

Strategies for dealing with low level disruption

Scenarios

How could you improve the following situations?

1. You feel that a girl in your class does not like you. She gets on with her work most of the time but during any class discussions she will try to catch you out by asking difficult, awkward or irrelevant questions. She often tells you that the work you are setting is pointless and has said that she doesn't trust your marking.
2. There are lots of pupils in your 4th Form set who keep calling out answers. It is a mixed ability set and you want to encourage them to speak out and to do well but have to keep reminding them to put their hands up before speaking and you often feel that discussions get out of control.
3. One boy in your 5th Form class dominates all lessons by calling out answers, and trying to make the rest of the class laugh. You suspect that he is struggling with the work and the pace of the class. If you ask him to quieten down he reacts badly and has become confrontational.

Dealing with difficult classes

- Make this class your priority for lesson planning and marking until you feel that behaviour/attitude has improved.
- Check their individual education plans carefully – this might explain some poor behaviour.
- You decide on the seating plan.
- Get to the classroom early if possible – to meet and greet and take control.
- Get them started quickly – give them something to work on as soon as they come into the classroom.
- Reinforce verbal instructions with written instructions on the board to leave no room for confusion.
- Make the purpose of the work very clear – explain how it fits into a particular topic or module.
- Look for positives – praise students who are working well.
- Follow the school discipline policy.
- Give warnings and stage your punishments.
- Find things to praise, e.g. give them a noticeboard to display good work and give out T-ticks for classwork or prep.
- Avoid any confrontation – see the pupil at the end of the lesson for a conversation about his or her behaviour if this is needed.
- Stay calm: ‘Anger is funny’.

If this does not work.....

- Observe a colleague in another subject who teaches the class / certain pupils in the class. You might observe a few good techniques that would help.
- Ask your Head of Department for advice and/or support, e.g. lesson observations and tips or Heads of Department warning.
- Ask colleagues to look at your lesson plans to see how they might be better suited to a more difficult group.
- Talk about your experiences with other teachers and don’t be afraid to ask for advice.