the unique and diverse needs of learners, acknowledging that traditional systems of reward and punishment often fail to engage those with additional learning needs or social and emotional barriers (Swinson, 2023). In contrast, humanistic and constructivist theories of Rogers, Maslow and Vygotsky offer a more inclusive and holistic foundation for classroom management, focusing on empathy, self-actualisation and collaboration. These theories underpin key Welsh educational policies and shape the foundation of the Curriculum for Wales (2022) which promotes a holistic, learner-centred approach.

However, while these theoretical principles are well embedded within Welsh educational policy, their translation into everyday classroom practice remains complex. Approaches such as Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) and Restorative Practice (RP) align strongly with humanistic and constructivist values, focusing on empathy, self-reflection and relationships. Denne et al (2023) emphasise that these frameworks require extensive training, consistency and whole-school participation to be effective. Public Health Wales (2022) state that when the frameworks are implemented effectively, they actively promote empathy, reflection and shared responsibility for behaviour, leading to improved wellbeing and stronger relationships. Nonetheless, As Ainscow (2020) argues inconsistent implementation of these frameworks limits their inclusivity and overall impact across schools.

The Inclusivity of classroom management is also shaped by the skills, experience and wellbeing of teachers themselves. Research from Avramidis and Norwich (2020) indicates that although many teachers express support and positive attitudes for inclusive education, they lack confidence, resources and support from leadership to apply them in practice. Similarly, Collier-Meek et al (2019) identify teacher workload and burnout as significant barriers to consistency of apply frameworks. It is emphasised by both The OECD (2021) and Nissim and Shamma (2025) that effective inclusion requires expertise but also emotional intelligence, collaborative reflection and institutional commitment. This indicates that inclusion cannot be achieved solely through classroom interventions but must be embedded in a whole school culture that promotes teacher development and progress.

Ultimately, while Welsh education policy reflects an ambitious and progressive vision for inclusion within classroom management, significant barriers persist in practice. The gap between theoretical ideals and policies from classroom realities highlights the need for systemic investment in professional learning, collaborative

leadership and structural reform. As Ainscow (2005), and Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) emphasise, true inclusion requires cultural and structural transformation across the whole school system- just not the addition of new initiatives. Achieving this will demand sustained funding, time and a re-evaluation of how wellbeing and inclusion are prioritised alongside academic progress. While classroom management strategies may not always appear fully inclusive due to diversity of learners needs, grounding practice in coherent evidence-based policies can move Welsh schools closer to achieving a genuinely inclusive education system- one in which every learner is valued, supported and empowered to succeed.

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