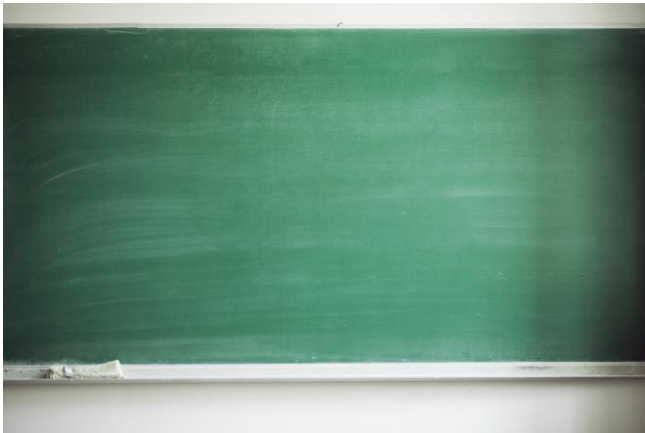




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# ECIE6003

Classroom Management Essay

2204676

BA Inclusive Education

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## Essay

This essay discusses current classroom management strategies and critically evaluates whether they are inclusive of all learners. It will link educational theories to current practices and acknowledge the challenges faced by teaching staff.

According to (Hulac and Briesch, 2017) effective classroom management is “essential” to learning, as an out-of-control classroom means “no teaching can occur and no curriculum can be taught”. Teacher practice must ensure that pupil behaviour is not disruptive and does not interfere with the ability of others to learn (Hulac and Briesch, 2017). If the classroom is managed effectively, teachers can focus on teaching the relevant curriculum (Hulac and Briesch, 2017). However, teaching is not just about simply delivering a lesson to a group of children; instead, a good learning experience requires the teacher to possess multi-faceted classroom management skills, not only to cover a range of educational areas but also to be skilled at creating a nurturing learning environment, adapting to each pupil's needs, and managing behaviour issues effectively (Professional Development Academy, 2025).

Modern 21<sup>st</sup>-century classrooms are adapting to new advancements in technology, especially in Artificial Intelligence (AI), and to evolving ways of teaching that have become more personalised and student-centred in recent years (Kharbach, 2024). However, there have also been formidable problems and classrooms in the UK are currently being compared to war zones (Barker, 2025). Disruptive behaviour has become increasingly more difficult, especially since the COVID pandemic (Lewis, 2025). This rise in behavioural issues is creating significant challenges for teachers and testing the effectiveness of their classroom management strategies (NASUWT, 2025). Whilst all schools should have a behaviour management policy, only 9% of teachers feel that “they receive support promptly”; 42% strongly feel that they are made out to be “to blame if they have an issue with poor pupil behaviour” and 79% believe that the number of students that have behavioural needs, for which they do not receive adequate support to teach, has risen in the last year (NASUWT, 2025). In contrast, Estyn (2025) states that “strong leadership, consistent behaviour management and community engagement help improve pupil behaviour” (Estyn, 2025).

There are numerous causes of challenging behaviour in today's school environment, such as social media influences, mental health issues, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), changes in home life, or learned behaviour from their home environment, boredom, phobias, and a lack of routine due to, for example, staff shortages and frequent use of supply teachers (Welsh Government, 2025). Other factors affecting classroom management include curriculum changes, teacher shortages, increasing SEND support pressures, the lingering effects of COVID-19, school closures, budget constraints, and larger class sizes (Grace, 2025; UCM Education, 2025).

Classroom management must be strategic to maximise teaching impact and meet the needs of all learners (Warner Pacific University, 2025). This begins with a structured approach to both learning and the classroom environment, which includes clear expectations and instructions, a purposeful classroom layout, and the management of both positive and negative behaviour (Warner Pacific University, 2025; Putra and Yanto, 2025). Teachers need to engage with pupils and motivate them to learn to the best of their ability, within the boundaries of a curriculum, testing, and targets (Farndon, 2024; Lord and Jones, 2006). School policies, such as the Strategic Equality Plan, outline the requirements necessary to ensure all learners achieve their full potential (School A, 2025).

It is essential that pupils' voices are respected and that they participate in creating rules, ensuring their needs and concerns are addressed fairly, as Maslow's hierarchy of needs highlights the importance of meeting pupils' basic needs for security and belonging in school before any learning can happen (Maslow, 1943; Putra and Yanto, 2025; Warner Pacific University, 2025; Hulac and Briesch, 2017). Likewise, this hierarchy of needs also applies to teachers, who must feel accepted by pupils to manage the classroom "safely and smoothly" and reach learning objectives; this shows that "there is an inseparable relationship between the needs of teachers and students" (Putra and Yanto, 2025; Maslow, 1943). However, this relationship can be complicated for supply teachers, as pupils may "act up and see how much they can get away with," which can affect classroom management (Brittain, 2024).

Organisation is a key element of classroom management; lesson planning needs to be effective, with clear goals and expectations, while distractions can be minimised through a well-managed, orderly classroom and a daily routine that reduces disruption during transitions (Wong and Wong, 1991). While some level of control is necessary in the school, students still need a degree of autonomy to maintain their attention and interest in learning (Wong and Wong, 1991). This child-centred, constructivist approach to education is supported by the theories of Piaget (1962) and Vygotsky (1978), which posit that children learn through their own exploration and discovery, either independently or in social settings (Lourenço, 2012). Accordingly, teachers are primarily there to guide pupils towards the tools and information they seek to learn, as advocated by Montessori schools (Maria Montessori Institute, 2025; Sprey and Slater, 1965). Although Vygotsky (1978) also argues that educators should scaffold children's learning within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), especially when the content is complex and the child might become frustrated or overwhelmed by a learning task.

For pupil engagement to be consistent and inclusive, teachers must develop respectful and supportive relationships with all pupils (Putra and Yanto, 2025). They need to adapt to individual needs and promote positive behaviours through restorative practice theory, which emphasises relationships and repair rather than punishment, allowing conflicts to be resolved calmly and 'in a socially inclusive manner' (Warner Pacific University, 2025; Putra and Yanto, 2025; Hopkins and Masters, 2004). A whole-school approach to behaviour management should be implemented, rooted in school policies and procedures (Nasuwt, 2025; Estyn, 2025). This should include a clear system for recognising good behaviour and addressing inappropriate conduct, such as a Positive Discipline Policy that welcomes all learners (School A, 2023). Such a policy, based on restorative practice theory, prioritises building relationships with pupils and applying a consistent approach; it aims to diffuse or quickly de-escalate situations before they escalate into larger issues (School A, 2023; Hopkins and Masters, 2004). According to Skinner (1965), operant conditioning can influence behaviour through reinforcement, which promotes desired behaviour, or through punishment, which discourages unwanted behaviour. Teachers must be consistently proactive and attentive in addressing issues as they

occur to prevent inappropriate behaviour from escalating (School A, 2023; Estyn, 2025).

Unfortunately, teachers have noticed a substantial decline in pupils' "pro-social behaviours", which directly relates to an increase in "disruptive behaviour" and "school exclusions" (Welsh Government, 2025). This trend of growing verbal and physical abuse "negatively impacts other learners and places additional strain on staff well-being and school resources" (Welsh Government, 2025). Other contributing factors include the after-effects of COVID-19, which led to a rise in language delays and "underdeveloped communication skills", making it difficult for pupils to engage in or adapt to a structured classroom environment (Welsh Government, 2025).

To tackle these issues, the Welsh Government (2025) has invested in research to develop better policies, tailor suitable interventions and "identify best practice". It has been recognised that speech, language and communication skills need to be strengthened earlier to support pupils as a means of preventing challenging behaviour later (Welsh Government, 2025). Family engagement is an essential factor in educational attainment, so there must be more consistent and enhanced support through accessible resources, workshops, and positive behaviour strategies (Welsh Government, 2025). Pupil support also needs to be enhanced within schools, with targeted interventions in emotional literacy as "behaviour change is most sustainable when well-being and emotional skills are nurtured systematically and universally" (Welsh Government, 2025).

The role of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) within schools is becoming increasingly significant, as they teach emotional literacy skills through short interventions to support children who struggle to recognise and communicate their emotions appropriately (Thomas, 2022). Steiner (1984) argued that to be emotionally literate, a person must hone five key skills: knowledge of their own emotions, the ability to regulate their emotions, awareness of empathy, the ability to repair emotional damage and the "intelligence with a heart" of using all these skills to interact with others (Steiner and Perry, 1999). These emotional literacy skills are taught to address behavioural problems that stem from various circumstances, such as bereavement, parental separation, anxiety, friendship

struggles, self-esteem, attachment issues, anger issues, and lack of emotional control (Thomas, 2022).

Emotional literacy support often overlaps with Additional Learning Need (ALN) provision, as difficulties in social and communication skills can hinder effective learning for some children with ALN (Local Authority, 2025). For those with ALN, ELSA intervention can extend beyond the recommended 6–8-week period, as they may require ongoing support to help them regulate their emotions and respond appropriately (Thomas, 2022). This is an added strain on ELSAs' workload, who also usually have another role within the school, such as a Learning Support Assistant (LSA), Teaching Assistant (TA) or Higher-Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) (Thomas, 2022). This can undermine the ELSAs self-efficacy by fostering a sense of under-preparedness due to time constraints and a high workload (Rees, 2016). However, emotional literacy training can also benefit teaching staff, as they will naturally model social and emotional regulation skills in their everyday interactions with children (Rees, 2016).

Likewise, a trauma-informed school approach can help teaching staff who are struggling with the demands of rising mental health difficulties amongst its learners (TISCUK, 2025). It is recognised that within schools, there is a high number of children who have multiple adverse childhood experiences (ACE's), which can negatively impact their mental and physical health (TISCUK, 2025). The trauma-informed approach ensures that all children can access an emotionally available adult, helping each child feel seen and safe, with restorative practice applied if relationships break down (TISCUK, 2025). As "troubled children may not follow the rules but they will follow a person" (Dix, 2017).

This is a humanistic approach that promotes empathy and unconditional positive regard, a theory supported by Rogers (1957) that emphasises listening to an individual's perspective and remaining non-judgemental, which enables them to feel valued and accepted. Similarly, Ginott (1972) asserted that good communication can break down barriers to learning with his Congruent Communication Theory. This non-confrontational, compassionate way of relating to children was seen as the key to improving pupil self-esteem, which in turn allowed them to learn more effectively

(Ginott, 1972). This is important as pupils who are having difficulties at school or have ALN are likely to have lower self-esteem as they can be “more vulnerable to feeling less proud of themselves and not valuing their qualities” (Caqueo-Urizar *et al.*, 2021). Being able to communicate effectively with children removes personal barriers to learning, as teachers can identify each child’s strengths and weaknesses by promoting cooperation and recognising their presence (Ginott, 1972). This open communication helps teachers to differentiate work to meet the specific needs of all children in their classroom, and differentiation is also necessary to comply with the reasonable adjustments required by law for children with ALN (Ginott, 1972; Local Authority, 2025).

Whilst good communication and understanding of our pupils can encourage engagement in the classroom, there also needs to be other sources of motivation to ensure tasks are completed to the best of a pupil’s ability (Education Development Trust, 2025). These sources can be intrinsic, as they are interested in the learning experience, or extrinsic, as there is some sort of reward for a good learning achievement (Education Development Trust, 2025). Skinner (1965) also believed rewards and consequences could influence behaviour through his positive reinforcement theory (Krishanan and Gordon, 2014). In schools, positive reinforcement could include, for example, praise, a thumbs-up, stickers, certificates, or giving the pupil different choices (Education Development Trust, 2025; Krishanan and Gordon, 2014).

However, reward systems can negatively affect some pupils with learning difficulties, as they may feel targeted or pressurised by the need to earn rewards; therefore, it is crucial to implement a reward system that supports their individual needs (Educational Wave, 2025). There should also be a clear expectation of when and how rewards will be earned, so that the system is fair and pupils do not lose their intrinsic motivation (Educational Wave, 2025). Conversely, Dreikurs (1964) argues that there should also be logical and fair consequences to undesirable behaviours, as this will help pupils learn to make better choices in the future. The consequence must be stated calmly as a fact rather than as an angry lecture or order, which could be seen as a threat (Dreikurs and Soltz, 1964). The logical consequences model was created on the basis that all children want to be accepted socially and get along

with others, and that everyone wants control over their lives and to feel capable of achieving (Dreikurs and Soltz, 1964).

Digital rewards such as Class Dojo can not only motivate learners through the points they collect but also directly involve parents in celebrating their achievements, as parents can use the Dojo app to monitor their child's progress and communicate with the school (Class Dojo, 2025). As previously mentioned, parental engagement is a key part of pupil development and, therefore, being able to support the school's reward systems at home can reinforce "desired behaviours" through setting unified "clear expectations, and providing consistent feedback" (Educational Wave, 2025).

A traditional classroom transforms into a digital one with laptops, computers, tablets, and the internet (Haleem et al., 2022). Digital technology also serves other roles in classroom management, such as engaging learners through interactive online educational games like Kahoot or Duolingo, which are enjoyable and enable children to collaborate in small groups and use the platforms individually (Kahoot!, 2025; Duolingo, 2025). Collaborative learning is recognised as an essential part of developing a growth mindset, which encourages a love of lifelong learning (StratX Simulations, 2025; Dweck, 2017).

Pupils can also utilise digital devices to research topics and complete projects independently; again, developing skills that can help prepare them for lifelong learning (Haleem et al., 2022). There are various digital tools and software that can assist students with accessibility needs in accessing knowledge in the virtual world, which can be tailored to their individual learning styles (Haleem et al., 2022). However, while some students thrive in the online environment, others struggle without support (Haleem et al., 2022). Still, all pupils face the risk of encountering harmful content online; therefore, the systems they use must be secure, and they must know how to use digital technology safely (Haleem et al., 2022; Kim, 2025).

It is reported that schools in the UK spend approximately £900 million annually on educational technology, and the UK's educational technology sector is the largest in Europe (Tobin, 2023). Artificial intelligence (AI) tools can help reduce teacher workload and are frequently used by children to complete school tasks (Tobin, 2023)

. However, there are dangers associated with using AI in education, such as pupils cheating on assessments or homework, risks to privacy as AI can store and analyse data, reduced social interaction with peers and teachers, unequal access to devices among pupils, and the risk of over-reliance on AI technology hindering pupils' lifelong learning abilities (Tobin, 2023). Most concerningly, the development of AI technology has advanced too rapidly for the government to provide timely support and advice to schools (Tobin, 2023).

Whilst AI can help streamline a teacher's workload, it cannot replace the teacher altogether (Guerra-López, 2025). Teachers are needed to ensure the work is appropriate, accurate and customised for individual learner targets. Nevertheless, it can make the teaching workload more sustainable, which could help retain teachers who are suffering from burnout; this is essential when there are teacher shortages in some areas (Guerra-López, 2025). AI and digital technology can make pupil progress tracking and data gathering easier; they can also be used to gather feedback from pupils through surveys and quizzes, as well as to formulate lesson plans (Tobin, 2023; Guerra-López, 2025; Haleem *et al.*, 2022).

In conclusion, many educational theories overlap and together they suggest that the best learning takes place when there is a calm child-centred approach; where children feel supported with clear expectations, consistent enforcement of agreed school rules and fair rewards for effort as well as attainment (Lourenço, 2012; Vygotsky, 1978; Rogers, 1957; Piaget, 1962; Maslow, 1943; Skinner, 1965; Steiner, 1984; Ginott, 1972; Dreikurs and Soltz, 1964).

As discussed, there is a strong correlation between classroom management and pupil achievement; good classroom management consistently improves pupil achievement (Putra and Yanto, 2025). Many schools have behaviour policies that adopt whole-school, trauma-informed approaches and use restorative practice; this aligns with the Curriculum for Wales, which is child-centred and encourages empathy and resilience (School A, 2023; TISCUK, 2025; Welsh Government, 2020). So, in essence, current classroom management strategies can be inclusive to all learners if there is a whole-school approach and equity in meeting all pupils'

needs. It is also necessary to adapt the curriculum to individual needs to ensure it is inclusive of all learners (Welsh Government, 2020; Local Authority, 2025).

However, whilst inclusive education is an international agreement that all learners have access to the regular school system, there is a gap between intention and reality in the effective implementation of inclusive practice (Aas, Uthus and Lohre, 2023). The Welsh Government (2025) has tried to acknowledge the gap between research and practice by commissioning a study on the “current trends” in behaviour issues to “provide actionable insights” that will shape the future of educational policies and guidance in Wales (Welsh Government, 2025). In the meantime, teachers must continue to collaborate and stay up to date with classroom management research (Warner Pacific University, 2025).

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