

effective classroom management

a teacher's guide

second edition

**COLIN J. SMITH and
ROBERT LASLETT**



**Also available as a printed book
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Effective classroom management

This new edition of the successful and widely recommended *Effective Classroom Management* has been updated and restructured in the light of recent research and developments. It is written for new teachers and also for those who train or guide them while they gain experience, and combines practical advice on lesson organisation and teaching methods with an exploration of teachers' feelings about themselves and the children they teach.

Effective management in the classroom is discussed as a co-operative enterprise linked to classroom and school processes and the development of good relationships. It is considered from four aspects:

- *Management in the classroom* begins with four simple rules: get them in; get them out; get on with it; get on with them. The authors then give more detailed advice on analysing classroom organisation and reducing sources of friction.
- *Mediation with individuals* refers to knowledge of how to provide the counselling and guidance which some pupils require, understanding their problems and avoiding damaging confrontations in the classroom.
- *Modification of behaviour* involves applying learning theory to shaping and changing behaviour in ways which are practical and realistic within the routine of the normal classroom.
- *Monitoring school discipline* considers how schools evaluate the effectiveness of policies on discipline and how senior teachers can help colleagues cope with stress and other problems.

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Introduction

We have written this book particularly to help newly-qualified teachers establish and improve their classroom management. We hope that more experienced teachers, especially those charged with the task of acting as 'mentor' to new entrants to the profession, will also find this book useful as a means of organising reflection on their own experience of what makes teaching effective. Such teachers rarely have the time to examine and articulate the techniques which they have internalised over the years. We know that the first edition of this book has been used by teachers to analyse and explain the rationale for actions which have become natural and intuitive to them through successful practice.

We realise that any authors who write about the management of children face difficulties, because they are not present in schools and classrooms where the significant events that affect management take place. We hope that we have reduced these difficulties facing us as far as it is possible to reduce them. We are experienced teachers, we are in contact with practising teachers, and we base many descriptive passages on observations in classrooms.

In our experience, it seems that effective teachers develop their own personal management practices without undue concern about the theories that underpin them. What we have tried to do here is to describe effective practice and also explain the theories that support it.

In some ways, effective classroom management is not unlike chess, although the comparison is not altogether satisfactory, because we do not regard teachers and the children in their classes as opponents. But it is true that experienced teachers know about opening moves and their effects on subsequent moves; they know which gam-

bits are risky and they know how to avoid checkmate and how to checkmate others. They also learn to study and respect the other person at the board. But even comprehensive knowledge of openings, middle and end games does not, of itself, ensure success. The knowledge has to be applied with sensitivity and imagination that can only come through practice. At the same time, this practice is improved by reading the accounts and confessions of successful chess players. Classroom practice is improved by studying what others do successfully and understanding the principles on which their practice is based.

We have written about management rather than control in classrooms, because we believe that management emphasises that learning and teaching are complementary activities. Just as successful managers in commerce and industry avoid disputes which disrupt production, so in the classroom successful teachers do not constantly have to demonstrate 'who is the boss'. There are times when teachers must exert their authority clearly and unmistakably, and we do not pretend that it can be otherwise. But we also believe that good classroom management depends more upon teachers and children working equitably together because they are confident together, than upon peremptory instruction and resigned obedience.

Though the fundamentals of classroom management do not change, this new edition has been rearranged into four sections to draw attention to the importance of seeing effective classroom management, not as a simple attribute which individual teachers either have or have not got, but as the product of a combination of skills, knowledge and understanding, which can be fostered by individuals and institutions. Each section refers mnemonically to an aspect of teaching beginning with the letter 'M'.

Management refers to skill in the organisation and presentation of lessons in such a way that all pupils are actively engaged in learning. This requires an ability to analyse the different elements and phases of a lesson, to select and deliver appropriate material and to reduce sources of friction. These issues are discussed in Chapters 1–3.

Mediation refers to knowledge of how to provide the more intensive individual counselling and guidance which some pupils require, how to enhance self-concepts and avoid damaging confrontation in the classroom. This is examined in Chapters 4–7.

Modification refers to understanding the ways in which learning

theory can be applied to devising programmes for shaping and changing behaviour through thinking up suitable rewards and punishment. These issues are discussed in Chapter 8.

Monitoring refers to checking the effectiveness of school policies on discipline and pastoral care and how senior management can help colleagues avoid stress and cope with problems in classroom management. These issues are discussed in Chapters 9 and 10.

Though it is possible to see a progression from simple to more complex problems or from responsibilities of the individual to institutional responsibilities, the different perspectives described by the 'four Ms' inevitably overlap and interlock. As with so many aspects of education, effective classroom management depends on the quality of support and guidance within the school as well as the talent of the individual teacher.