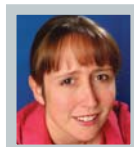


# Oh Behave!

Behaviour guru and Teachers TV presenter Sue Cowley reveals how to stay in control of your class, right from the start...



**B**ehaviour management is one of the top concerns for many newly qualified teachers: if you can't control your class, you can't teach them, and they're unlikely to learn anything.

The start of the year is a key time for setting out your stall. Get your classroom management techniques right at this point and your journey through that tricky first year will be a great deal easier.

## Conveying confidence

It's ironic that the thing you most need to be effective at managing behaviour is the thing that you're least likely to have - and that's confidence. Where you convey a confident, relaxed manner, the pupils feel secure and at ease. But if you come across as nervous or defensive, the children quickly pick up on this and respond by testing you out.

I can remember feeling terrified the first time I faced a class all of my very own. This is entirely normal (in fact, you should probably worry if you don't feel nervous about your first meeting with your pupils). Remember that you don't have to feel confident; you just have to appear to be so.

Effective behaviour management is as much about perception as it is about reality; if the children perceive you to be confident and in control, they will respond to you in a positive way. As you gain in experience, you will also gain in confidence. In the meantime just pretend!

***"I can remember feeling terrified the first time I faced a class all of my very own"***

## How to appear confident

### DO

- Speak slowly and clearly
- Smile at your children
- Use open and welcoming body language
- Use humour
- Try to relax

### DONT

- Over verbalise - instead, use the minimum of words to get your point across

- Do too much whole class teaching in an attempt to maintain control
- Take misbehaviour personally
- Over react to minor incidents
- Forget to breathe!

## Establishing your expectations

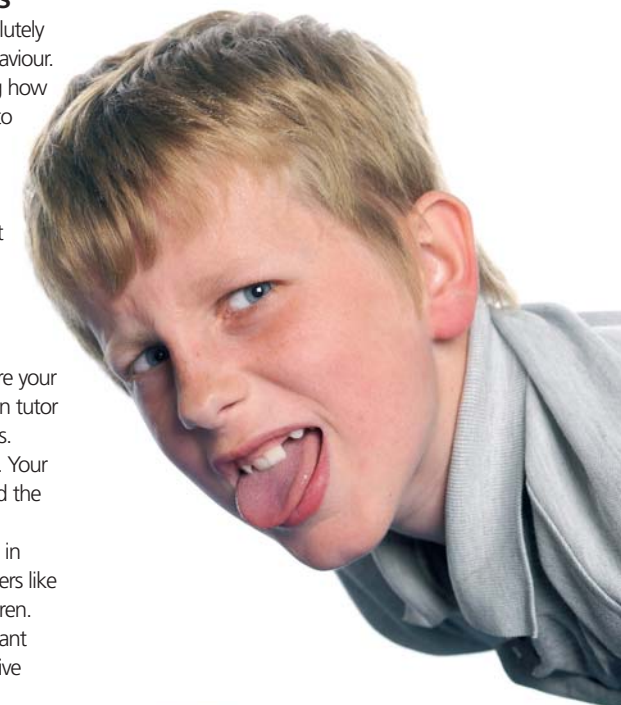
In your first few days with the class, you absolutely must establish your expectations of pupil behaviour. I can remember my lecturers at college saying how important this was, but it didn't make sense to me until I had a class of my own. Tell your children about the behaviour you want, so they have something concrete to aim for. Doing this will also help you appear confident and in control.

In order to establish your expectations, you need to:

- Think about the behaviour you want before your first lesson. Have a chat with your induction tutor about some suitable rules and expectations.
- Don't go overboard with long lists of rules. Your children are unlikely to retain much beyond the first three; stick to what really matters.
- Tell your pupils what your expectations are in your very first lesson together. Some teachers like to make their rules together with the children.
- Use positive statements of what you do want (e.g. 'We walk sensibly') rather than negative ones of what you don't (e.g. 'Don't run').
- Once you've told them once, tell them again! Remind them after break, before lunch, after lunch, before home time, and again the next morning. You can't tell them too often!
- Praise the children when they get it right. Look around for pupils doing as they've been asked, and highlight these, rather than focusing on misbehaviour. "Well done, Ben, you're sitting really still and quiet. That's fantastic!"
- Show them through your own behaviour. If you ask for silent attention when you talk, then you must wait for it before you open your mouth.

## Winning back a 'lost' class

In teaching, there's little more terrifying than having to face a class you have 'lost'. You'll know when it's happened, because it feels like the children are in charge, rather than you. I can remember it



happening in my own first year, and the sick, panicked feeling I had inside when I had to teach the class. But with help and support I did get them back, and so can you.

**TO WIN BACK A LOST CLASS:**

- Speak to an experienced colleague, preferably your mentor, about the best approaches to use.
- Ask that a senior member of staff comes into your classroom, so that you can talk to the children while they are paying full attention.
- Go over your rules again, and this time stick to them. Be willing to chase up on every little incident.
- Don't forget the positive – at least some of the children will still want to do as you ask. Get plenty of rewards in place to motivate your pupils.
- Have a look at your lesson content and delivery, and make sure that this is fully engaging for the children.

Above all else, aim to enjoy your first year as a teacher, and to capitalise on all the energy and enthusiasm that you feel for the job. This is a great time for you to be experimental and creative with your teaching. Don't let concerns about behaviour management get in the way of enjoying yourself and the time spent with your class.

# The Top Five Classic Errors

**COMMON MISTAKES THAT YOU SHOULD TRY TO AVOID...**

**TRYING TO BE THEIR 'FRIEND'**

You came into teaching because you like children, so it's natural to want to treat your pupils like your friends. But be warned: they don't want you to be their friend, they want you to be their teacher. If you start out too friendly, your children will soon take advantage.

**CONTROLLING FROM THE FRONT**

As a new teacher, it feels scary to let go of the children and set them off on a group activity. But keeping a class listening for ages on the carpet is a recipe for boredom and misbehaviour.

**LETTING THEM PUSH AT THE BOUNDARIES**

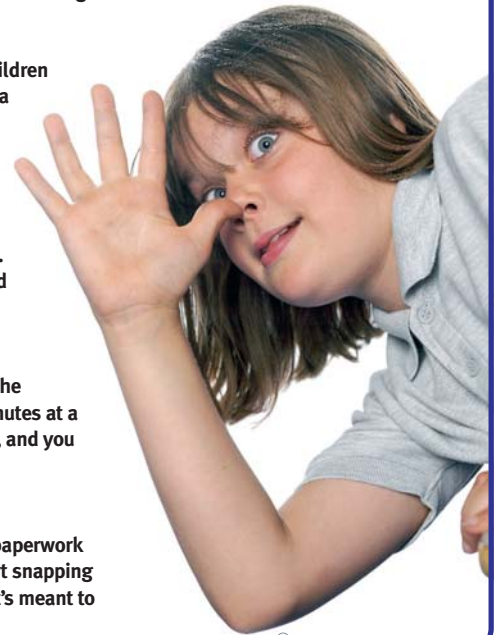
You've set your expectations and boundaries as advised, but you don't want to upset the children. So when they push at the limits you let them. And before long, chaos reigns.

**OVER-USING YOUR VOICE**

There's lots of great stuff you want to explain to the children, so you talk at them for ten or fifteen minutes at a time. And then you wonder why they're fidgeting, and you have a sore throat.

**FORGETTING THE FUN**

By the first half term, you're snowed under with paperwork and you can't see the wood for the trees. You start snapping at the children for minor things, and forget that it's meant to be fun for everyone.



**Find out more**

Sue Cowley is a best selling educational author and internationally renowned trainer. Her book *How to Survive your First Year in Teaching* is the classic text for NQTs. For more information, visit [www.suecowley.co.uk](http://www.suecowley.co.uk)



**LET TEACHERS TV GUIDE YOU SAFELY THROUGH YOUR FIRST YEAR...**

As a new teacher and throughout your career, Teachers TV will be a reliable and trusted source of fresh ideas and advice on professional development. Its broad schedule of programmes cover every aspect of teaching and regularly feature top experts, such as Sue Cowley ([www.teachers.tv/series/teaching-with-cowley](http://www.teachers.tv/series/teaching-with-cowley)).

Whether you watch on TV or online, there's plenty of support to help you through your first year. Why not visit the NQT hub ([www.teachers.tv/nqt](http://www.teachers.tv/nqt)) and keep an eye out for the following videos?

**PRIMARY NQTS - WORKING WITH OTHERS**

Sarah Bubb provides two South London teachers with a valuable set of skills that help to improve and develop the effectiveness of their working relationships.

**THEY DIDN'T TEACH ME THAT – INDUCTION**

Miranda Krestovnikoff comes to the rescue of a part time primary trainee who wants some advice on the induction process.

