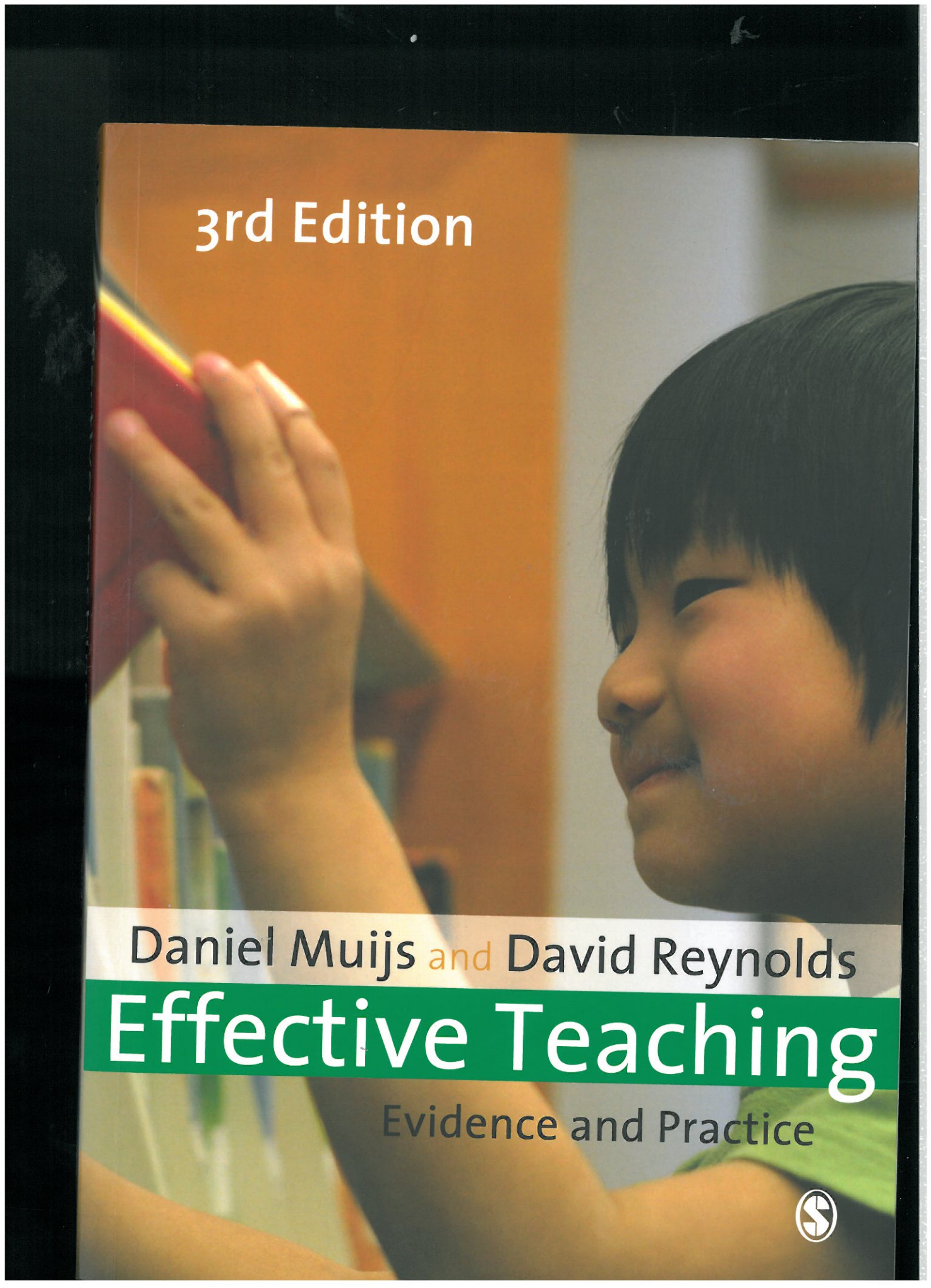


The background of the book cover is a photograph of a young child with dark hair, seen in profile from the chest up. The child is holding a red book with both hands, looking down at it with a focused expression. The background is a warm, orange-brown color, possibly a wall or a bookshelf.

3rd Edition

Daniel Muijs and David Reynolds

Effective Teaching

Evidence and Practice



CHAPTER 7

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT



Key Points

In this chapter, you will learn about:

- the main studies on classroom management
- how to avoid disruption during lesson transitions
- why and how to establish clear rules and procedures
- what seating arrangements are most effective for different teaching situations.

Introduction

One of the main features to emerge from teacher effectiveness research as a correlate of pupil achievement and attainment is *opportunity to learn*. This refers to whether or not the content tested for (on whatever test is used to measure pupils' achievement) has actually been seen by the pupils during the course of the year. The main factors to influence opportunity to learn are

curriculum coverage (the extent to which the content covered by the teacher actually matches the content covered by the test) and the related factor of how many hours are actually pencilled in to study the subject tested. However, another major factor influencing opportunity to learn within the lesson is *time on task*, that is the amount of time within a lesson that pupils spend engaging with the curriculum rather than on other activities such as socializing, moving around the classroom and being disciplined (Brophy and Good, 1986; Reynolds and Muijs, 1999a).

Time on task in turn is crucially dependent on the quality of both classroom and behaviour management, in that ensuring a smooth flow of the lesson is important to both. Classroom management (Lemlech, 1988) has consistently been found to distinguish more from less effective teachers (e.g. Muijs and Reynolds, 1999) and has also been found to distinguish expert teachers, who appear able to manage classrooms very smoothly by ensuring that activities blend into each other seemingly without effort, from novice teachers for whom classroom management appears to present significant difficulties. A major study of classroom management was undertaken in the 1970s at the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education at the University of Texas, by a team led by Edmund Emmer and Carolyn Evertson. Coming from a teacher effectiveness research perspective, they looked at differences between teachers in their pupils' on and off task behaviour and related these to the teachers' classroom management strategies (Emmer et al., 1997; Evertson, 1995). Many of the findings from that study have influenced subsequent practice as well as the recommendations given below.

A different perspective is that of 'classroom ecology' research, initiated by Kounin in the late 1960s and continued in research undertaken by Doyle and Carter from the 1980s onwards. Kounin was one of the first to realize, after extensive studies, that pupils' behaviour was not just, and indeed not primarily, influenced by teachers' disciplining techniques, but by their classroom management (Kounin, 1970). Classroom management is closely connected to and often discussed in conjunction with dealing with pupil misbehaviour. In this book, we will discuss the two separately, viewing classroom management as creating conditions under which pupil misbehaviour is less likely to occur. How to deal with misbehaviour when it does occur will form the subject of Chapter 8.

Classroom management is crucially linked to preparation. In one study of effective teachers, for example, they were found to strongly emphasize effective planning and organization as prerequisites for effective teaching, not least as good planning facilitates classroom management (Watson et al., 2007), and as a general rule it can be stated that effective classrooms are managed through procedures and rules, not through punishment. Therefore, procedures need

to be planned and implemented early on, from the first lesson of the new school year.

Elements of Effective Classroom Management

Starting the lesson

An obvious but often neglected element of effective classroom management is starting the lesson on time. Reasons for lessons starting late are various, amongst others prior lessons running late, playtime going on for too long, chaotic transitions from playtime to lessons, and ineffective management of pupils coming into the classroom. While the teacher can her/himself help to alleviate these problems, a whole-school policy aimed at maximizing lesson time is essential as well (Creemers, 1994).

The start of the lesson can involve several classroom management difficulties that the teacher needs to take into account. The main problem is that pupils will often be coming from the playground or lunch where different, more lax rules apply, and therefore the transition to appropriate classroom behaviour may cause difficulties. The teacher can keep disruption to a minimum by instituting a number of set procedures for dealing with lesson starts. The teacher can, for example, write instructions on the board before the pupils come in so they can get started with the lesson immediately, train pupils to take the register and read instructions or have certain set activities that pupils can start doing as soon as they come into the classroom, such as chanting times tables. Having a seating arrangement from the start of the year so all pupils know where to go every lesson is also important.

Appropriate seating arrangements

Another important aspect of classroom management is providing appropriate seating arrangements in the class. One general principle is that pupils should have sufficient space to work comfortably. If movement in the class is desired or necessary, pupils should be able to do this easily and without too much pushing and shoving. There should be enough room between seats for the teacher to be able to move around the classroom without bumping into or disturbing pupils. How exactly to arrange pupils and desks depends on the space and resources available.

There is also a pedagogic aspect to this in that choice of the exact seating arrangements will need to match the formats and goals of the lesson, as the

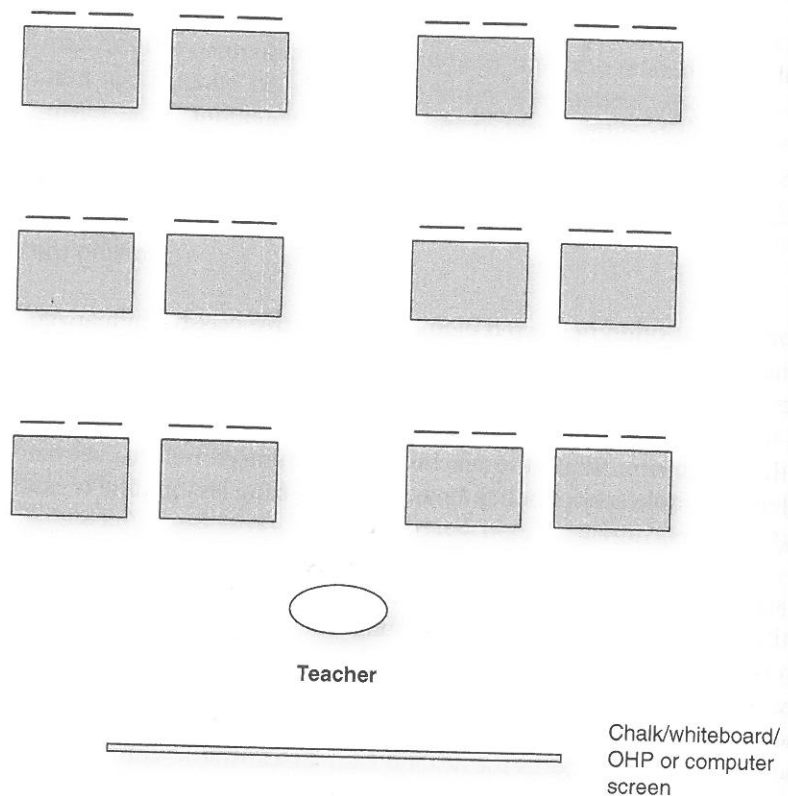


FIGURE 7.1 Seating in rows. This seating arrangement is effective for whole-class teaching, but not for small group work or classroom discussion

way pupils are positioned can influence the effectiveness of different types of delivery (see Figures 7.1 to 7.3). If a direct instruction style lesson is to be used in which the teacher will spend a substantial amount of time delivering content to and interacting with the whole class, all the pupils should be able to see the teacher and the tools s/he is using (black/whiteboard, OHP screen, number line) without straining. No pupils should be sitting with their backs to the teacher. This still leaves a number of seating arrangements open to the teacher, such as seating pupils in rows facing the teacher, seating them in a semi-circle or horseshoe or, with younger pupils, letting them sit around the teacher on the rug.

Other lesson plans may require different seating arrangements, however. For cooperative small group work, for example, it is recommended to place the groups around tables to allow them to interact easily with one another. If individual work is required where pupils aren't supposed to interact with each other too much, this seating arrangement should on the contrary be avoided.

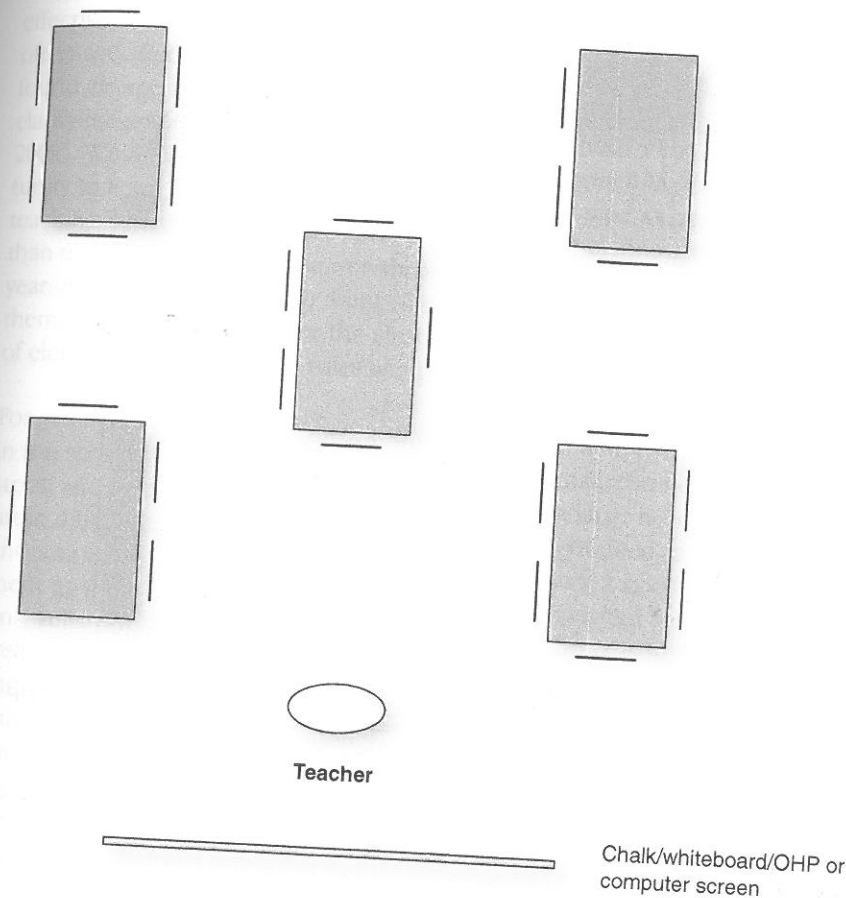


FIGURE 7.2 This seating arrangement is suitable for small group work, but less suitable for whole-class teaching and class discussion

Whole-class discussion can be facilitated by seating pupils around a big table or seating them in a circle or semi-circle, while seating them in rows will impede discussion. A possible compromise (for young pupils) involves pupils sitting round the teacher on the carpet during the whole-class part of the lesson and then moving them to sit around tables for small group work afterwards. Using a semi-circle seating arrangement can stop pupils trying to 'hide' and not take part in interactions (Joachim, 2002).

Dealing with external disruptions

Disruptions from outside the classroom can take up valuable teaching time. These can take several forms such as the head coming in to make announcements,

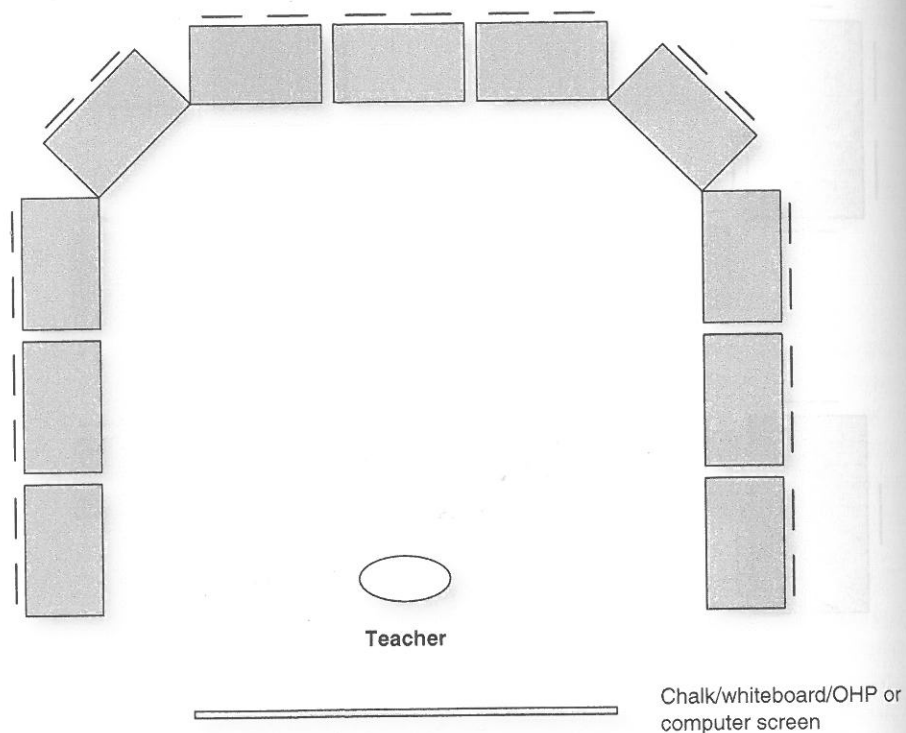


FIGURE 7.3 This seating arrangement is suited for class discussion and whole-class teaching, but is not suitable for small group work

teachers from other classrooms coming in with questions and pupils coming in with various requests. While a whole-school strategy to limit this kind of interruption is desirable, some interruptions are inevitable. The teacher needs to make sure that interruptions cause minimum disruption to the lesson by having clear rules for pupils' behaviour during such disruptions (such as sitting quietly or getting on with seatwork) and by dealing with them quickly, if necessary telling the teacher or pupil who has come in to leave and come back later.

Establishing clear rules and procedures

One of the main factors for ensuring smoothly run lessons is to establish clear rules and procedures from the start. *Rules* are more formal, usually written, statements that specify what pupils are allowed to do or expected not to do. *Procedures* are more informal arrangements that specify how things are to be done in a particular classroom. Rules are often specified school-wide, and have been identified in school effectiveness research as distinguishing more from less

effective schools. Procedures can in many cases also be school-wide, but are often specified by the teacher for his or her class. Effective teachers have been found to spend a considerable amount of time and effort on specifying and clarifying procedures at the beginning of the school year (Wong and Wong, 2004). While this may seem to be at odds with the principle of maximizing opportunity to learn and time on task (spending as much time as possible on academic teaching), the additional time spent on this at the beginning of the year is more than made up for by the time won through less time-wasting during the rest of the year. Also, pupils do actually want rules, they want to know what is expected of them, and will behave better the clearer that is. Below, we will discuss a number of elements for which clear rules and procedures need to be established.

For rules and procedures to work, they need to be actively taught to pupils. As in the school as a whole, it is better to stick to a small number of clearly understood and consistently enforced rules rather than a large number of (therefore) more difficult to enforce regulations. The rules taught need to become a routine and automatic part of pupil behaviour. This requires a good deal of reinforcement at the beginning of the school year. It is important that the teacher not only tells pupils what the rules are, but explains the reasons why they exist as well. Thus, when telling young pupils not to shout out answers, the teacher should explain that the reason they shouldn't do this is to give all pupils a chance of answering the question. Likewise, when telling them to be quiet while another pupil is answering the teacher needs to explain the reasons for this, such as showing respect to other pupils and being able to learn from their answers. Reasons for being careful with laboratory equipment need to be explained as being a matter of pupil safety (and not merely the school's insurance policy!).

A lot of rules have to do with movement around the class, such as sitting in a circle in an orderly way. These situations obviously need to be practised a number of times before they will run smoothly and, like other motor skills, they need to be automatized as much as possible. Other rules that need establishing relate to things like how to pass round material, what to do when arriving late and how to ask for help.

One of the main factors to take into account when setting up classroom rules and procedures is to ensure they are consistently implemented. If consistency is not enforced, rules will soon break down. For example, if the teacher has decided to prevent pupils shouting out answers to questions, this rule must be constantly enforced and as soon as a pupil shouts out an answer, s/he must be told off. If this does not happen and one pupil is allowed to shout out an answer, soon more and more pupils will start doing this and the teacher will have to take strong action to restore the rule.

Smooth transitions between lesson segments

One of the main ways to ensure maximum time on task is to ensure that not too much time is wasted during transitions from one part of the lesson to the next part of the lesson, for example when going from teaching a new topic to the whole class to individual practice of the new topic. This can be a particularly difficult problem if pupils need to move from one part of the classroom to another, like when they have to move from the carpet to their tables or need to get materials such as workbooks and pencils. If not managed appropriately, such transitions can easily lead to time-wasting and can take up a significant part of the lesson (in our own research, we found this to be up to 15 per cent of lesson time in some lessons!) (Muijs and Reynolds, 1999).

Transitions need to be as short and smooth as possible. In order to make this easier, effective teachers establish clear procedures for lesson transitions. These can include rules limiting how many pupils can move around at any one time (for example, by letting one table move at a time), or assigning a particular child to clear away papers and pencils left on the table (it is a good idea to give this role to different pupils at different times). The best way to do this is to think of transitions as a set of steps that need to be executed by pupils. These can be put up on a wall chart, and be taught to pupils. For example, the transition from whole-class work during which pupils sit in a circle around the teacher to seatwork at their desks could be as follows:

1. Pupils go to their tables in order, i.e. first table 1, then table 2 etc.
2. At their tables, they take a worksheet from the middle as well as their pencil.
3. Pupils write their name and the date at the top of the worksheet.
4. Pupils start working (Arends, 1998; Borich, 1996).

Another useful technique is cueing. This is a technique used to alert pupils to the fact that a lesson transition is about to occur. An example that is often used during seatwork is to tell pupils that they have five minutes left to work and to repeat this one minute before the end of seatwork. Cueing can help prevent the problem of pupils who continue to work on the preceding activity after they are supposed to have moved on to the following activity.

Pupil talk

Inappropriate pupil talk can disrupt lessons. Pupils talking during the lesson are off task themselves and can distract other pupils. Correcting this misbehaviour will slow down the lesson and make the classroom climate less pleasant. Therefore, clear rules on when pupil talk is or is not allowed are important. This

does not mean that talking should be prohibited at all times. During small group work and some other types of seatwork, low-level talk can be appropriate, but this is clearly not the case during whole-class presentations. Clear rules also need to be established for pupil behaviour during questioning. Pupils should not usually be allowed to shout out answers (except during quick-response games) and should be made to listen to each other's answers and ideas. A period when loud talk can occur is during lesson transitions. According to Borich (1996), it is best to institute a no-talking rule during transitions, as allowing low levels of talk is difficult and often unsuccessful.

Giving homework assignments

Giving (homework) assignments can be one of the more difficult parts of the lesson, not least because not all pupils will be keen to do them. In order to minimize these problems, effective teachers give assignments immediately following related in-class activities. This ensures that the homework assignment often appears to be a natural part of the lesson and not something 'tacked on' afterwards. It is also important that the teacher makes it clear that homework is important and not just an obligatory time filler. For example, the teacher saying 'It is important that you practise this aspect, so you can use it well when we get to more difficult exercises, so I'll give you some homework on this' creates different expectations than the teacher saying something like: 'I have to assign you homework, so do exercises 10 and 11 on page 32.' Homework should not be used or presented as a punishment.

Maintaining momentum during the lesson

One of the most fruitful ways of preventing pupil misbehaviour during lessons is to ensure the smooth flow of the lesson. Kounin (1970) described a number of ways in which teachers themselves can slow down the momentum of lessons. Two of these refer to the teacher stopping an activity already begun:

- A *dangle* occurs when the teacher starts to do a particular activity, but then stops it halfway, leaving it 'dangling in mid-air'. This can happen when a teacher starts preparing a seatwork activity and then suddenly decides s/he needs to teach something else first, for example.
- A variation of this is a *flip-flop*, in which a teacher starts an activity but goes to another activity before finishing it, after which s/he goes back to the original activity once again. Both dangles and flip-flops can cause confusion among some pupils, and can trigger misbehaviour among the naughtier pupils. Both can be prevented by good lesson planning on the part of the teacher.

- Another way in which teachers can impede lesson flow is through *overdwelling*. This occurs when a teacher goes on explaining instructions to pupils after they have totally grasped what they need to do. This will lead to boredom and restlessness among pupils, and thus to a higher chance of misbehaviour.
- *Fragmentation* occurs when the teacher breaks down activities into too many different steps. An example would be where the teacher hands out papers in the following steps: 'Take the pile of handouts', 'Take one off the top and hand the pile to your neighbour', 'now take one off the top'. It has to be noted, however, that what constitutes overdwelling or fragmentation may differ from group to group, depending amongst other things on the age and ability level of the class.

Downtime

Downtime refers to those parts of the lesson during which one or more pupils (or the whole class) have time to fill because they have finished seatwork early, because the lesson has finished early and there is no point starting a new topic, or because pupils have to wait for materials to be fetched, the computer to load and so on. These situations can easily lead to disruption if clear procedures do not exist to deal with them. Effective teachers have clear rules, such as 'If you finish early, go into the reading corner and silently read a book' or 'If you've finished your work, come and ask me for the answer sheet and mark your answers'.

The best way to avoid downtime problems is to limit the amount of it that occurs. This can be done by, for example, making sure that there are enough additional tasks available for pupils who finish quickly and by making sure that all materials to be used are in class before the start of the lesson. It is better to have more exercises available than everyone will be able to do during the allotted time than to be left with unproductive time which has to be 'filled'.

Ending the lesson

A final moment during which management problems are likely to occur is at the end of the lesson. Problems that can occur at this point include not leaving enough time for finishing the planned activities (research has shown that the end-of-lesson summary is especially likely to get shortened or even completely cut out), lessons running over time, and instructions for homework getting lost as pupils rush to collect their belongings and go off for lunch or playtime. Effective teachers experience fewer problems with ending the lesson than less effective teachers, through methods such as planning and pacing the lesson to leave sufficient time for activities at the end, giving out homework early so that

no confusion occurs, establishing a set of rules for leaving the classroom (letting pupils go out one by one after answering a final question can be effective) and cueing so pupils know how long the lesson still has to go.

Summary

In this chapter, we have learnt about what research has found to be effective classroom management techniques.

Research on classroom management started in the late 1960s, and identified a number of points to help teachers avoid pupil misbehaviour.

Pupil misbehaviour is most likely to occur during the start of the lesson, at the end of the lesson, during downtime (which should be limited as much as possible) and during transitions. In all four cases, it is important to establish clear procedures for pupil behaviour. More generally, spending some time on establishing clear rules and procedures at the beginning of the year can save teachers a lot of time later in the year.

The teacher should limit the number of rules and procedures used, however, and rules must be rigorously enforced otherwise they will soon be ignored by pupils. The reasons for enforcing particular rules need to be explained to pupils, and it can be helpful to engage pupils in the process of making rules.

The teacher needs to maintain momentum during the lesson and has to avoid actions that can impede momentum such as 'dangling', 'flip-flops', 'overdwelling' and 'fragmentation'. Teachers will often need to limit or prohibit pupil talk.

When giving out homework assignments, teachers need to make clear the educational value of the assignment and avoid giving the impression that it is a punishment.

Reflective Questions

1. You are planning a lesson using whole-class teaching and individual pupil practice. What seating arrangements could you use?
2. How would you avoid disruption during lesson transitions?
3. You are starting the year teaching a new class. How would you go about setting up classroom rules?

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(Continued)

4. Think of a lesson you have recently taught, observed or been a pupil in. When did disruptions occur? What could have been done to avoid those?
5. Think of a lesson you have recently taught, observed or been a pupil in. Were there any occasions when you felt the teacher her/himself was causing the lesson to lose momentum? How could this have been avoided ?
6. Do you think it is better for a school to instigate a whole-school behaviour policy, or to leave this to individual teachers? Why?