Practice guide for primary and secondary schools

Develop techniques and practices

Australian Education Research Organisation

Classroom management practice guide

Students moving through the school

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Effective classroom management creates safe and supportive learning environments for all students. This practice guide is part of a suite of foundational resources for beginning teachers, teachers working in new environments, or experienced teachers who want to refine or refresh specific elements of their classroom management practice. They can be used to individually reflect on and refine one's own practice, or as shared resources to support mentoring and other collaborative and whole-school approaches to improving classroom management.

The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO)'s guidance is based on a synthesis of the most rigorous and relevant research evidence and guidance on classroom management from a wide range of research experts and expert practitioners across Australia and internationally.

This practice guide will support you in refining an effective routine for students moving through the school. This is important for maintaining a safe and orderly school environment in which learning time is maximised.

Establishing a clear routine before students move between their classroom and other areas of the school ensures they're aware of what is expected of them. Using clear communication, teachers explain, model, monitor and reinforce expectations for behaviour to support safe and organised movement to other areas of the school, such as to assembly or a specialist lesson.

Supporting safe student movement to other areas of the school includes the following steps:

1. Gain all students' attention.
2. Remind all students of the expectations for leaving the classroom, moving through the school and arriving at the destination.
3. Monitor and reinforce behaviour expectations as students move through the school.
4. At the destination, remind students of the behaviour expectations.

Implementing a routine for student movement through the school requires several skills, including acknowledgement and praise, clear communication, deliberately pausing, non-verbal correction, scanning and voice control.

Always interact with students with a calm tone, respect and politeness – for example, greeting students on first encounter and completing instructions with 'Thank you'. Positively frame communication, stating what students need to do rather than what they don't (that is, avoid using words like 'no' and 'don't'). This models respectful and polite interactions for students and creates a positive and supportive learning environment.

Effective student movement to other areas of the school

1. Gain all students' attention

Efficiently gaining all students' attention maximises instructional time and reduces the likelihood of students missing important information.

Stand where all students can see you and, with an assertive voice, gain all students' attention:

1. Using a countdown, call and response or verbal prompt to indicate to students that they need to stop what they're doing, face you and listen in silence.
2. Pausing and scanning to ensure students are looking and listening.
3. Acknowledging students meeting behaviour expectations and praising students exceeding behaviour expectations specific to them.
4. Responding to behaviours not meeting expectations with a non-verbal correction such as a look and gesture, or a positively framed verbal correction such as a group reminder of expectations, and acknowledging students when they correct their behaviour.

2. Remind all students of the expectations for leaving the classroom, moving through the school and arriving at the destination

It's important that you have pre-planned behaviour expectations for students when leaving the classroom, moving through the school and arriving at the destination. By keeping the same expectations each time, students will become familiar with your expectations for them and develop more automatic habits so that behaviour that doesn't meet your expectations will be displayed less frequently.

Clearly communicate to all students the expectations for leaving the classroom, moving through the school and arriving at the destination. Instructions should include:

- how students should leave the classroom – for example, if they need to assemble outside the classroom
- how students should behave when moving through the school – for example, walk calmly and quietly in 2 lines, keep to the left, knowing where they should stop
- what they need to take with them
- what they need to do when they reach the destination – for example, wait outside to the left in 2 lines.

Check for student understanding of the behaviour expectations by asking 2 or 3 students to repeat instructions. Clarify and demonstrate until all students understand what's expected of them.

3. Monitor and reinforce behaviour expectations as students move through the school

It's important to monitor all students when they're leaving the classroom, moving through the school and arriving at the destination. This will ensure safety, demonstrate to students that you're aware of what's happening and provide opportunities to reinforce behaviour expectations.

Position yourself at the door and prompt students to leave as expected, including lining up if required.

Continuously scan all students as they prepare and move through the school. Maintain a position that allows you to observe all students during this transition. Assist students when needed.

Acknowledge students meeting behaviour expectations – for example, 'Thank you, students, for waiting quietly while …' or 'Great to see those students who stopped walking as soon as I asked'. Praise students exceeding behaviour expectations specific to them.

Address behaviours that don't meet expectations with a non-verbal or positively framed verbal correction – for example, 'Remember, [Name], walking quietly to the library', acknowledging students when they correct their behaviour.

4. At the destination, remind students of the behaviour expectations

Reminding your students of the behaviour expectations when you arrive at your destination ensures they know how to behave and creates and maintains a safe and supportive learning environment. It's important to have pre-planned behaviour expectations for students at various locations throughout the school, such as at assembly, the library, specialist classrooms or outdoor lessons. Having the same expectations every time enables students to become familiar with and meet your expectations for them.

Position yourself where you can see all students and all students can see you – for example, at the entrance to assembly or the library. Remind students of the behaviour expectations for the destination:

- With an assertive voice, gain all students' attention:
    1. Using a countdown, call and response or verbal prompt to indicate to students that they need to stop what they're doing, face you and listen in silence.
    2. Pausing and scanning to ensure students are looking and listening.
    3. Acknowledging students meeting behaviour expectations and praising students exceeding behaviour expectations specific to them.
    4. Responding to behaviours not meeting expectations with a non-verbal correction such as a look and gesture, or a positively framed verbal correction such as a group reminder of expectations, acknowledging students when they correct their behaviour.
- Clearly communicate to remind students of the expectations for them at that location.

Deliberately pause and scan to allow time for students to think about and prepare to meet the expectations.

Scan and circulate. Acknowledge students meeting behaviour expectations and praise students exceeding behaviour expectations specific to them. Respond to disengaged and disruptive behaviours, acknowledging students when they correct their behaviour.

Rehearse and practise student movement to other areas of the school

Use the checklist for each step in the following section to identify your strengths and prioritise the step you will focus on first for rehearsal and practice. Focus on one step at a time until you can confidently demonstrate each item on the checklist.

Begin by scripting and rehearsing without students present, then practise with students present. Invite a colleague to observe you moving through the school with students. Ask them to use the checklists to provide feedback on what went well and to suggest one area for further improvement.

1. Gain all students' attention

Rehearse, then practise:

- [ ] positioning yourself where all students can see you
- [ ] gaining all students' attention by using your countdown, call and response, or visual cue or gesture
- [ ] deliberately pausing
- [ ] scanning all students
- [ ] acknowledging students meeting behaviour expectations and praising students exceeding behaviour expectations specific to them
- [ ] responding to disengaged or disruptive behaviours that might occur and acknowledging students when they correct their behaviour.

2. Remind students of the expectations for leaving the classroom, moving through the school and arriving at the destination

Identify the school's and your expectations for the 3 stages below. What behaviours do you want to see? Are there particular problem behaviours you want to understand and address?

1. **Students leaving the classroom**

- [ ] How will students leave the classroom? Will they stand behind their chairs? Will they line up? Will they move out a few at a time?
- [ ] What do they need to take with them? What do they need to leave behind?

2. **Students moving through the school**

- [ ] Should students walk silently, or can they quietly talk to the person beside them?
- [ ] Do they walk in lines with a partner, or can older students walk to the destination themselves and meet you at the door?
- [ ] Can they walk directly to the destination, or do they need to stop along the way to regroup? How will they know where to stop?

3. **Students arriving at the destination (for example, assembly, the library, the computer lab, the oval or an outdoor learning area)**

- [ ] Do they line up outside the entrance and wait for you? Do they need to keep to the left for others trying to move into the space? Do they need to have equipment ready before they enter?
- [ ] Do they sit in a certain place? Is there a task for them to complete when they arrive?
- [ ] Can they speak quietly to each other, or do they need to be silent ready for the teacher?

Script, rehearse, then practise clearly communicating these expectations:

- [ ] Use as few words as possible while maintaining clarity.
- [ ] Break instructions down:
  - into a small number of manageable steps
  - in a sequential order
  - so they're actionable for students.
- [ ] Deliberately pause and scan to ensure students understand and are following the instructions.

3. Monitor and reinforce behaviour expectations as students move through the school

Rehearse then practise:

- [ ] the route you will take students, with the least disruption to other classes and distraction to your students
- [ ] where you will stand when students are leaving the classroom to scan all students for behaviour. Ensure your back is not facing students and blind spots are monitored.
- [ ] where you will walk in relation to your students when moving through the school so that you are able to scan them all
- [ ] supporting students requiring clarification of an instruction or extra assistance
- [ ] acknowledging students who meet behaviour expectations and praising students who exceed behaviour expectations specific to them
- [ ] responding to disruptive behaviours that might occur as students move through the school, acknowledging students when they correct their behaviour.

Script, rehearse, then practise gaining all students' attention and re-setting behaviour expectations when needed.

4. At the destination, remind students of the behaviour expectations

Script, rehearse then practise:

- [ ] Identify the behaviour expectations at the destination (for example, assembly, library, computer lab, oval):
  - what they need to do
  - where they should sit
  - what they need to get or have out
  - if they're allowed to talk and at what volume.

Script, rehearse, then practise clearly communicating these expectations:

- [ ] Use as few words as possible while maintaining clarity.
- [ ] Break instructions down:
  - into a small number of manageable steps
  - in a sequential order
  - so they're actionable for students.
- [ ] Deliberately pause and scan to ensure students understand and are following the instructions.

Questions for reflection

When you've refined and combined each of the steps for setting behaviour expectations for moving through the school, consider the following questions:

- What differences are you noticing as your students move through the school?
- How consistently are you maintaining the steps of this routine? Are there any adjustments you need to make to ensure you can consistently maintain this routine?
- Is this routine a habit for all of your students? What else can you do to make it a habit?
- When will you review the routine for moving through the school and reteach it? How will you know that you need to do this?

Regularly revise moving throughout the school

Schedule points in the year to revise this practice for yourself and your students.

For more practical guidance

AERO has developed a suite of resources to support teachers and school leaders to refine or refresh their foundational practices in creating safe and supportive learning environments through effective classroom management. You can read the Classroom Management Resources: User Guide for an overview of these resources and suggestions for their use.

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