The challenges posed by the behaviour of some pupils can only be properly addressed if support is extended beyond the classroom.

Linking theory and practice, this book outlines a range of assessment and intervention techniques at:

- **District and community level**
- **School level**
- **Classroom level**
- **Individual level**

Written for teachers, behaviour consultants, learning support staff, educational psychologists, home-school liaison officers and parents.

Addressing Pupils' Behaviour

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Improving Classroom Behaviour

Making sense of classrooms and classroom behaviour

It often seems that the classroom is one of the most talked-about contexts there is, at the same time as being one of the least understood. There is a great deal of simplified talk about what goes on in classrooms, much of it based on un-recognised assumptions. Such simplification becomes a significant problem when we consider how to improve classrooms, as simple prescriptions usually have little impact on the classroom. We need ways of approaching classroom change which are equally as complex as the context.

If you were to select a person at random on the number 31 bus, and ask them to tell you how they think teaching should be organised in classrooms, the frightening fact is that they might give you an answer. Such an answer would be based on the fact that they were once a pupil in a classroom. It might also reflect some of the media commentary about teaching, much of which is stimulated by the rhetoric of government and its agencies. These two perspectives have a worrying similarity in that both of them over-focus on two aspects: the first is the teacher, and the second is what they dislike about the teacher's performance. Such myopia does not get us far.

In this chapter we will build an alternative and more comprehensive focus on understanding the classroom situation and its effects, both on teachers and on pupils, before offering a range of frameworks for thinking about experiments to improve classroom behaviour. These frameworks are not offered as a set of prescriptions, but as some lines of action which depend on the diagnosis of the existing difficulty. The chapter finishes with some thoughts about broader methods of ensuring healthy classrooms.

Our perspective in this chapter is not that of the prevalent "inside the person" explanations which were examined in chapter 1 - neither for pupil nor teacher. Rather, we intend to recognise the importance of the context of behaviour, as in the chapters which precede and follow this one. An example of context in concrete terms was given by the Governor of a New York prison who was worried about the amount of fighting between inmates. The strategy of 'change the person', by putting fighters on a bread and water diet, seemed ineffective, as was the more liberal version of talking to fighting inmates to persuade them into better behaviour. The problem was finally solved by calling in a bricklayer, who rounded off the walls at the junctions of corridors - these had been identified as the situations where fighting broke out, when poor visibility led to surprise encounters. Perhaps this example is over-concrete, as it focuses so much on the physical aspects, and we know that situations are more than that. So before we examine some of the specific and observable aspects of classrooms, it is also important to consider the meanings which may attributed to this context.

Images of classrooms

It is interesting and illuminating to ask yourself and to ask your colleagues the following question: "What situation that is *not* a classroom is most like a classroom in your view?". In our experience this brings forward important trends and particulars. Many people find the question difficult to answer, which may reflect the uniqueness of the classroom situation in our society. Trends we have observed include that teachers in primary schools are more likely to answer "a family" than are teachers in secondary schools, while the latter are more likely to offer situations such as theatre, or church, thereby reflecting the performance and audience aspects, and the traditional approaches to audience control. We suggest that teachers with these images of classrooms are more likely to engage in one-to-many interactions, expect to be listened to because of their role, and see their job as conveying a message. On the other hand, a different image was conveyed by a teacher in a Richmond school who answered "an office": he described a situation where everyone came in each day knowing their roles and working relations, and what they aimed to achieve. Again a teacher who answered "a restaurant" brought to attention her view of offering pupils a range on the menu, and indeed of changing the menu over time. Another teacher who answered "an aeroplane" not only highlighted the physical aspects in her school where the desks had been placed in pairs, but also the role aspects of the hostess answering the call bell in this setting. Finally, a student teacher who wrote an essay likening classrooms to prisons, with no hope of alternative, failed the course!

Clandinin (1985) describes a teachers' image of "the classroom as home" showing how this embodies personal and professional experiences, and how in turn the image is expressed in

her classroom practices. Bullough (1991) has shown how metaphors reflect conceptions of teaching, and how these evolve through student teaching, maintaining motivation on the journey. Connelly and Clandinin (1994) illustrate how the telling and writing, retelling and rewriting of teachers' and students' stories results in changes in teaching practices, while Bullough and Stokes (1994) explore the analysis of personal teaching metaphors as a means of facilitating the professional development.

Teachers are major orchestrators in making classrooms into whatever they become, and within some broad trends, the variety of what they construct is considerable. The usefulness of identifying one's image of a classroom goes beyond mere illumination. It can be a route to significant improvement. If teachers are given the time and support to unearth their current images, they may also see good reason to move on to other images which are more sympathetic to the teacher role, more enhancing of pupil autonomy and more appropriate to the twenty-first century. Transformational change does occur on occasion, especially if a teacher's preferred image of classrooms is at stake. A teacher we met in Birmingham told us that she had changed her approach to teaching overnight: on being asked how she became the exception to the rule about classroom change being generally slow, she said that in her case a "pupil pursuit" of a class she taught led her to vow that she would never again contribute to such a passive picture for pupils. She decided to pursue her preferred image of a classroom much more actively after that experience.

Understanding the classroom context

The classroom is measurably one of the most complex social situations on the face of the planet. This statement is not made in order to mystify anything: quite the opposite - it makes sense of why simplistic approaches to classroom improvement do not work. For example, the tendency to focus on the teacher and to use over-simple descriptions of teachers does not fit the facts. Decades ago Ryans (1968) applied multiple psychometric measures to a sample of over 6,000 teachers and related them to assessments of their classroom work. Teachers receiving a uniformly high assessment of their classroom behaviour turned out to be those with the highest frequency of involvement in avocational (non-work) activities (page 393). There are two responses to these findings: one is to say "Yes I can explain why teachers who do more at the weekends perform better in classrooms …"; the other is to say that such studies took a too-personal focus on the teacher, and missed the point by not analysing the context. If you only focus on the teacher you will get spurious perspectives.

Instead we use the fact that all our behaviour relates to context. This principle, often forgotten, was introduced in chapter 1 and may be summed up by the statement: B = f (p.s). Behaviour is a function of the person and the situation. Each human being has their unique profile of responses and approaches which vary across the situations they meet. A teacher who behaves in one way in classroom A may not do so in classroom B, and not in the staff-room, or at the pub. Sadly when a difficulty arises, all the focus may be on classroom A, rather than on the variety, range and exceptions. And, as we shall see in detail in the next chapter, similar considerations apply to pupils, whose behaviour varies in important ways across learning situations and social situations in and out of school.

So if we intend to focus on the context where teachers and pupils spend most of their school time, and in which the majority of difficulties in most schools are experienced - the classroom - it will be important to recognise some of the unique and influential aspects of that setting. The following derives from the work of Walter Doyle (1980. 1986a, 1986b, 1990).

Characteristics of the classroom situation

1 Classrooms are busy places Teachers can be engaged in 1,000 interactions a day, sometimes more. It is very difficult to name a comparable job on this dimension: perhaps air traffic controllers cope with comparable complexity, although their job makes less personal demands. Teachers make a non-trivial decision in the classroom every two minutes. One result of this for the teacher can, of course, be tiredness, especially for the beginner teacher, or, if they do not find means of coping with the busy-ness, stress.

This feature also draws to our attention the fact that because events happen fast teachers learn to act fast: their appraisal and decision-making in classrooms is rapid. Even so, every event cannot be reflected on in depth, so the development of *routines* is another feature of classroom life which helps cope with the busy-ness of the situation. Some routines may embody poor practice as far as pupil learning is concerned, but the classroom situation makes such demands for routinisation.

For the pupils in this busy environment it is apparent (and confirmed by numerous classroom interaction studies) that the amount of individual attention they receive with the teacher in a day is likely to be only a few minutes and probably highly interrupted. The way in which we conceptualise learning in classrooms must take this into account by not implying that pupils learn only when interacting with teachers. The social skills of this busy situation are key to pupils being able to make the best of it: they have to get used to being one of many, especially when it comes to adult attention, and this can demand extra skills of being able to wait, or finding other sources of help. We often feel that more explicitness about these social skills and their development would relieve many difficulties in classrooms

2 Classrooms are public places This statement is meant in two ways. First, classrooms are public in the general sense that many people have a view or opinion on classrooms and how they ought to operate. Second, classrooms are public in that a teacher's and a pupil's behaviour is generally highly visible to all the other members in the event.

The implication of the first is that the teacher is at the centre of a number of people's expectations - parents, colleagues, head, local authority, central government and, of course, pupils. In the unlikely event that these various expectations are in broad agreement with each other, the teacher will probably feel strongly supported in her/his job. It is more likely that disagreements exist and the teacher feels in a state of 'role strain'. Resolving role strain can be accomplished in a number of ways, each with its own costs and benefits - a classic has been the strategy of isolating role performance from view by the conflicting parties: this leads to the phenomenon of classroom as a castle, with paper over the windows to the corridor.

The implications of the second sense of publicness are various: teachers may feel that they are "on stage" to some degree and have to develop an approach which blends the public and the personal. Teachers may act towards one pupil with the intention of affecting others in the audience - the "ripple effect", but mainly teachers adopt a focus toward groups of pupils (whole class or less). This group focus grows out of the imbalance in numbers in the classroom and also serves to cope with the busy-ness of the situation.

Pupils learn to experience much public evaluation of their work and behaviour and they adopt a variety of strategies in the face of this: strategies to work out what answer teacher wants, strategies to assess whether teacher is being fair in her/his evaluations, especially when they are public, and so on. Some studies suggest that teachers give public evaluations of pupils every few minutes. Pupils learn to be treated as a member of a group which is not always of their choosing, and in turn may adopt a group approach toward affecting others - including, on occasion, their teacher.

3 Classroom Events are Multidimensional There is a wide variety of purposes, interests and goals represented by the different personnel in a classroom. The teacher may have thoughts about the staff meeting this evening, or the mortgage: the pupils may have thoughts about what's on television or what someone said to their friend. And in the middle of this,

teaching and learning takes place. Personal-social aspects of pupils' and teachers' lives are always affecting classroom life.

Even when we focus on the learning dimension alone the statement still applies. The classroom contains a multiplicity of information sources - books, worksheets, displays, other visuals, as well as all the verbal and non-verbal behaviour of teachers and pupils - and these sources generally do not all refer to the same thing. The information from multiple sources is sometimes incompatible, and sometimes inconsistent, so that skills of selection are crucial for learners. This skill is even sometimes required in order to handle the ambiguities in a learning task.

For the teacher an implication is that they need to manage events on a multiplicity of dimensions: knowing subject, appraising students, managing classroom groups, coping with emotional responses to events, establishing procedures, distributing resources, encouraging thinking, keeping records and so on. With these tasks all affecting each other the result may feel overwhelming on occasion. Effective teachers accept and mediate this multidimensionality. Sometimes they engage it explicitly in their classroom management, through references to what they're aware of going on elsewhere, and sometimes in their subject, through links to daily life

For pupils this multidimensional environment means that on the occasion when they intend to engage in academic work they need to display considerable skills in selecting what is salient information and what is not, especially when attempting to identify the demands of a task. These are not usually the skills which are referred to when identifying academic achievement.

4 Classroom events are Simultaneous The multiple events in the classroom do not occur in a step-by-step fashion but simultaneously, especially from the teacher's point of view. One group is happily working away, another group wants attention for something, and meanwhile someone is climbing out of the window! Teachers attend to numerous aspects at the same time: the pace of work, the sequencing of pupil contributions, the distribution of pupils attended to, the accuracy of pupil contributions, the development of the argument, and so on, while at the same time monitoring work involvement levels, other pupil behaviours and external events.

This has at least two implications for teachers. First, it is important to exercise the skill (at least apparently) of being able to monitor more than one aspect at once. This is sometimes described as the 'eyes in the back of the head' phenomenon. Second, it follows that teachers may exercise a choice as to which aspect to respond to and which to ignore. The style of operation of this choice can have critical effects and can make the difference between a 'smooth' teaching performance which gives rise to a purposeful climate, and a 'lumpy' performance where the teacher seems controlled by events and appears to be 'chopping and changing'.

For the pupils the simultaneity of classroom events is not such a salient phenomenon since they may not intend to have a perspective on the whole situation and its events. However, the fact that it is salient for teachers can be exploited very effectively by those waiting for teacher's back to turn. Some pupils quickly learn the skills of avoiding teacher's monitoring.

5 Classroom events are unpredictable In such a busy, multidimensional environment it is not possible to be in a position of predicting the course of events with a fine degree of accuracy. Despite teachers' proper professional attempts to predict how this group might respond to the material, or how long it might take, they know that there will be surprises, so they generally become skilled in recognising and tolerating unpredictability.

Disruptive effects are easily generated by interruptions: the external ones (the window cleaner, the snowstorm) and the internal ones (the projector breakdown, the Tannoy

announcement). Routines in classroom life can be viewed as one attempt to engender predictability and reduce ambiguity. Nevertheless teachers perforce must be able to tolerate high levels of ambiguity in classroom life.

Pupils also have strategies for coping with unpredictability: their seeking every detail of what is expected in a task, searching for the answer teacher wants, requesting low-risk predictable tasks, and making teacher predictable through stereotype and labelling are examples. They all serve as attempts to reduce ambiguity

This analysis helps us realise that the nature of classrooms demands that teachers exhibit high level skills, an ability to interpret situations and orchestrate learning. They often can't describe these aspects, and sometimes feel hesitant to do so lest it divides them from the lay-person. But their professionalism is founded on this complexity.

It also helps us recognise the poverty of those views which portray the classroom as a simple cause-and-effect situation, which offer a simple teacher-centred view, and which seem to imply that there is a prescription for successful teaching in all contexts. These views are common, but are positively dangerous as a basis for improving classrooms. They lead respectively to teachers feeling de-skilled when simple add-ons don't work, to classrooms not being places where students develop the skills to take responsibility for their learning, and to the creativity of the system being depressed. This can lead to teachers passing on prescriptions, which can in turn depress student performance.

This understanding of the classroom setting, its demands and constraints, accounts for other important phenomena. It helps us appreciate that teachers exchange, use, even create new practices daily as they face and resolve problems in the classroom. Large scale programmes and curricula probably represent a small proportion of the everyday changes which teachers are making in their classrooms. Teachers decide whether their practices are valid from a range of bases, from personal feeling to scientific, with a tendency toward the former - the intuitive practitioner, feeling his/her way through. They are involved in recipe collecting and exchanging, traded on the basis of 'what worked for me' and 'what feels right'. The working assumption is that one practitioner cannot *tell* another something: they can only exchange experiences. Although teachers may seek information from a range of sources, this is highly dependent on availability and accessibility: peers in the same school become the most credible.

When it comes to improving classrooms from the perspective of difficult behaviour, this perspective also sets us up to examine more about the situation and how it is orchestrated than about individual incidents. Here we will consider significant differences in style of management, but before we do that it is instructive to register some widespread trends.

Surveys of teachers' views of troublesome behaviour in classrooms have been conducted in various phases and various places. Wheldall and Merrett (1988) surveyed 198 teachers in the West Midlands, asking them to identify the most troublesome behaviours from ten categories provided. 47% elected 'talking out of turn' (hereafter referred to as "TOOT") followed by 25% choosing hindering other children (HOC). For the most frequent troublesome behaviour, the results were similar: TOOT 55%, HOC 21%, with no other category above 10%. When asked about the most troublesome behaviour of the particularly troublesome individuals, the results were TOOT 33%, HOC 27%. Houghton et al. (1988) surveyed 251 secondary teachers in the same area: the most frequent and troublesome classroom misbehaviours were TOOT 50% and HOC 17%. A modified survey of 70 nursery teachers found 55% of teachers listing "not listening", and concluded "In nurseries where the work is much less formal, the same type of behaviours are seen to be troublesome to teachers" (Merrett and Taylor, 1994).

Further afield, in St. Helena 50 returns from first and middle school teachers showed most disruptive behaviour: TOOT 42%, Facing away from work 25%. The most common misbehaviours were TOOT 43%, Facing away from work 16%. In particularly troublesome children, TOOT was most disruptive and most frequently occurring. (Jones et al, 1995). In Singapore 89 primary school teachers rated the most disruptive behaviours as Talking 26%, and disturbing others 21%) although interestingly 15% chose nothing. The most commonly occurring misbehaviours for these teachers were: Talking 42% and facing away from work 13% (Jones et al, 1996).

In a similar vein, research carried out for the Elton Report (Gray and Sime, 1989) analysed questionnaire results from 2,500 secondary teachers and 1,050 primary teachers in England and Wales. Of the problem behaviours which teachers experienced, TOOT was again top of the list: 97% of each group reported it occurring at least once during the week, with 53% of secondary and 69% of primary teachers reporting its occurrence at least daily. Further, TOOT was identified as the problem behaviour most difficult to deal with, and when asked to consider a particularly difficult class, the most difficult behaviour was TOOT. The same questionnaire was returned by 156 junior primary and 621 primary teachers in South Australia (Johnson et al., 1993). The most common discipline problems were TOOT 30% HOC 38% and Idleness and work avoidance 33%. When asked to report on a difficult class, the behaviours which were difficult were the same.

The similarity in these results is striking, notwithstanding some interesting differences. What's the problem with TOOT? Why do teachers across the world report it with such regularity? There are two main response to these questions. The first is to address the behaviour, and to start with the most difficult pupils (who interestingly are not reported as displaying different types of difficult behaviour), and develop a method with them of reducing the behaviour. This is the behavioural approach, as most recently described by Anderson and Merrett (1997). Leaving aside for a moment the question of who will staff such a specialised intervention, the track record of behavioural approaches raises some doubts when implemented in the classroom: Bain et al (1991) report that the frequency of the targetted teacher behaviour, such as "teacher encouragement", can return to near-baseline levels after the intervention ends. Corrie (1997) adds an extra doubt about this approach, by demonstrating that the frequency of TOOT varies in classrooms, and by studying the classroom situation in which it occurs she found that different teachers had different views of that situation, their roles, their approaches to the group, to learning and so on. It was not to be reduced to a consideration of "teacher skill".

So an alternative response to the above surveys is to say that they tell us something important about the typical classroom situation, around the world. This would require us to consider the role of talk in classrooms, and how it may be best utilised in the service of learning, teachers' views on this, the organisational perceptions of classroom talk, and the degree to which the classroom curriculum encourages, supports and develops talk.

Why reactive approaches aren't effective

In a parallel with the findings about the reactive school (see chapter 2), the reactive classroom is not effective for improving behaviour. As before, we take being proactive to mean anticipating potential difficulty, thinking ahead rather than waiting for problems to arise. In contrast, being reactive means only responding to current problems, and planning a response once they have arisen.

Many approaches focus on aspects of the teacher's response to unwelcome behaviour. These latter often reflect the question which may be heard in many unstructured teacher conversations about classroom difficulty: 'What do I do if...?' or 'What do you do about...?' The inherent risk is that of casting the teacher in a response-led role, which is an ineffective

strategy in the classroom situation. It's a case of closing the stable door after the horse has bolted.

Responses to events do not provide the answer. They set the teacher on the back foot and can initiate a pattern of the teacher being run by events rather than of orchestrating purpose and momentum in the classroom. What's more, responses of the short variety do not work. Clarke et al (1981, Gay and Parry-Jones, 1980) undertook a detailed analysis of the internal structure of disruptive incidents in classrooms, detailing the actions which initiated and terminated the incidents. The analysis demonstrated that 'soft' and discursive strategies were four times more likely to lead to an exit from the incident than were hard commands. O'Hagan and Edmunds (1982) demonstrated that apparently successful attempts to control disruptive conduct by intimidatory practice may have deleterious consequences in other ways, for example on pupils' inclination to truant. So when we raise some aspects of teachers' responses later in this chapter, it is with recognition of their secondary importance to the wider aspects of classroom management.

The most effective element in reducing general classroom disruption is the teacher's skill in planning activities. This implication is supported by research findings such as those of Kounin (1976), whose extensive and detailed studies showed that the action which teachers took in response to a discipline problem had no consistent relationship with their managerial success in the classroom. However, what teachers did *before* misbehaviour occurred was shown to be crucial in achieving success, through a preventive focus which reduced difficulty. The teacher's ability to manage the classroom group through planned activities is a key element in developing constructive behaviour patterns.

So with these contextual points in mind, we turn to consider difficult behaviour in classrooms and its improvement. For the reasons given we will not adopt reactive approaches, and will not fall into another available trap of focusing on deficits in teachers' "classroom management skills". There is not a meaningful consensus on what these are, and as Corrie (1997) has shown, any focus on the teacher would be better served by considering their knowledge and conceptions of classrooms. Instead we take a first step of clarifying the picture of the difficulty.

Diagnosing classroom difficulty

Many "solutions" which are proposed for difficult behaviour in classrooms are not based on a diagnosis of the situation. They are favourite solutions which may work but may not. For example, one source of advice may suggest that a teacher becomes more "positive" and rewarding, another may propose that the differentiation of tasks needs attention, while another may want to alter the social relations. The list could easily go on, but we must ask the question "What is the basis for the advice?". In many cases it is an enthusiasm transferred from another context, or in some cases it is an enthusiasm for a particular model for fixing a classroom. Given what we recognise about the complexity of the classroom, any advice which pre-selects a single aspect for focus is likely to work only as a matter of chance. Instead of this, we need to develop a way of being clearer about the difficulty and of matching the advice to that clearer picture. We will call this "diagnosis", although we do not wish to stimulate medical connotations and the idea that a single organic cause will be found! Given the complexity and connectedness of classrooms, an "accurate" linear diagnosis will not be forthcoming, but a narrowing of the focus will be achieved.

There are probably a number of dimensions along which classroom difficulty could be addressed. Given the importance of context in behaviour, we have chosen to order things in terms of how widespread in time and space the difficulty is. So diagnosing the *extent* of difficulty will develop a clearer focus. We recognise that this does not always happen in

everyday conversation about classroom difficulty, since teachers are not practised in being specific. "That class was awful today" is a comment which many of us will have heard (and may have used), but such a comment does not necessarily reflect an accurate analysis of the pattern of behaviour, and is likely to be an over-statement of the position. Given this, it is valuable to be more specific about the extent of difficulty, with the caveat that exaggerated comments are often delivered in the staff-room at break time, where it is not necessary to initiate immediate action (other than to continue stirring the coffee).

The challenge is to adopt a form of diagnostic thinking which will support us in spotting the patterns in the difficult behaviour.

The following questions attempt a starting diagnosis, and lead on to ideas and frameworks which may be useful in thinking about improvement of the behaviour patterns.

Is there a *particular* disaffection in this classroom?
    In other words is it restricted to particular times, places or persons?

If Yes, does the disaffection relate to:

1. particular sorts of teacher-pupil interactions
Examine skills in handling conflict, avoiding escalations   [sections a to g]
2. a particular *classroom* context
Analyse the physical, social and psychological features of this classroom   [section h]
3. particular *activities*
Analyse the design and message of these activities   [section i]
4. a particular *subgroup* of pupils
Analyse the role of this group within the class
and the roles of key members within the group   [section j]

If No:

Is there a *general* disaffection in this class?
    In other words does it seem to involve most people and most occasions?

If Yes, does the disaffection relate to:

1. the *curriculum* offer. Is it appropriate for this class?
Do pupils feel they achieve something valuable?   [section k]
2. the *profile of activities*. Is it engaging?
Are pupils involved in the activities?   [section l]
3. the *responsibilities* in this class. Are they developed and shared?
Are pupils involved in planning?   [section m]
4. classroom *rules*. Are they agreed, understood, accepted and used?
Are pupils reviewing the success of this class?   [section n]
5. the *climate*. Does it need review and improvement?   [section o]
6. the sense of *community* in this classroom. Is it positive?   [section p]

The sections which follow contain various suggestions for action (and inaction) on the part of a classroom teacher experiencing difficult behaviour. But at the outset let's be clear:

- Not all of these suggestions will be appropriate for your situation
- Not all of these suggestions will be appealing to you as a teacher
- Not all of these suggestions will "work" - especially if we take that to mean producing obedience!

Anyone who felt they had to do *all* of what follows would be overwhelmed straight-away. But if you use these suggestions to set off trains of thinking about the situation you know and find difficult, and if you professionally select and modify the suggestions to your own situation, there may be some value gained. Clearly a series of considerations and possible lines of action is not a workbook of recipes.

If you let the diagnostic questions above lead you to some sections rather than others, then the order of the sections which follow is unimportant. They are certainly not in order of importance. Beginning with the most immediate considerations, what to think about and do in a difficult interaction, might appear to promote a "What do I do if they do X?" mentality, which is exactly the sort of reactive approach which does not work. Somewhat better would be to ask the proactive question "How can I create a classroom where these things don't happen?", which is considered in the latter sections. These later suggestions are not any less immediate because they appear later - we can start changing our classroom climate tomorrow, for example. Nevertheless we put incidents first, in order to speak to the concerns of the teacher, perhaps tired and frustrated, who has a focus on particular individuals and incidents - let's consider them first before moving to the wider scale and equally immediate matters of classroom patterns and classroom community.

Frameworks and ideas for improving classroom behaviour patterns

The first few sections have a common theme: how a teacher can develop their choice of response to a difficult incident, as opposed to feeling that they have to react in ways which are not improving the situation. It is not surprising that in the busy classroom situation, quick reactions are made: the problem arises when these contribute to the escalation of a troublesome incident. We all find ourselves in situations where we feel we have little choice, but by thinking about the situation and the message we most wish to convey a new range of alternatives can develop.

a. Styles of responding

Consider the following classroom situation:
    Timothy grabs Rosemary's ruler and appears to hide it from her.

Consider the following options for the teacher:
    a. "Timothy, stop being childish and give Rosemary her ruler back"
    b. "Timothy we ask before borrowing in this classroom"
    c. "Timothy, you're quite able to get on with your work, so return Rosemary's ruler and let her do the same"

These three simple options have both similarities and differences. They are similar in that they all indicate to Timothy that the teacher has noticed his behaviour and decided it is inappropriate. In that sense they may all serve to mark a boundary on behaviour. But they also have differences:
    a. has elements of judging the person, negatively
    b. points to an agreement previously made
    c. refers to roles and responsibilities in learning

The impact of these different styles, if generalised over time, can be quite marked. Style a. can be counterproductive in terms of improving behaviour because it may build up resentments: it may be the style of the "deviance-provocative teacher" [see section g]. Style b. can be effective if it is set against a background of making and reviewing agreements regarding classroom behaviour. Style c. makes the important link with what we aim to achieve in classrooms, it reaffirms our purpose.

But style a is quite prevalent in our classrooms. And the most frequently occurring teacher comments are very brief: "Stop it" and "Shut up!".

Think about your responses to small-scale incidents. What messages do they convey:
a. about the pupil?

b. about the classroom climate and control?
c. about the purposes in your classroom?

b. Teachers' ways of conveying to pupils that behaviour is inappropriate

When things are going well, the communication between teachers and pupils is complex and reflects shared meanings which have developed between them. For example, the teacher who, without looking up from the work she is checking with a pupil, says "someone's being silly" and two pupils at the back of the room stop the behaviour they're involved in - because they know and can interpret the informal rules of that classroom. On another occasion in another classroom, the same comment might be ineffective as the teacher has not built up shared meaning with a class with the result that their ways of conveying the inappropriacy of behaviour aren't successful.

Hargreaves et al.(1975) identified the following eleven teacher strategies:
1 Descriptive statement of the deviant conduct:
   "you're taking a long time to settle down"
2 Statement of the rule which is being invoked:
   "rulers aren't for fighting with", "when I'm talking no-one else talks"
3 Appeal to pupil's knowledge of the rule: "you know you're meant to write it in the book"
4 Command/request for conformity to the rule:
   "shut up" "put that away"
5 Prohibitions: "don't", "stop that"
6 Questions: "are you listening?", "what's going on over there?"
7 Statement of the consequences of the deviant conduct: "I won't bother to read if you go on like this", "someone will get hurt if this equipment is left lying here"
8 Warnings and threats: "I'm going to get annoyed", "you'll be in detention", "I'll send you to the Head"
9 Evaluative labels of the pupil and her/his conduct: "stop behaving like a baby", "don't be daft"
10 Sarcasm: "we can do without the singing", "have you retired?"
11 Attention-drawers: "Sandra!", "girls!", "5C!"

If we ask the question :Are some of these strategies more effective than others?" we have to recognise that all of them can be effective in some situations in the short term. However, strategies 2 and 7 are worthy of our attention since they achieve two goals: they signal that the behaviour is unwanted and they communicate the rule which the teacher sees as being broken. As such they are likely to have the most effective long-term contribution, especially in a classroom where the communication of informal rules seems to have been ineffective.

Within this theme we do not want to convey an image of successful classrooms as rule-bound environments: neither pupils nor teachers find that motivating, and the occasions when rules are relaxed are often memorable for building relationships. One of pupils' criteria for judging teachers is "can he have a laugh?" (Gannaway, 1984). However breaking rules is most meaningful when someone knows what the rule is that is being broken!

Can you monitor the clarity of rule communication in your classroom, and adjust if necessary?

c. Responding to aggression - assertively

Aggression may comes in a number of forms - verbal, indirect, and so on. Direct physical aggression towards a teacher is comparatively rare: reported and recorded non-accidental injuries involve one third of one per cent of teachers (see data cited in Department for Education and Science, 1989).

When faced with direct aggression, the two main responses are "fight" (returning the aggression) or "flight" (non-assertion). These may seem natural, or indeed sensible in evolutionary terms! However their cumulative effect in a classroom is unlikely to promote a constructive set of relationships. It is possible to develop a new response - learning to respond to aggression assertively. In this mode a teacher can retain more control of their own behaviour, and therefore go beyond the more basic "fight or flight".

When people start to consider and develop more assertive responses in their repertoire, two connected things become noticeable. First, their predictions - they often predict that they will get a violent reaction to their assertive response. This is inaccurate, as anyone who goes beyond this fear to experiment with assertive responses will tell you. But this fearful prediction can stop a few people ever reaching the experimental stage. This is the second point: our predictions shape our range of behaviour - this can be limiting, as implied above, or it can be in an expanding fashion, where our predictions support a wider range of action options. It is useful, therefore, to practice identifying one's own predictions, especially those small "inner voices" which speak in moments of difficulty.

Remember or anticipate a situation where you were on the receiving end of someone else's aggression. Try to notice your own "inner dialogue". This may be very brief, but can have strong effects, both on how you subsequently feel and on your range of possible behaviour. You can practice spotting this and its effects. Here are some examples:

Inner dialogue	Possible Feelings	Possible Response
1 "Who does s/he think s/he is?"	Anger	Aggression
2 "How could he behave like that in my classroom?"	Hurt	Non-assertion
3 "This looks nasty: I'd better go along with it"	Fear	Non-assertion
4 "He's getting annoyed but I've seen this before"	Calmness	Assertion

Does one of the above "ring bells" for you? In other words is it more commonly part of your repertoire than the others? Can you rehearse some new inner dialogue more along the lines of example 4?

Professionals who behave confidently and who give the impression that things are under control are less likely to be assaulted or to witness assaults (Poyner and Warne, 1988).

d. How can I get myself to react less?

Adopting a more calming inner dialogue will help to ensure that difficulties do not escalate, and is part of becoming less reactive. This takes practice. Here it's worth considering the very fast sequence which occurs when we're faced with any incident. It starts with the lower part of the brain firing off some very quick feelings. Then follow, we hope, the higher parts of the brain which bring in a range of considerations and previous experiences. Finally, we decide what to do and act. As Goleman (1996) has clarified, emotionally intelligent behaviour operates a sequence as shown if Figure 3.1:

Feel → Think → Do

Figure 3.1: Three stages in emotionally intelligent behaviour

The problem with some of our reactions is that the "think" stage is by-passed, so that what we do is driven by what we feel.

There are various approaches to reducing our reactivity. We could:

(i) deliberately make more of a gap between the Feel and the Do:
- count to ten (or less)
- consider more than one option

It can be useful to be open-handed about this, saying what is going on as you are doing it, for example: "I'll count to five now, and consider whether it would be best to do X or Y". This can be very effective for demonstrating that you retain control - of yourself first and of your role.

(ii) spot the inner voices which make you most reactive, i.e. the thoughts which serve to perpetuate feelings rather than move on from them. Examples which might keep you stuck in reactive mode could include:
"That Terry is a mean little blighter"
"He's always trying to take advantage of me"
"She shows no respect for me or for anyone"

(iii) Occasionally try something counter-intuitive to break the pattern:
"Wayne, what a nice pair of shoes, are they new?"
"Nigel, I want you to walk round the classroom shouting"
Brown (1986) has indicated how there are occasions when being paradoxical with a pupil actually stimulates them to exercise more of their self-control.

Developing new responses will also test out our beliefs. Sometimes we might impose inflexibilities on ourselves by holding particular beliefs. Test yourself by noticing how you feel about this comment from a headteacher in the West of England: "The individual with the greatest flexibility of thought and behaviour can and generally will control the outcome of any interaction."

e. What the pupil says next

There are some classic responses which pupils give when teacher has suggested they're doing something inappropriate. These were identified four decades ago by Sykes and Matza (1957) and remain alive and well now:
"it wasn't me" "it was X's fault"
    (denial of responsibility)
"we were only having a laugh" "it didn't hurt"
    (denial of injury)
"it was only Y" "he deserved it"
    (denial of the victim)
"I bet you've done it" "you let Z off"
    (condemning the condemners)
"it was important to show him …"
    (appeal to higher loyalties)

There are various ways in which you might perceive these responses, each of which could lead you to different paths for your next response:
- as "excuses"?
- as testing you out?

- as the sort of responses which self-respecting people give when accused?

What will our next response be? Here are three sorts of possibilities:
- *escalate*? For example "Don't give me those excuses" or "Don't speak to me like that". There is good evidence that such responses do lead to matters escalating. Créton et al. (1989) and Admiraal et al. (1996) have highlighted the vicious cycles when teacher and pupils symmetrically intensify each other's behaviour. Remember that giving hard commands can lead to hard responses from pupils.
- *hostile*? "You should be ashamed of yourself". Well, let's hope that shame is not what pupils take away from their classroom experience. This sort of response does not give the pupil room to save face, and to wind down when they have been playing the wind-up game with teachers. As Rogers (1992) points out, students who seem to want the last word are often concerned about how they manage in front of their peers.
- *passive*? "Why are you doing that?" That's a question to which there's no real answer, and we don't want it anyway! We want the difficulty to reduce and constructive working relations to resume. Asking this sort of question can give pupils a wonderful opportunity to side-track you with lots of creative answers to your question.

Preferable to these three is something which is both assertive (not aggressive) and non-escalatory, something which brings attention back to the important matters of the classroom and productive relations for learning. Perhaps "That's as may be - now let's get this activity done".

Some of the skills in asserting yourself, as described by Dickson (1982) are:
- give a clear statement of what you want: "I want you to return to your table"
- stick to your statement, repeating it as necessary
- deflect the other person's responses, the ones which may undermine your statement, for example by prefacing your re-statement with a short recognition of their view: "I've heard your reason for looking at the fish, but I want you to return to your table".

Rogers (1992) suggests that pupils often engage teachers in "secondary behaviour" which diverts the teacher from their original concern of resuming activity. This could be any number of things: a grunt, a glance to a peer, a question - the potential is considerable. In this context, assertiveness appropriate, remembering that it is not about getting your own way, but about practising clear communication within the rights and responsibilities of one's role.

f. Managing conflict

Conflicts will happen, in classrooms as much as anywhere else. Conflicts are endemic in school life: that's not necessarily a problem - it's the way we handle them that matters. One of the most important orienting points is not to confuse conflict with aggression: such a view can lead to conflicts being swept under the carpet or denied. Different sorts of conflicts you might meet include (a) conflicts within yourselves: you want to carry on talking with a pupil at break, and you also want to get some coffee, (b) conflicts between yourself and someone else: the class wants to see part of the video again, but you want to move on, (c) conflicts between other people: some pupils are arguing about whose actions led to the experiment failing. It can be useful to clarify to yourself which type of conflict you're experiencing. Here we will comment on type (c) then (b).

When teachers find that difficult behaviour in a classroom is expressing conflicts between pupils, they sometimes say that they feel at a loss for how to improve matters. There are a number of background features which help to reduce conflict and to advance pupils' personal-social development (see, for example Katz and Lawyer, 1994):

1.Co-operation. Helping children learn to work together and trust, help, and share with each other.

2.Communication. Helping children learn to observe carefully, communicate well, and listen to each other

3.Respect. Helping children learn to respect and enjoy people's differences and to understand prejudice and why it is wrong

4.Expressing themselves positively. Helping children learn to express feelings, particularly anger, in ways that are not destructive, and learn self-control.

5.Conflict resolution. Helping children learn how to resolve a conflict by talking it through.

When managing conflicts between others:
• Get the parties to talk in a structured way- one at a time - taking turns to speak and to listen
• If appropriate, get both parties to take more distance on the situation by writing down how they see it
• Get them to make suggestions for how to end the conflict
• Treat it as a practical problem-solving exercise, rather than a moral lesson: "what can we do to solve this" rather than "I want you to apologise right now"
• Make sure that each person's proposal for resolving the conflict is put in clear practical terms, and that the other person has had a chance to indicate whether they agree to the proposal (Bach and Wyden, 1968).

A conflict ends when each person has aired their views, and they have questioned each other enough to ensure that this airing has been properly achieved.

Have you tried a structured and practical approach to managing conflicts between others? What else would you add to the points above?

How would you vary the points above for the situation in your class?

When you're in a conflict with someone else
• Keep it private - just between you
• Ask "Is what has led to this really so important?"
• Avoid coming across as threatening
• Look for a new alternative, in which both can 'win'
• Help the other person to say more about his/her view of what's going on.
• Explain your view of things clearly.

g.   The deviance-provocative teacher and the deviance-insulative teacher

This is an idea about how teachers may vary in their handling of difficult incidents. We all vary, so it's not an idea for putting us into fixed categories.

When we're a deviance-provocative teacher (Jordan, 1974), we *believe* that the pupils we define as deviant do not want to work, and will do anything to avoid work. It is impossible to provide conditions under which they will work, so the pupils must change. Disciplinary interactions are a contest or battle - which we must win.

When we're a deviance-insulative teacher, we *believe* that these pupils really want to work, but that the conditions are assumed to be at fault. These can be changed and it is our responsibility to initiate that change. Disciplinary interactions relate to a clear set of classroom rules which are made explicit to the pupils.

The deviance-provocative teacher is unable to defuse situations, frequently issues ultimatums, and becomes involved in confrontations, whereas the deviance-insulative teacher allows students to 'save face', and avoids confrontations.

Thus the deviance-insulative teacher has some beliefs and responses which make up a "virtuous cycle" in which behaviour goes well.

Whereas the deviance-provocative teacher has some beliefs and responses which make a "vicious cycle" in which behaviour does not go well.

In lessons managed by the deviance-provocative teacher, deviant pupils are neglected other than for the many negative evaluative comments made about them. Pupils are referred to higher authority when they refuse to comply - which they do. The deviance-insulative teacher avoids favouritism, or other preferential treatment in lessons.

Can you think of occasions when you have become deviance-provocative? What led to this happening? Can you think of occasions when you have become deviance-insulative? What led to this happening?
Are there any ways through which you can ensure more of the latter and less of the former?

h.   Skills in managing the classroom context

Creative teachers display many skills. Those included in the following framework relate to the particular complexities of the classroom which were outlined at the start of this chapter.

Teachers managing the classroom situation are:
• managing the physical setting
  - layout, seating, resources, etc.
• managing the social structure
  - groupings, working patterns, etc.
• managing the psychological setting of the classroom:
  - handling the timing and pacing, developing effective routines
  - giving a personal yet public performance, with a focus on group participation
  - being aware of the multiple dimensions of classroom life - and showing it
  - managing more than one event at the same time, ignoring as appropriate
  - recognising and tolerating the unpredictable nature of classroom life

This framework of headings can be useful on those occasions when it seems that difficult behaviour is associated with a particular classroom. As a precursor it can also be useful to think about our broad profile of skills.

To identify some useful pointers for your own action:

(A) Identify an occasion when a classroom you were managing created a positive, purposeful atmosphere. Apply the headings above to that example. What aspects of your classroom management went well?

(B) Now think of a less positive example where the behaviour concerns you. Apply these headings to that example. What aspects of your classroom management are highlighted? Identify two areas which it could be useful to develop in order to address your concern.

Is there a particular classroom which is causing you concern?

Here we use the term "classroom" deliberately, since teachers sometimes tell us that they experience most difficulty in a particular room. "They're fine during the rest of the week - it's just when we get into that room". In this case it is useful to analyse the features of the classroom which this framework highlights:

• physical setting: layout of furniture, positioning of seats, resources, lighting, display, etc. (for a literature review see Weinstein, 1979)

Do any of these seem linked to the difficulty? If so, can you experiment with some aspect? We have seen groups of teachers deconstruct and reconstruct the physical design of a classroom, rearranging everything which moves, in order to support the patterns of behaviour they seek. Managing the physical setting is one of the teacher's key skills, but not always exercised: they often de-skill themselves by saying that someone else wouldn't like a change on this front - the cleaner, the colleagues, even the pupils!

The physical setting of a classroom also carries messages about ownership and purpose of that place. Review these in a classroom where difficulty is occurring: are there positive signs of pupils and purpose in this room?

• social structure: the groupings of pupils, patterns of working together, rationales given, etc. (also the subject of a later review by Weinstein, 1991)

Classroom life is about being in groups, yet this aspect is often not analysed or developed. Broadly speaking, classrooms can be effective with any social structure in which a range of groups are used for learning and in which pupils learn about being in a group. Groupings which carry signs of devaluing some pupils (for example so called ability grouping) can lead to worsening patterns of behaviour. If you think that a particular way of grouping is related to difficult behaviour, you might consider a range of modifications. One teacher gave each pupil a playing card as they entered the classroom: large groups could be formed using the suits, small groups using the card values. This also carried the message that it was important to be able to work with anyone in the class. Regrouping of pupils can be quickly carried out by allocating a letter to each person in the current grouping and then composing new groups on the basis of the letters. The element of random-ness is also useful as it demonstrates that teacher does not have some secret basis on which to rig the groupings. Teachers who involve pupils in thinking about groupings in this way will usually find that the groups work better.

The rationale for working in groups might be poorly communicated in some classrooms: reiterating that it's for getting on with the learning and for getting on with each other is necessary. Re-teaching the skills of working together can be important.

• psychological setting;
this is mainly managed through the type of activities in the classroom and the way they are conducted. Teachers actually manage activities rather than students, and as Doyle (1990) remarks "if an activity system is not established and running in a classroom, no amount of discipline will create order". Specific activities will be reviewed in the next section.

- the busy-ness of the classroom is managed through timing and pacing of activities. Too few activities can lead pupils to seek diversion: too many can get them confused. The transitions between classroom activities can be unstable periods which need effective orchestration. They are well handled when preceded by some advance warnings: "There are three minutes before we return to the whole group", "We've been working on this experiment for 10 minutes now so you should be about half way through".

- the publicness of classrooms can create difficulties if it becomes exaggerated. In other words if everyone's behaviour, and especially any difficult behaviour, becomes the heightened focus for public attention. It is constructive to have private interchanges in the classroom, including with those pupils whose behaviour concerns you. Positive communications such as praise are more effective if handled privately. The sense of the classroom being a stage for everyone's performance declines as the relationships in a group develop, and as the focus returns to learning activities not persons.

- the multidimensional nature of classroom life needs recognition. Those teachers who try to keep the rest of life firmly outside the door operate less effective classrooms. Instead of operating defensively in that way, the challenge is to acknowledge the rest of life and link it to the learning. This may mean giving a few moments to something which you know is engaging pupils' attention, and seeing what can be learned before moving on to the classroom agenda. More broadly a curriculum which has been related to the life experiences of pupils is a hallmark of authentic pedagogy, in which pupils are challenged to think, and to apply academic learning to important, real-world problems. Pupils who receive more authentic pedagogy learn more, regardless of social background, race, gender (Newmann et al., 1995)

- the simultaneity of classroom events demands a key skill from the teacher, that of selective ignoring. Effective teachers are effective at deciding what to overlook. They give a "smooth" performance, which maintains a sense of momentum, and conveys the sense that they are steering the events. By contrast, the teacher who does not use such skills effectively gives a "lumpy" performance, responding to something here then something there, so that momentum is lost and the events seem to be in control. Perhaps in a classroom where difficulty has developed, a teacher can find their sensitivity heightened towards that difficulty, and as a result exercises the skills of selective ignoring less well. More broadly, there are occasions when our own approaches to managing the classroom constitute interruptions, and disturb the flow in a non-productive way! (Arlin, 1979)

- the unpredictability of classroom life has to be recognised and accepted as well as managed. Teachers are sometimes very effective at conveying the message that unpredictability is to some extent inevitable, which in turn may help pupils recognise this. The skills of turning one's attention away from an interruption, or of learning from unpredicted happenings can be built in the classroom. When it is not recognised or reaches levels for which class members are unprepared, it can be associated with difficult behaviour. Here, the purposes and routines of the classroom might need to be reviewed and re- established for this particular classroom. The process of establishment is usually thought of at the beginning of the school year (Emmer et al.,1980), and the process is very illuminating at that time (Ball, 1980, Beynon, 1985), but it may need to be reviewed at other times, especially if patterns of difficulty have arisen.

Are there any of these preventive aspects you wish to enhance in the particular classroom you have selected where difficulties arise?
Can you observe a colleague in their handling of these aspects in the same classroom?

i.   *Analysing particular classroom activities*

If you have identified that a classroom difficulty relates to particular activities, the next step is to identify whether there's something about the way we construct the activities which might be improved. The basic ingredients of a classroom activity are shown in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2: Ingredients in classroom activities

Scan the following brief examples, and see whether you agree that much of a classroom might be portrayed through a focus on features of the activity and situation:

Brian the drama teacher has a large open space for his room. He arranges chairs in pairs throughout the room and sets the class off on their warm-up task, selling an idea to each other for two minutes while he keeps time. Pupils bring the resource of their out-of-school knowledge. Then groups of four are formed to develop the script for a fantasy advert. Brian uses tight timing for the first half of the lesson, viewing himself as task-facilitator and monitor, regularly reminding the groups to use their understanding of influence language.

Sheila the science teacher has a laboratory with fixed benches and cupboards. Pupils have learned how to use the resources of the room. After a brief introduction with diagrams on the board, they work in small groups to carry out an investigation for about 50 minutes. Pupils occasionally call on Sheila as an extra resource in their problem-solving.

Andrew teaches languages from the front of a classroom fitted with rows of desks. He uses the blackboard to run a question-and-answer session for 10 minutes: pupils then write the answers into exercise books individually for 10 minutes. Andrew sees himself as the sole source of the knowledge which the pupils are gaining.

These brief examples might also remind us that the way in which activities are set up and groups are managed strongly influences the type of control behaviour which the teacher adopts. Bossert (1977) demonstrated consistent patterns in these influences, and the fact that they operated regardless of the individual teacher. Note also how little is said about the goals of the activity in most cases. Yet the element *Goals* is central in hanging the whole activity together and in creating purpose in the classroom. Ames (1992b) and others have noted that very often the goals of classroom activities are not made clear.

(A) Identify an occasion when a particular classroom activity seemed linked to difficult behaviour. Analyse the activity in terms of the five ingredients and their management. Make some notes on the aspects of the activity which are highlighted.
Is the difficulty related to something about the task?
Is it something about the social structure?
Is it the timing or pacing of the activity?
and so on.

(B) Now think of a more positive example, an activity with the same pupils which went well. Apply these headings to that example. What aspects of the activity are highlighted as important?

What suggestions emerge about how to improve the activity where difficulty occurs?

Identify a manageable experiment you will undertake.

Anticipate some of the things which might work against the change you've planned. How will you cope with them?

j.   Thinking about pupils' roles in sub-groups

If a sub-group of pupils seem to be associated with difficult classroom behaviour, we often focus on particular individuals, and attribute things to them - "ringleaders" and so on. However, the most visible members of a group are not necessarily the sources of power and influence in that group. We need to take seriously the notion of roles in groups, treating role as a cluster of behaviours which is meaningful to others. Role relates to context and does not describe all of a person, but to a set of interactions with the role-partners. A leader cannot be a leader without followers, the bully cannot be a bully without victims.

When analysing the behaviour of pupil groups in classroom, it follows that we will create a more powerful picture by looking at how the various roles relate and interact in the playing out of the behaviour in that group. Systematic ways of describing roles in groups are not easy to find, and everyday descriptions might not lead us forwards. The work of Bales (1970) has proved useful since it found three important dimensions along which the roles people adopt in groups can be described. The first captured the degree to which the person exercised power or dominance in the group: one's position could be upward or downward on this dimension. The second illustrates the degree of liking or the evaluation a person attracts: one's position could be positive or negative on this dimension. The third portrays the degree of contribution to the group tasks: a person may be forward or backward on this dimension. Thus, we have a three-dimensional space into which it is possible to locate the general role style of group members (Figure 3.1).
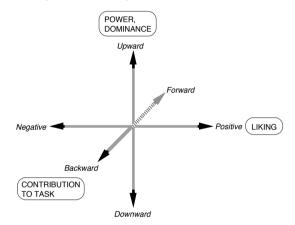

Figure 3.3: Three dimensions along which group roles vary

This conceptual framework can be of direct use as it stands. With practice it is soon possible to array the various members of a group in the space by thinking about their positions on the three dimensions in turn. Bales used these dimensions to identify 26 role types, and Figure •• 3.4 3.2 shows our attempt to fit everyday descriptive words to this systematic description. Note that these are not meant to be agreed descriptions: they are the perceptions which members of a particular group might hold about the roles within it.
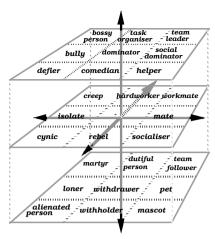
Figure 3.4: Possible group descriptions of role types on three dimensions

Applying this to a group of pupils allows us to see the trends and patterns between them. Sometimes we can see that the difficulty highlights a group of dominant people of different styles: the challenge is to harness their dominance towards group goals. Sometimes we can see a pattern of argumentation between roles: on these occasions it is unlikely that one will relinquish dominance, but it may be possible to teach pro-social skills to both parties. Sometimes the role which is being played by third parties is passive towards difficulties, and needs to be enhanced in the interests of a positive group. In the secondary school, we may also be able to collect information which identifies pupils role types in the different groups they are part of for different lessons. The variation in roles displayed can be productive for creating an improved picture in those lessons where difficulty arises.

Can you apply these frameworks to a group of pupils associated with difficult behaviour? What new insights emerge?
Can you compare your thoughts with any other colleagues who know this group?

k. Reviewing classroom curriculum

Some approaches to difficult classroom behaviour do not include any consideration of the curriculum. This is potentially counter-productive. Classroom management is not an end in itself, and our goal is not to have well-managed intellectually sterile settings! What is available for learning in the classroom is a crucial element in the patterns of behaviour which develop there.

When we feel that a class's difficult behaviour is related to them being "switched off" from the curriculum offer, we have to be proactive in turning that picture around. In these days of National curricula and Government-specified initiatives, it's easy for any teacher to feel that they have little control over the curriculum in their classroom. But that is to confuse the broad content with the important lived learning relationships which day by day permeate your classroom(s). A proportion of the classroom curriculum relates to the National Curriculum, but only to your own interpretation of how to offer it, and there's a lot more to the classroom curriculum than that.

We can identify three strands, each with aspects that are planned and aspects that are responsive to the events which arise. When disaffection seems general in a class, the questions under these three headings below might generate a focus for work to increase engagement.

Think through the headings and enquiries below. See whether any ideas for development emerge

i. The assessed curriculum

Has the purpose of each element of the curriculum been conveyed, so that pupils feel they achieve something valuable?

Has the level of difficulty been reviewed so that pupils feel the work is not too easy or too difficult?

Has the work been related to the personal experience of pupils and people they know, and to examples in local life?

ii. The interpersonal curriculum

Is the way that pupils cooperate and work together a topic for structured review and discussion?

Are suggestions for improving classroom relations made, both by teacher and pupils?

Are communication skills, including the constructive communication of emotions, supported and developed in this class?

iii. The personal curriculum

Does the curriculum offer each pupil the chance to feel more competent at something?

Has the purpose of the curriculum been linked to pupils' views of their futures?

What approaches have your colleagues used to make their classroom curriculum engaging for this group or a similar group of pupils?

l. Looking at the profile of activities and engagement

Sometimes disaffection in a class is related to the profile of activities which may have become narrow or repetitive. Here we need to consider the overall profile of activities in a classroom, and their success in creating pupil engagement and learning.

Perhaps a practitioner's list such as this would help to think about the range of possibilities:
Answering teachers' questions (spoken)
Class discussions
Copying
Dictation
Group work
Individual help and guidance
Listening to teacher speaking
Practical work
Reading
Reporting to the rest of the group
Research
Role-play simulations
Taking notes
Talking to other pupils
Watching demonstrations

Watching videos
Working in pairs
Writing answers to questions from a book/the board

Hughes (1997) collected pupils' perceptions of the frequency of these activities, as well as their perceptions of how effective each was in developing learning:
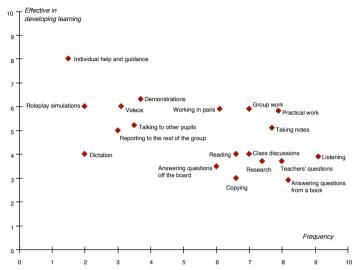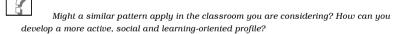

Figure 3.5: Pupils' perceptions of frequency of classroom activities and their effectiveness in developing learning

These results have some similarity with the findings of Cooper and McIntyre's (1993). studies of teachers' and pupils' perceptions of effective classroom learning. These showed that pupils and teachers prioritise active approaches such as group/pair work, drama/role-play, story-telling and drawing. Nevertheless, the reality in many classrooms is that the frequent activities are those where pupils are passive.

Might a similar pattern apply in the classroom you are considering? How can you develop a more active, social and learning-oriented profile?

Research on the characteristics which lead to engaging classrooms has been summarised under headings with the acronym TARGET (see Ames 1992a):

Tasks
- engage personal interest, variety and challenge
- help pupils establish short-term goals, so that they view their classwork as manageable, and can see progress

Authority
- help pupils participate actively in the learning process via choices and decision-making
- help them develop and use strategies to plan, organise and monitor their work

Recognition
- recognise individual pupil effort, accomplishments and improvement, and give all pupils opportunities to receive reward and recognition
- give recognition and rewards privately so that the value is not derived at the expense of others

Grouping
- promote and support co-operative group learning and the skills in peer interaction
- use mixed and varied grouping arrangements, helping pupils learn from the experience in different groupings

Evaluation
- evaluate pupils for individual progress and improvement: offer feedback and opportunities to improve their performance
- vary the method of evaluation and make evaluation private

Time
- adjust task or time requirements for pupils who have difficulty completing their work
- allow pupils opportunities to plan their timetable. and progress at an optimal rate.

Are any improvements to the profile of activities indicated in order to achieve greater engagement?

m.   *Reviewing classroom responsibilities*

Sometimes poor behaviour in a classroom is associated with a lack of development in the range of pupil roles. Rather than being engaged in creating a productive climate, pupils can slip back into anonymity, and experiment with other forms of behaviour.

When teachers are thinking about developing the range of roles for pupils, they might think about allocating responsibilities for classroom duties. This is fine as far as it goes, but may be available to only a few, and may feel trivial to some. So we should consider responsibility and a range of roles in wider aspects of classroom life. Well-structured work in groups is a potent medium for pupils to learn about roles in working together. Direct work of this sort builds from the allocation of functional roles in the group - reporter, timekeeper, arbiter etc. Extending from these skills, there needs to be a focus on roles for learning. This often develops from a structured review of how the role felt, what responsibilities emerged, and how others in the group viewed the role.

The most crucial responsibility a pupil takes is responsibility for their learning. This again will not necessarily develop without structured support at first. Giving pupils opportunity to plan their learning activities and to review their learning through a range of appropriate methods is the key to them seeing themselves as active agents in a cycle of learning. For this to happen, it will be necessary for us to:
- clarify the overall curriculum and its goals in pupil-friendly ways
- make plain the tasks and how the assessment will work
- arrange for resources to be accessible
- support pupils' planning and organisation skills, together with monitoring and review.

Think about one of the classes you manage. How does the present profile of responsibilities look under these headings:
- classroom duties

- roles in groups
- responsibility for learning.

Can this profile be enhanced? What would pupils suggest?

n. Classroom rules and routines

Rules in classrooms aren't operative just because the teacher says so. They have to be set up, agreed, used, and periodically re-examined. This is not a once-and-for-all process. Routines also make a contribution: they may not be framed as a "rule", but they're the way of making regular events happen: how resources are accessed, how homework is handed in, how the classroom is entered, and so on. The purpose of any rule or routine needs to be clarified in the way it is framed, and through review with the class. If the operation of these becomes erratic then the momentum of the classroom can be at risk. On such occasions, it can be useful to review the steps which are needed for effectiveness:

Establishing - needs a lot of communication/ teaching at the early stage

Agreeing - pupils are likely to agree if rules are few in number and their purpose is clear

Using - all parties need to publicise and refer to the rules, and mediate them in so doing

Reviewing - periodically the class examines whether the rules in use are fulfilling their purpose

Most classroom rules can be grouped under these five headings (Hargreaves et al, 1975):

- Talk
- Movement
- Time
- Teacher-pupil relationships
- Pupil-pupil relationships

Negotiation of classroom rules is something which cannot be avoided, indeed Rogers (1991) focuses on this as a major strategy in maintaining effective classrooms. If teachers act as though it was their role to impose a rule system, pupils will spend some of their time testing it out, especially self-respecting adolescents! If more is negotiated from the start, pupils will be more involved in applying it and are likely to learn more about themselves and behaviour in the process.

The level of detail at which rules are phrased can be a trap: if they become too detailed, it is possible to end up with too many and some of them will be easy targets. While working abroad, we remember being presented with a six-page list of rules which newcomers to primary school were given.

o. Discussing the climate

"Climate" can seem like a broad, even nebulous word, but it's necessary and appropriate for the more general level of considerations which we have now reached regarding difficult behaviour in classrooms. Ever since the studies of Lewin et al (1939) we have known that the teacher's style of running a group has a major effect on young people's behaviour. Classrooms which are run on laissez-faire lines are linked to more aggression between pupils - as are those run on authoritarian lines, but in the latter case the evidence may only become clear when the leader leaves the room! Developing a democratic climate is the productive approach.

Classroom climate can be led by the teacher, but you can't be a leader without followers, so pupils will need to be engaged and supported in a variety of ways as mentioned in

preceding sections. Fraser (1989) has reviewed many studies of the social climate of classrooms: his work highlights two recurring aspects - affiliation (pupils' sense of wanting to join in and be a part) and cohesiveness (pupils' sense of wanting to work with each other). These combine with the purposes of the classroom to create a productive climate for learning.

If climate can be identified by comments of the style "it's the way we do things around here", what would be said about the way we do things in the class you are considering?

p. Building classroom community

Building classroom community helps to achieve many of the wider and important goals of school. When classes meet periodically to discuss issues of general concern, work collaboratively with the teacher to develop solutions to discipline problems, and the teachers help students to think about the importance of community values, pupils develop more prosocial values, helping, conflict resolution skill, and motivation to help others learn (Schaps and Solomon, 1990). Kohn (1996) has argued that it classroom community-building is the necessary antidote to those methods which seem designed to produce compliance. As for community-building at the school level (discussed in chapter 2), and in parallel with the above consideration of classroom climate, the central themes which compose community recur: membership, purposefulness, and coherence. The link to improved behaviour occurs because students who experience their classroom as a community attempt to abide by its norms and values (Solomon at al, 1996).

Community in a classroom is built slowly but surely through:

- paying attention to how pupils affiliate to the class: do newcomers get included effectively? do class members feel comfortable to describe the class positively?
- challenging pupils to become engaged in the class, and to support the activities related to it
- encouraging a wide variety of roles and contacts between all members of the class

When teachers emphasise prosocial values, elicit student ideas, and encourage co-operation, there is higher student engagement and positive behaviour (Solomon et al, 1997). Teachers' encouragement of cooperative activities appears to be particularly important .

Some of the additional methods which may contribute to this development include:

- class meetings, perhaps using a range of methodologies, to plan new tasks and arrange events for the class
- class reviews, which specifically address how the community feels and what would improve its working
- class problem-solving which addresses issues which arise, and through its workings creates more effective solutions at the same time as building self-discipline

For the teacher responding to difficult behaviour, this means a shift from "What will I do as a result of this incident?" to "How are we all going to solve this problem?", and conveying that acts (not actors) are unacceptable when they break a community agreement or damage the community and its goals. Development of a classroom community also needs the pupils to learn skills of listening, anger control, seeing other's point of view, and solving problems collaboratively. Teachers need to display these skills.

An underlying theme to these methods is that of regularly asking "What sort of classroom do we want?", and following through with the responsibilities which we take on in order to achieve the things we want. The teacher can feel challenged at times by really taking on class ideas which s/he may not have chosen. The teacher will also have to challenge any

community outcomes which are not genuine solutions, for example false compromises or subtle bargains.

Classroom community is built in small steps. Which will you take first?

The image of classrooms which we hope to convey

The themes and issues raised in the foregoing sections have not tried to advance a nostalgic, seductive picture of classrooms in which teachers had unquestioned authority and pupils were happily compliant. Rather, the overall position is one of trying to manage this complex situation in such a way that it promotes the qualities and skills which pupils will need to develop for their unknown and changing futures - learning skills and pro-social skills. The teacher who manages such a setting knows that they are not "in control" of this complexity, but in a myriad of ways they are exercising control.

Keeping classrooms healthy - school practices

The foregoing sections, which make up the bulk of the chapter on improving classroom behaviour, are presented as though they are frameworks for an individual teacher. It is of course possible that such a scenario would be productive: after all teachers do a lot of their own problem-solving without anyone else knowing. However you may have noticed that the sections occasionally suggested conversations with colleagues. We believe that on most occasions this can be more productive, since an external dialogue with a colleague can develop further than an internal dialogue with oneself. We now consider some of the wider ways through which colleagues in a school might be helped to interact with each other so as to support each other's learning and practice

We have seen in chapter 2 how teacher collaboration is an important part of building a professional learning community in school. Even in a context of pressure and constraint a school can and should provide support to teacher motivation and effectiveness in this way. The image of teachers' working life which we should aim for is one where teachers' classroom practice has been de-privatised. No longer should we hear the idea that "change stops at the classroom door".

It is clear that a professional learning community is not built on the staff development practices of the recent past, which too often consisted of staff going to one-off off-site courses, and INSET days where little professional learning took place because the agenda came from elsewhere, the teachers were treated as functionaries rather than professionals, and the lack of rigour often led to a dissatisfying process of recycling ignorance. Instead the development of widespread professional learning in a school requires structural support and human and social resources. What might these be? We comment on some school practices which might be episodic (i.e. called on under certain conditions) and some which are more likely to be regular.

Meetings of teachers over a particular class

We have hardly ever met an example where a meeting of teachers discussing the learning and behaviour of a particular class was not productive. It is common in our experience for teachers who have recently experienced such meetings to say they should have more of them: if they did, the contribution to de-privatisation of classroom practice would be significant. In the primary school it is likely that the class teacher remains a central figure

in any such meeting, and the more peripheral perspectives of others attending could illuminate and enrich that view. In the secondary school the teachers of a particular group (even though the group may disperse somewhat in later years) can have a productive exchange, especially if it is well facilitated and has a structure to ensure information exchange. Some of the guidelines in chapter 4 on meetings discussing an individual pupil would also apply. In the secondary school, regular meetings of this sort would be helped if the structure of teams focused more on pupil learning (Watkins, 1999).

Paired observation

Perhaps the most powerful form of professional learning is where pairs of colleagues choose to enter into a partnership with the intention of exploring developments in each others' classroom practice. Such partnerships have to be set up with care, and choice is an important aspect. In many schools, any hint of a central scheme allocating an observer, especially if it is tinged with hierarchical messages, will significantly increase the chances of defensiveness.

For paired work to develop, partners need to establish guidelines and agree on their responsibilities to one another and to others who may have an interest or involvement in the work. Time spent clarifying the purpose of the partnership is well spent at an early stage, so that trust can be built. Some practice and experimentation is welcome on the issues of how to choose a focus for an observation, if and how to collect and record information, etc. We have witnessed some pitfalls here, such as agreeing an over-safe focus in a collusive fashion, or the observer pressing their own interests or agenda as a focus, thereby risking the quality of learning relationship from the start.

The quality of observation is probably subservient to the quality of review which takes place following observation. Here the richness of professional conversation can be very significant - under the right conditions. These are likely to include that the observer will be explicit about the relativity of her/his observations, not casting them as more "objective" than the teacher's, and that both will join in a dialogue which is triggered from the observations, and which elicits both parties' images and hopes for the classroom.

We are used to hearing that many teachers are resistant to observation of their classroom, and we understand such comments as reflecting past histories of isolation and current hostile perceptions in inspection. But these are not the only conditions under which observation might take place. Little (1998) puts it well from her studies: "Teachers welcome observation and profit from qualified observers, who will not waste the teacher's time, who will not insult the teacher's intelligence, and who will work as hard to understand classroom events as the teachers do to conduct them". We find most UK teachers agree with this remark and can enter more actively into well-designed co-working as a result.

The following principles, devised from the work of Argyris (1993), have been well received:
- negotiate your role explicitly, taking care over the evaluative dimension.
- ask the teacher what they want you to report on and discuss.
- if you ask questions, give your rationale for asking
- don't make judgements without clarifying their basis, in detail
- beware handling the discussion as a control or influence interaction

Change is not a problem in an atmosphere where it is recognised that change is continually part of a teacher's professionalism. But if one person takes it upon themselves to think that their job is to get their colleague to change, then the work suffers. Professionally supported teachers move their practice on in a variety of ways. In the current climate of target-mania in education, one conventional message is that action plans must be made for change to take place. We do not find this necessary in many cases, especially in schools where good levels of trust and professional practice are prevalent.

One of the key tests of this paired work, and of the learning climate of the school, is whether colleagues take or make opportunities to share the learning more widely, for example between partnerships or with wider audiences. If few do, it may reflect on the school culture, and conversely, any pairs who do share more widely deserve real support for their contribution to change.

Mentoring

Mentoring seems to be promoted as a panacea lately, not always with sufficient attention to goals and processes (Watkins, 1997). Where mentoring is for teachers and has a focus on classroom practice, the mentoring schemes for beginner teachers and for the induction of newly qualified teachers often show the hallmarks of bad practice: agendas are decided elsewhere, mentors talk too much, criticism is confused with feedback, choice and power are not considered openly. The challenge is to find ways of building the learning agenda, building in choice, keeping the relationship under review, and supporting action learning at all times (Watkins and Whalley, 1993).

Mentoring pairs who reach the stage of real dialogue (Dixon, 1998) often report a real excitement with their learning and practice. While we know of no direct evidence linking effective mentoring with lesser classroom difficulties, we would confidently expect that a school with quality mentoring on a widespread basis would be showing more signs of a learning community, and these are characterised by reduced difficulty.

Some associated considerations regarding consultation relationships within and beyond the school will be found in chapter 5.

At this point we reflect back over the chapter on improving classrooms, and consider a further way of keeping classrooms healthy. We wish to emphasise that although this chapter was constructed with the perspective of teachers in mind, and that most of the proposals indicate some action on the teacher's part, a theme runs through them all which is crucial to improving classroom life: improving the quality of communication between teachers and pupils. When difficulty arises in the classroom we may think that things are worse than they are, or that pupils are antagonistic to our goals, and so on. These are thoughts which usually indicate a limitation to communication between us and our pupils. Various studies show us that the picture may not be as we feel it is in those moments. For example, Munn et al. (1990) elicited the comments of 543 secondary pupils about the strategies used by their teachers which got the class to work well. The 4300 comments were grouped into 21 categories, none of which dominated, but the most frequent was "explains and helps". A wide variety of strategies was seen as effective by the pupils, and through asking each pupil to select three teachers and their effective strategies, over 75% of the staff in the four schools were identified as being best at getting the class to work well. Staff found this "an immensely encouraging finding".

Similarly when it comes to interventions which seek to improve behaviour, the process of eliciting pupil views has been identified in various sections of the chapter and can have long-lasting impact. Swinson (1990) adopted an approach which demonstrated this with a class in the second year of a Liverpool comprehensive, whom their teachers described as 'disruptive, disobedient, and therefore difficult to teach'. An early step was to gather their views on their classes, and to find that pupils rated "being allowed to take a greater part in lessons by discussing rather than just writing/copying" as the most important item. This item was ranked equally highly by those pupils who had been mentioned as particularly disruptive, as those who were not. "The teachers were generally surprised and encouraged at the very positive response of the class". A further step was for a meeting of staff to devise proactive strategies for improvement, agreeing that more emphasis should be given to encouraging feedback from the class. The class were supported in developing social and

communication skills, and developed mutually supportive check-ups of equipment at the beginning of the day. Improvements in behaviour, attendance and schoolwork were noticeable, and Swinson concludes that a crucial element was the staff change to a more positive attitude as a result of the questionnaire feedback. In this example, better communication helped the improvement attempt get off the ground, and the improvement attempt itself focused on better communication, both between pupils and teachers and between pupils and pupils.

As we turn our focus to individuals and behaviour, perhaps we will find that frameworks to improve communication will again play a constructive role.