Good Practice:
Behaviour in our Classrooms

Good Practice Report

March 2024

Contents

About this report

Positive classroom behaviour creates the conditions for all students to focus and achieve at school. But positive behaviour isn't just up to the students – it requires shared responsibility and joint actions.

ERO looked at the behaviours that are happening in Aotearoa New Zealand classrooms, the impact of these behaviours, and what good teaching practice looks like for managing classroom behaviour.

This report is focused on good practice for teachers and leaders. It uses robust evidence to clarify 'what good looks like' for managing challenging behaviour, and how teachers and leaders can implement these practices in the classroom.

ERO looked at behaviour in Aotearoa New Zealand classrooms

The Education Review Office (ERO) is responsible for reviewing and reporting on the performance of early learning services, kura, and schools. As part of this role, ERO looks at how the education system supports schools to provide quality education for students. In this case, we looked at how classroom behaviour is going currently, and what good practice for behaviour management looks like.

There are multiple ways of defining or 'viewing' classroom behaviours. In this report, we focus most strongly on teachers' experiences and perspectives, with the aim of being useful for supporting teachers' classroom practice. A range of useful additional resources about behaviour can be found at the back of this report.

This report is part of a set of two reports

This *good practice report* is focused on what we found out about good practice for teachers and leaders. There is also a companion *evaluation report* which details what we found out about the behaviours that are currently happening in Aotearoa New Zealand classrooms.

There are practical guides available for teachers, leaders, and school boards, with guidance that is specific to their roles. These can be downloaded from our website, evidence.ero.govt.nz

Where we looked

We have taken a robust, mixed-methods approach to deliver breadth and depth in this research. We built our understanding of the current state of behaviour and what is good practice through:

→ surveys of 1557 teachers

→ surveys of 547 principals

→ focus groups with:

— school staff

— students

— parent and whānau participants

— Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLBs) from two clusters

→ site visits and online sessions with 10 schools

→ an in-depth review of literature, including Education Endowment Foundation research[a]

→ Ministry of Education statistics on the frequency of stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions, and expulsions.

We focused our investigation on experiences of schools, teachers, students and whānau across Aotearoa New Zealand in English-medium state and state-integrated primary, intermediate, and secondary schools. We did not include specialist schools.

To help us know what good looks like, and know what matters for managing behaviour, we worked closely with an Expert Advisory Group with a range of expertise. The group included academics, educators, practitioners, and sector experts.

What we looked at

In our companion *evaluation report*, we explore a range of questions about what behaviours are happening in Aotearoa New Zealand classrooms.

Within this *good practice report*, our investigation explores:

→ what the existing research evidence says about good practice in managing challenging behaviour

→ what the existing research evidence says about good support for teachers and leaders

→ what these practices and supports look like in our Aotearoa New Zealand context, and across a range of schools

→ what insights, strategies, and stories we gather that could be useful for the sector – teachers, leaders, parents and whānau, and others.

a   UK-based charity dedicated to improving teaching and learning through better use of evidence.

What about bullying?

Bullying is a very specific form of behaviour (it is deliberate, harmful, involves a power imbalance, and has an element of repetition), which is not the focus of this evaluation. For dedicated resources on bullying in Aotearoa New Zealand schools, including a student voice resource, see ERO's 2019 research: Bullying Prevention and Response in New Zealand Schools May 2019 | Education Review Office (ero.govt.nz)

Report structure

This report is divided into three chapters.

→ Chapter 1 sets out our **key findings from our companion evaluation report,** about the current state of behaviour in Aotearoa New Zealand classrooms.

→ Chapter 2 is the main part of the report. It sets out **six areas of evidence-based teacher and leader practice** for managing classroom behaviours.

→ Chapter 3 gives a brief overview of ERO's **recommendations for areas for action across Aotearoa New Zealand.**

We appreciate the work of all those who supported this research, particularly the teachers, school leaders, students, parents and whānau, and experts who shared with us. Their experiences and insights are at the heart of what we have learnt.

Chapter 1: What we know about behaviour in our classrooms

ERO looked at the behaviours that are happening in Aotearoa New Zealand classrooms. These are detailed in our companion evaluation report, *Time to Focus: Behaviour in our Classrooms.*

This chapter gives a brief overview of our 11 key findings.

ERO identified 11 key findings, about the state of behaviour in Aotearoa New Zealand classrooms. For further detail and additional findings, see our companion report: www.evidence.ero.govt.nz/documents/time-to-focus-behaviour-in-our-classrooms

Key findings

1) **Behaviour is a major problem in Aotearoa New Zealand schools, and it is worse than other countries.**

→ Half of teachers have to deal with students calling out and distracting others in every lesson.

→ A quarter of principals see students physically harming others and damaging or taking property every day.

→ PISA results over the last 20 years show that Aotearoa New Zealand's classrooms have consistently had worse behaviour compared to most other OECD countries. For example, Aotearoa New Zealand is lowest among OECD for behaviour in maths classes and in the bottom quarter of PISA countries for behaviour in English classes.

Figure 1: *Proportion of students reporting 'every lesson' or 'most lessons' in maths classes 2022*

Students cannot work well — Aotearoa New Zealand 29%, OECD average 23%

The teacher has to wait a long time for students to quiet down — Aotearoa New Zealand 32%, OECD average 25%

Students do not start working for a long time after the lesson begins — Aotearoa New Zealand 33%, OECD average 25%

Students get distracted by other students who are using digital resources (e.g. smartphones) — Aotearoa New Zealand 40%, OECD average 25%

Students do not listen to what the teacher said — Aotearoa New Zealand 41%, OECD average 30%

There is noise and disorder — Aotearoa New Zealand 43%, OECD average 30%

Students get distracted by using digital resources (e.g. smartphones, websites, apps) — Aotearoa New Zealand 46%, OECD average 30%
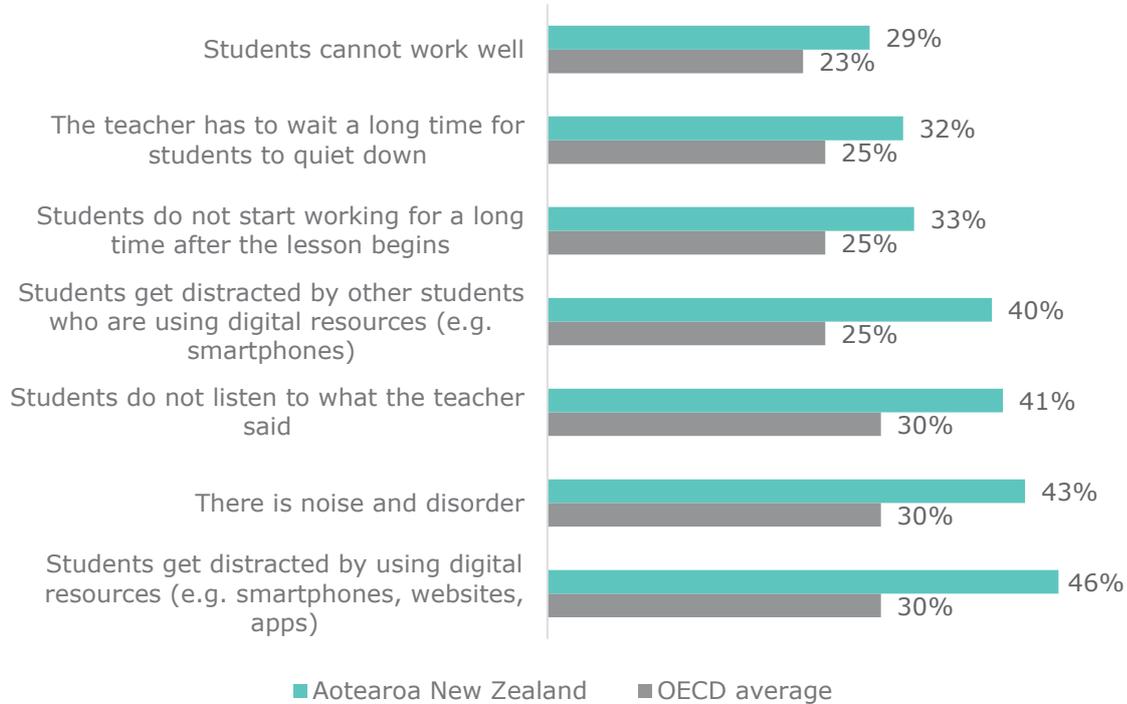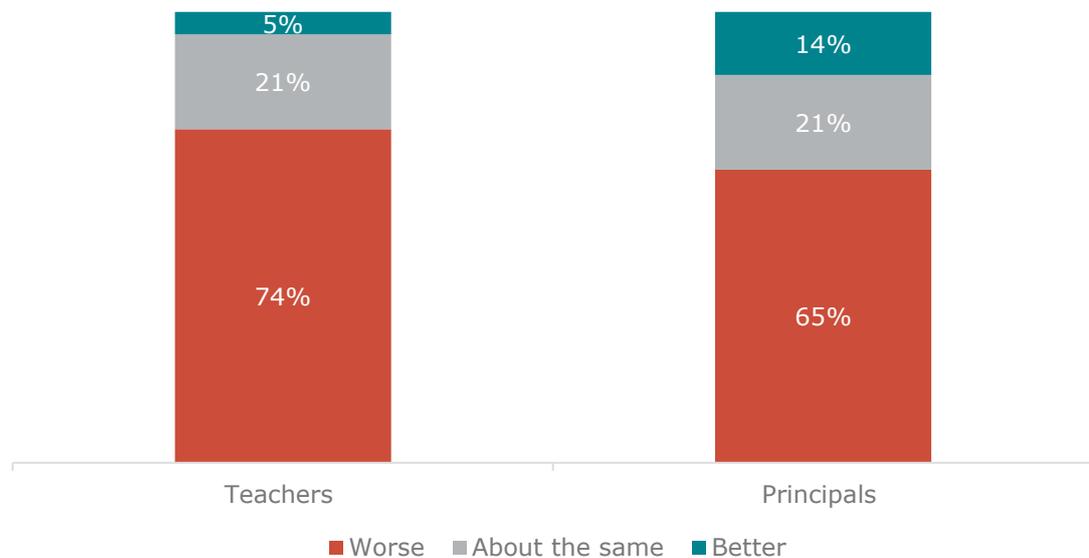
■ Aotearoa New Zealand   ■ OECD average

Figure 2: *Index of disciplinary climate in maths class across some OECD countries 2022 (higher numbers are better disciplinary climates, lower numbers are worse disciplinary climates)*

Japan 1.09

United States 0.24

United Kingdom 0.10

OECD average 0.02

Canada -0.08

Australia -0.24

Aotearoa New Zealand -0.33

2) Student behaviour has become worse in the last two years.

→ Over half of teachers report all types of behaviour have become worse.
In particular, they report a greater number of students displaying
challenging behaviour.

Figure 3: *Teachers' and principals' view of behaviour change overall in the last two years*

Legend: ■ Worse ■ About the same ■ Better

Teachers: 74% Worse, 21% About the same, 5% Better
Principals: 65% Worse, 21% About the same, 14% Better

3) Behaviour is significantly damaging student learning and achievement.

→ Almost half (47 percent) of teachers spend 40-50 mins a day or more responding
to challenging behaviour. This limits the time available to teach.

→ Three-quarters of teachers believe student behaviour is impacting on students'
progress.

→ International evidence (PISA) links behaviour and achievement, finding students
in the most well-behaved maths classes scored significantly higher than all other
students, and students in the worst-behaved classes scored the lowest.

> "It could impact us pretty badly... especially around this time. Like for the
> seniors, especially when we're trying to learn as much as we can for our
> externals and all that. So, if we miss one bit of information, that may decide
> if we get a pass or not a pass."
>
> **STUDENT**

4) Behaviour is significantly impacting student enjoyment of school and therefore attendance.

→ Two-thirds of teachers (68 percent) and principals (63 percent) find that challenging behaviour in the classroom has a large impact on student enjoyment. Enjoyment of school is a key driver of attendance.[b]

> "Some kids in my class were not doing their work and being silly and it annoyed me because they were sitting at my desk and they were getting me distracted."
>
> **STUDENT**

5) Behaviour is a key driver of teachers leaving teaching.

→ Behaviour impacts on teacher wellbeing through mental health, physical health, and stress.

→ Half of teachers (50 percent) say this has a large impact on their intention to stay in the profession.

> "I think it certainly takes its toll on teacher morale. I think there's a level of frustration for teachers that they are here because they want to do absolutely the best by their students… and they question their practice all the time."
>
> **PRINCIPAL**

Figure 4: *Impact on teachers' intention to stay in the profession: teacher's view*

| No impact	Small	Medium	Large
9%	19%	22%	50%
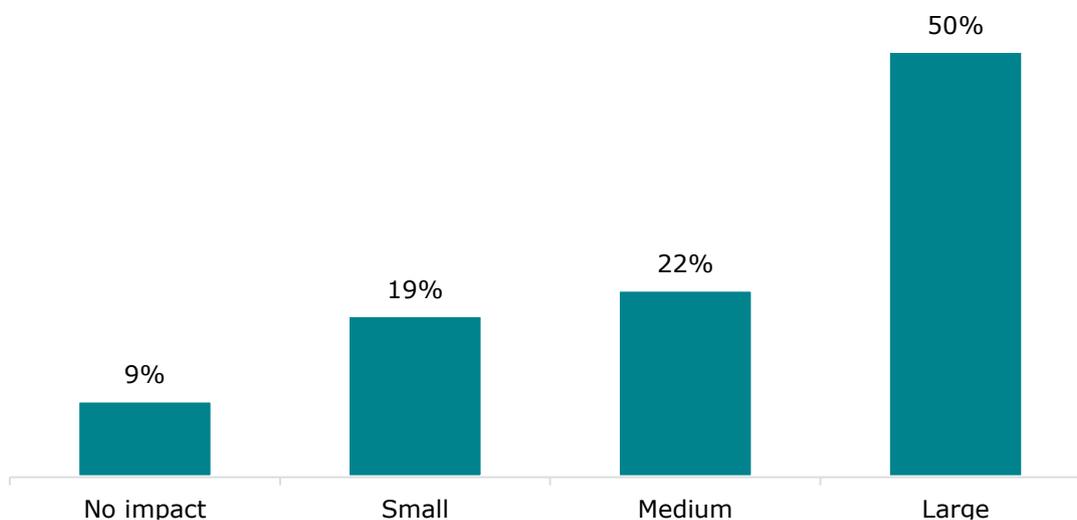
b   Attendance: Getting Back to School | Education Review Office (ero.govt.nz)

## 6) Behaviour is associated with negative life outcomes.

→ Student behaviour is sometimes managed through being stood-down (not allowed to attend school). These students have worse life outcomes.

→ Students with three or more stand-downs are less than a third as likely to leave school with NCEA Level 2 (22 percent) than those with no stand-downs (73 percent).

→ Experiencing stand-downs is linked to other longer-term outcomes such as unemployment, offending, and poor health.

→ The younger a student's first stand-down, suspension, or exclusion, the more likely they are to receive a benefit, have lower income, have a greater number of admissions to emergency departments, offend, or receive a custodial sentence.

Figure 5: *Achievement of NCEA Level 2+ at age 20 by number of stand-downs*

| 73% | 47% | 32% | 22% |
| 0 stand-downs | 1 stand-down | 2 stand-downs | 3+ stand-downs |
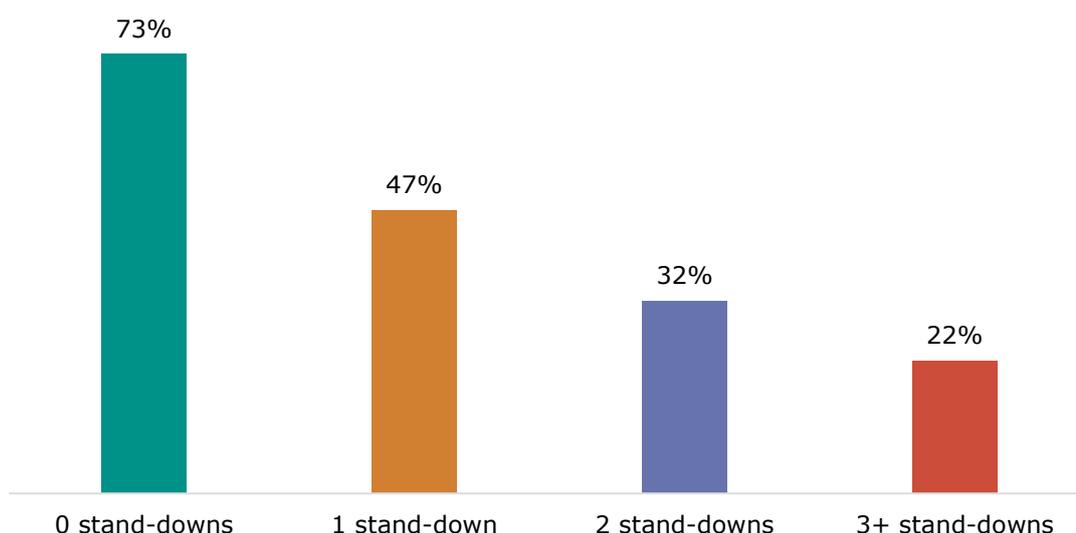
7) Behaviour issues are particularly severe in large schools and schools in low socioeconomic communities.

→ Teachers at larger schools see challenging behaviour more often, such as refusal to follow instructions (75 percent of teachers at large schools see this every day, compared with 65 percent of teachers at small schools).

→ Teachers from schools in low socioeconomic communities also see challenging behaviour more often, such as damaging or taking property (40 percent see this at least every day, compared to 23 percent from schools in high socioeconomic communities), reflecting the additional challenges in these communities.

Figure 6: *Percent of teachers seeing behaviours every day or more by school size*
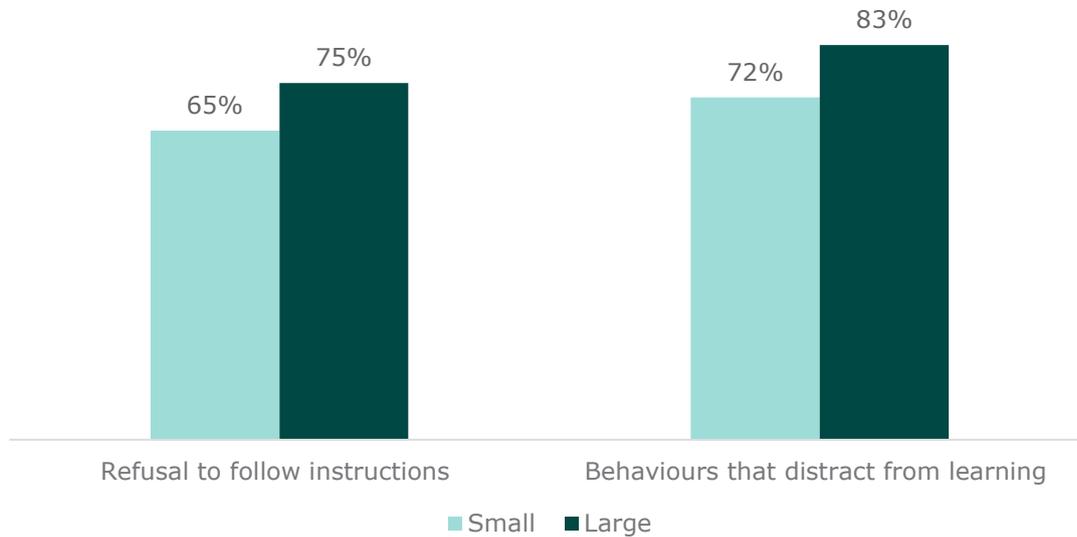
Figure 7: *Differences across socioeconomic status in percent of teachers seeing behaviours every day or more*
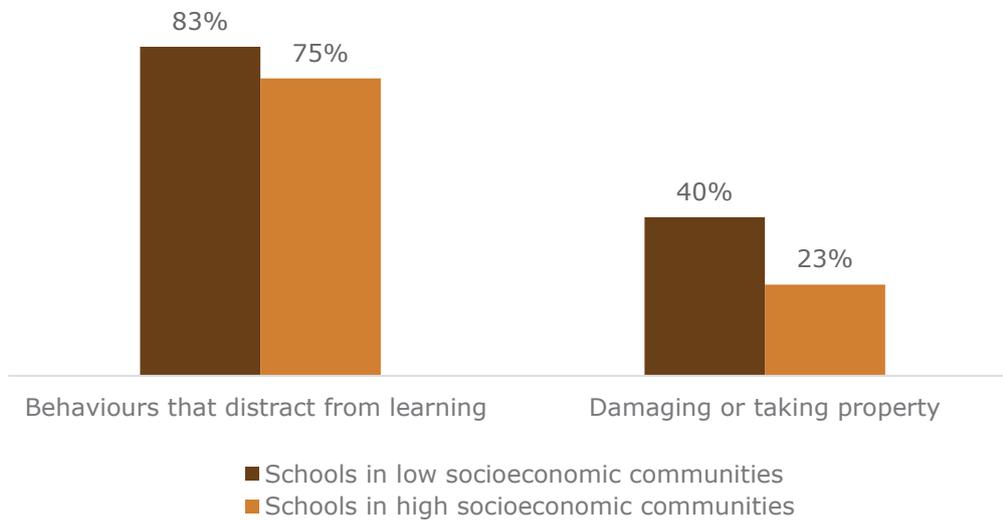
8) Teachers are not all well prepared to manage behaviour.

→ Less than half (45 percent) of new teachers report being capable of managing behaviours in the classroom in their first term.

→ Older new teachers (aged 36 and above) are more prepared to manager behaviour in their first term teaching than teachers aged 35 or younger.

9) Many teachers and principals struggle to access the expert support they need, particularly in secondary schools and schools in low socioeconomic communities.

→ Half of teachers (54 percent) and three-quarters of principals (72 percent) find timely advice from experts to be an important support, yet four in 10 teachers (39 percent) and half of principals (49 percent) find it difficult to access.

→ Teachers at secondary school feel the least supported, and that their behavioural policies and procedures are the least effective and applied the least consistently.

10) Teachers struggle to find the time to respond to behaviour.

→ Over half of teachers (53 percent) and principals (60 percent) find it difficult to access the time they need to tackle behaviour issues.

> "There's a lot more time that is being needed to address all the various issues, and that puts a huge pressure on schools."
>
> **STUDENT SUPPORT DIRECTOR**

11) There are inconsistencies in behaviour management within schools and between schools.

→ One in four teachers (25 percent) report that their school's behaviour policies and procedures are not applied consistently at their school. But just 2 percent of principals think they are not applied consistently.

Figure 8: *Teachers and principals reporting that their behaviour policies and procedures are ineffective and not applied consistently*

- Ineffective: Teachers 14%, Principals 1%
- Not applied consistently: Teachers 25%, Principals 2%

■ Teachers ■ Principals
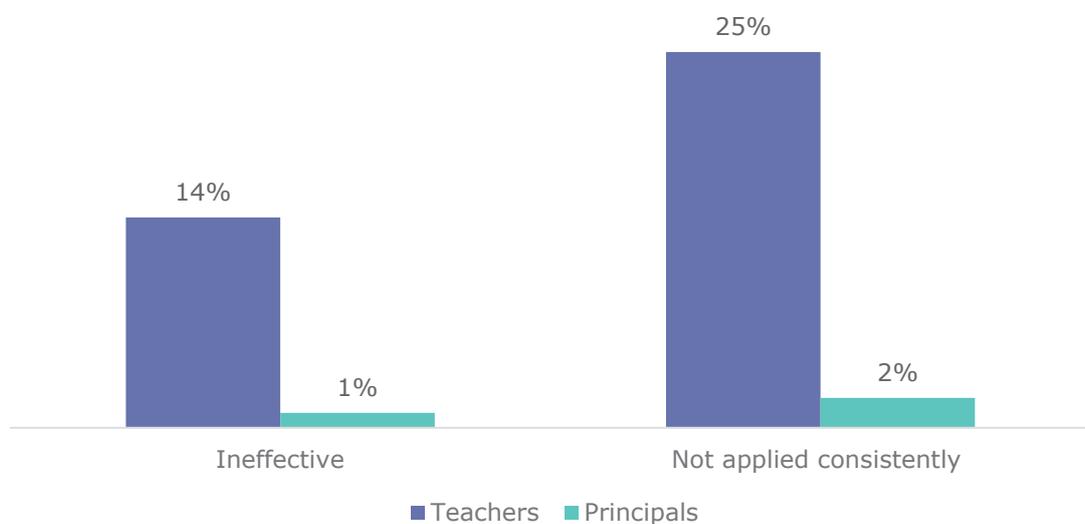
Conclusion

Behaviour in our Aotearoa New Zealand classrooms is a significant problem, and it has been getting worse. We know that challenging behaviour impacts on learning and engagement, and also on teachers' and principals' stress and retention in the profession. More needs to be done to ensure that behaviour management is effective, well-supported, and embedded across our classrooms and schools.

In the next sections of this report, we set out what teachers and principals can do at the classroom and school level (Chapter 2) and a set of actions that ERO is recommending at the higher level (Chapter 3), to better set up schools and teachers for success.

Chapter 2: Good practice for managing classroom behaviour

Creating a positive learning environment sets up all students to focus and achieve at school. We reviewed international and local evidence to find the most powerful practices that teachers and leaders can use for managing challenging classroom behaviour. These evidence-based strategies are a combination of 'proactive' (preventing challenging behaviour) and 'reactive' (responding to challenging behaviour) approaches.

This part of the report describes and illustrates six key areas of practice for effectively managing classroom behaviour. Each practice area is focused on what leaders and teachers can do, to prevent and respond to challenging behaviour in their classrooms.

Overview of this section

This section sets out:

1) how we found out about good practice
2) proactive and reactive strategies
3) key practice areas
4) interventions and tools available.

1) How we found out about good practice

We looked at the evidence base and talked to schools

To understand what good practice looks like, ERO's research and evaluation team did a deep dive into the international and local evidence base. We also interviewed and worked alongside experts and academics, and an Expert Advisory Group who helped develop and guide our findings. Using the evidence and through our expert contacts, ERO established the six practice areas that are most powerful for supporting positive behaviour in the classroom.

Next, we talked to a range of schools that were identified by ERO's expert evaluators, for deep dives into their behaviour management strategies. ERO worked with 10 schools and held focus groups with:

→ school staff
→ students
→ parents and whānau
→ Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLBs).

We asked teachers and school leaders about ways that they bring evidence-based practices to life in their schools and classrooms. We wanted to know about the particular strategies that have worked well in their experience. You can find their ideas in the lists of 'real-life strategies' throughout this report. It is important to think about which of these will be the right fit for a particular school or classroom – no single approach will offer an instant solution to all issues of behaviour management, but together these strategies can reduce behaviour concerns.

2) Balancing proactive and reactive strategies

Behaviour management strategies support all students in the class

Positive classroom behaviour creates the conditions for all students to focus and achieve. This is because when even *one* student is off-task and behaving poorly, there are negative impacts on learning and achievement throughout the classroom for:

→ the student who is behaving poorly is not focused on their schoolwork

→ the peers of that student are distracted by or concerned about the behaviour, meaning they are not focused on their schoolwork

→ the teacher of that student needs to respond to (or actively monitor) that behaviour, meaning they are not focused on their teaching of the schoolwork.

Managing behaviour is not just about supporting one or two students to stop their challenging behaviour – it's about using a range of proactive and reactive strategies practices to ensure *all* students in the class are able to do their best work.

Effective behaviour management uses a combination of 'proactive' and 'reactive' strategies

'Proactive' strategies are designed to reduce the likelihood of challenging behaviour occurring. They include preventative measures such as establishing clear expectations and rewarding good behaviour when it occurs.[1] Proactive strategies require good knowledge of students and strong relationships, developing school-wide approaches for managing behaviour, and explicitly teaching 'learning behaviours'.

'Reactive' strategies are intended to help teachers and leaders manage challenging behaviour when it does occur. These ensure that incidents are managed safely and efficiently.[2] Reactive strategies include having a clear plan for responding to incidents, using targeted approaches for some students, and responding to challenging behaviour with fair and logical consequences and working to restore relationships.

What's the difference between proactive and reactive strategies?

→ Proactive strategies are about encouraging positive behaviour. They involve working to create a positive and ordered learning environment, responding positively to students who show good behaviour, encouraging more positive behaviour over time.

→ Reactive strategies are about discouraging negative behaviour. They involve responding to students who are behaving poorly to discourage challenging behaviour and providing targeted support for improved behaviour over time.[3]

What influences behaviour?

There is a wide range of research and evidence already available about the range of influences on student behaviour, which can overlap and interact. Behaviour influences include, among other things:

→ individual factors like temperament, developmental stage, emotional regulation skills, communication skills, and disability

→ family factors such as home environment, family dynamics and parenting, family stress and mental health of family members, including:

— peer relationships and social dynamics

— trauma and adverse events

— community factors, like safety and availability of support services

— cultural factors, including norms around behaviour and ways to respond to behaviour, and discrimination.

While this report touches on influences, and the importance of knowing and understanding students' contexts, its main focus is on the role of teachers, leaders, and the wider school in preventing and responding to challenging behaviours that present within the classroom.

Proactive strategies should be used more often than reactive strategies

The evidence base shows that the best approaches for managing challenging behaviour use a *combination* of proactive and reactive strategies, with proactive strategies being used most often and reactive strategies being used only when needed. This combination is particularly important for students who have extremely challenging behaviour.[4]

Figure 9: *ERO's six practice areas move from proactive, class-wide strategies (used most often), to more reactive and individualised approaches (used more rarely).*
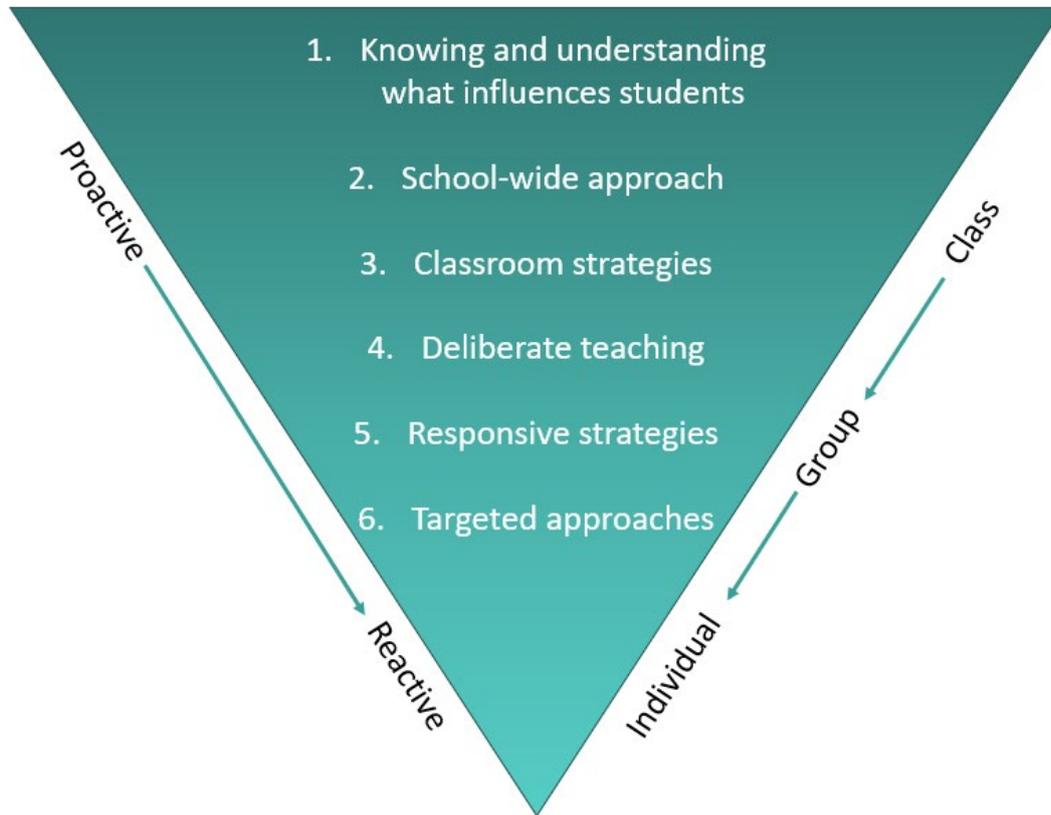
The six practice areas in this report are a mix of 'proactive' and 'reactive' strategies

Below is an overview of the six practice areas that we talk about in this report. The practice areas sit across both proactive strategies to prevent challenging behaviour *and* reactive strategies for responding to challenging behaviour in the moment.

Figure 10: *Summary of good practice areas highlighting proactive and reactive strategies*

Proactive

1. Know and understand students and what influences their behaviour (proactive)

Students' behaviour has multiple influences, some of which teachers can address directly

→ Find out about the influences or triggers for students' behaviour

→ Ensure every student has a positive relationship with at least one member of staff – ideally their classroom teacher

2. Use a consistent approach across the school to prevent and manage challenging behaviour (proactive)

Behaviour approaches work best when implemented at a whole-school level

→ Establish a clear school-wide behaviour approach and consistently apply this

→ Use data to track school behaviour

→ Ensure teachers are skilled in and supported to implement evidence-based behaviour strategies

3. Use strategies in the classroom to support expected behaviour (proactive)

Effective classroom management can reduce challenging behaviour.

→ Develop and implement with students a set of class behavioural expectations and consequences

→ Establish and reinforce clear and consistent class routines that are taught from day one

→ Organise the layout of the classroom to support positive behaviour

→ Give specific, related praise and incentives for positive behaviour throughout lessons

→ Display visual aids about expected behaviours around the classroom.

Proactive

4. Teach learning behaviours alongside managing challenging behaviour (proactive and reactive)

Teaching and reinforcing learning behaviours will reduce the need to manage behaviour

→ Create classroom conditions teaching practices that promote focused learning

→ Provide opportunities to learn positive social behaviours with peers

→ Coach and prompt students to regulate their own behaviour

Reactive

5. Respond effectively to behaviour (reactive)

When challenging behaviours do occur, it is important teachers know how to respond effectively

→ Plan responses to common and frequent behaviours in advance

→ Respond appropriately using relevant strategies:

— Corrective feedback

— Reminders

— Redirections

— Logical consequences

6. Use targeted approaches to meet the individual needs of students (reactive)

For students with more challenging behaviour, the approach should be adapted

→ Adapt approaches to individual needs, for students with more challenging behaviour

→ Plan with school staff, the student, their parents and whānau, and others as required

→ Get expert help when required

3) Key practice areas

This part of the report offers practical guidance for teachers and leaders. It is divided into six practice areas. Each has its own brief summary of the practice area and explanation of why it is so important for managing challenging behaviour. The areas are then broken down into key practices that make the most difference. These are illustrated by real-life strategies, insights, and ideas from Aotearoa New Zealand classrooms.

The six practice areas are:

Practice area 1	Know and understand students and what influences their behaviour (proactive)
Practice area 2	Use a consistent approach across the school to prevent and manage challenging behaviour (proactive)
Practice area 3	Use strategies in the classroom to support expected behaviour (proactive)
Practice area 4	Teach learning behaviours alongside managing challenging behaviour (proactive and reactive)
Practice area 5	Respond effectively to challenging behaviour (reactive)
Practice area 6	Use targeted approaches to meet the individual needs of students (reactive)

These six practices are sharply focused on practical actions that are specific to behaviour management aspects of the teaching role.

In addition, it is important to do the basics of teaching well, including content knowledge and delivery, pacing lessons well, using culturally responsive practices, reflecting on teaching effectiveness, and ensuring that learning tasks are at the right level of challenge for all students. These foundational aspects of effective teaching are very important, but are not the focus of this report.

As part of this study, we talked to teachers and school leaders about the strategies that have worked well in their experience. We have collected their ideas and strategies in this report, listed as 'real-life strategies'. It is important to think about which of these will be the right fit for your school or classroom – no strategies are one-size-fits-all.

Practice area 1: Know and understand students and what influences their behaviour (proactive)

This practice area is about teachers drawing on good knowledge about the students in their class. Students' behaviour has multiple influences, and teachers can build their knowledge about these through purposeful relationships with students and through information from other staff and parents and whānau.

When this is going well, teachers understand the range of influences that are impacting their students' classroom behaviour. They are also proactive in seeking and sharing information with other staff.

In this section, we set out why knowledge and understanding of students and the influences on their behaviour is so important for managing that behaviour. We also offer practical guidance on how teachers can build this area of their own practice.

Overview of this section

This part of the report sets out useful information about how teachers can know and understand students and what influences their behaviour. It includes:

1) what this practice area is

2) why this is important

3) what good practice looks like in real life

4) good practice example

5) reflective questions.

1) What is this practice area?

This practice area is about sourcing information about the range of factors that influence student behaviour. These include past behaviours and incidents, attendance and achievement information, individual needs, and family or wider community and cultural contexts. Knowing about these influences equips teachers to understand classroom behaviours and choose effective strategies – the strategies that teachers use to get to know students, which equips them for managing student behaviour. Teachers build this knowledge by purposefully developing relationships with students and their parents and whānau.

The key practices discussed in this section are:

a) finding out about the influences or triggers for students' behaviour

b) ensuring every student has a positive relationship with at least one member of staff – ideally their classroom teacher.

2) Why is this important?

Behaviour in the classroom is influenced by a range of factors. Many of these are external to what happens within the immediate classroom – like past behaviour, incidents of bullying, attendance and achievement information, individual needs, out-of-school interests, parents and whānau or community contexts. Teachers and leaders are better equipped to respond to challenging behaviours if they are well informed about the wider context for that behaviour. Being informed empowers teachers to have influence *within* the classroom: to prevent, predict, and respond to behaviours using what they know about students.[5] This is more effective than relying on a one-size-fits-all approach.[6]

When teachers take steps to get to know their students well, it also helps with:

→ building learning-focused relationships with students

→ bolstering students' sense of belonging at the school.

These are both strongly reflected in the research evidence base as positive influences on both student achievement and behaviour.[7]

3) What does good practice look like in real life?

The key evidence-based practices that we focus on are:

a) finding out about the influences or triggers for students' behaviour

b) ensuring every student has a positive relationship with at least one member of staff – ideally their classroom teacher.

a) Finding out about the influences or triggers for students' behaviour

In-school information like attendance and achievement data, behaviour and incident records, and whether students are keeping up with their schoolwork and homework, helps teachers understand what is happening for each student that might impact their classroom behaviour. The students' parents and whānau and home contexts, as well as in-class peer and group dynamics, also have significant impacts. Strong connections between school staff, and between home and school, allows issues to be raised early. The sharing of approaches that work well at home or in one classroom also helps ensure continuity between different contexts. Good knowledge informs teachers about the best strategies to address students' challenging behaviour in the classroom, supporting them and their peers to focus on learning.

Real-life strategies

We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well...

Phoning and talking to parents and whānau before term starts. Some parents and whānau find it easier to discuss their child's behaviour and needs over the phone than at a more formal in-person interview or meeting.

Organise group work based on peer and group dynamics. Some students may need to be kept apart because they distract each other, others may work really well together, and some may get left out. We heard that teachers use their knowledge about these dynamics to deliberately group their students so they learn well together. "We don't ever say, 'Get into groups.' We make sure that the groups are set. And I think that mitigates a lot of issues." (Principal)

Sending surveys or forms to parents and whānau about their child and their needs. We heard that this is an effective way for teachers and teacher aides to learn about students. The information can be used to design plans to respond to the needs of each student. We heard it is useful when surveys/forms are sent out before the term starts, so that teachers have a plan ready to go from their first class.

Ensuring that new entrant students visit the school to help them get used to the place and the teacher before they start. We heard that at least four visits before they start is effective for getting new entrants familiar with their teacher and peers, and comfortable in their new environment. This gives teachers a head start in building relationships with their new students, resulting in fewer behavioural difficulties in the classroom. One of the experts that ERO spoke to shared that disabled students might need a bit longer to grow their confidence in their new school – and teachers and leaders might need longer to adapt the environment and grow their confidence too.

Asking other teachers for information about students. Examples include talking to other teachers during staff meetings, and even contacting teachers from students' previous schools.

Having brief conversations that signal an interest in students outside of schoolwork. For example, chatting with students about what they got up to in the weekend. We also heard that it 'makes a real difference' if the teacher knows when a student's birthday is.

We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well...

Using pick-up and drop-off times to connect with parents and whānau about behaviour. We heard that it's worth the effort to pop out to the school gate and chat with parents and whānau before and after school, as these informal chats are less threatening to some parents and whānau than more formalised meetings. Leaders and teachers shared that if there is an incident to discuss, they prefer to only mention briefly at the gate that they will be contacted later on. This reduces negative interactions for parents and whānau and means that they can be prepared for a conversation about their child's behaviour at a time when they can focus better.

Keeping notes from conversations with parents and whānau. This ensures that decisions and important conversations are documented for future reference and information-sharing between staff.

Having regular informal 'meet the teacher' nights. These are a chance for parents and whānau to get to know their children's teachers. Some parents and whānau feel more confident coming along to an informal meet and greet (e.g., a social barbecue), rather than a more formalised event. Teachers then draw on these relationships to support student behaviour.

Scheduling regular hui/fono/meetings with Māori and Pacific parents and whānau. At one school they find it effective to ask parents and whānau to feedback on what they wanted from these meetings, what is working well, and what could be improved to make these events more productive for everyone involved.

Having specific times when leaders and teachers are available to parents and whānau for 'drop in' chats. One school ensures that teachers are in the classroom from 8:30am each morning, meaning that parents and whānau know when and how to easily reach the teacher.

> "Having that [shared] language... being able to ring home and have those open discussions – and parents understand exactly what you're talking about and the students can discuss that with staff or home. ... Students are now almost able to identify [and] self-refer if they need to as well, which is really good. Where in the past they probably would have actually labelled themselves negatively."
>
> **LEADER**

> "We have our 'meet the teacher' evening where parents are invited to come in, see the classrooms, be in the classrooms, meet the teams, meet their teachers, their child's teacher, ask all the questions they want, see the space, which makes a huge difference because they're welcomed in and they feel a part of the school."
>
> **LEARNING SUPPORT COORDINATOR**

b) Ensuring every student has a positive relationship with at least one member of staff – ideally their teacher

Behaviour and learning improves when students feel supported at their school. A rule of thumb for this, backed by evidence, is that all students should have a positive relationship with at least one member of school staff. This practice also ensures that there is staff oversight of all students across the school, which helps with monitoring behaviour.

In some schools this key relationship will be with the classroom teacher, while in secondary schools, where class teachers often differ depending on the subject, this might be through 'home group' teachers or other pastoral systems. It might also involve linking up across a range of staff members, such as counsellors or pastoral care leaders.

Real-life strategies

We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well...
Taking a whole-school approach to carefully matching students with teachers. We heard that this makes it more likely that students can develop a strong and trusting relationship with their teacher, which teachers find greatly improves their behaviour.
Arrange classes to support ongoing teacher-student relationships over multiple years. One school found it worked particularly well to shift to composite classes, where students have the same teacher for two or more years. This allows their teachers more time to get to know their students, and develop relationships with them and their parents and whānau.
Having one teacher or leader responsible for tracking students and looking at their data closely. We heard that it is useful for all other teachers to know where to go to find key information on students. Having this task assigned to one person means that it is prioritised and does not get forgotten. Schools also shared that with this system, any changes to behaviour trends are more easily noticed, as the assigned staff member has longer term knowledge. It also helps if this information is also accessible to all teachers (e.g. through an online document), so they are able to keep track of the range of students that they interact with.

4) Good practice example

This primary school takes a team approach to managing behaviour by making sure that there's a 'key teacher' matched to every student. Key teachers have developed a good relationship with their students, and other teachers call on them for support.

> "You know who to call on if they're having a bit of a meltdown or a situation where they may not want to listen… It means that a minor situation can then be dealt with in a minor way rather than making it into a bigger situation, then getting moved on to another school or no school at all. Which at the end of the day isn't really what we're here for."
>
> **TEACHER**

> "At morning tea today, one student was not necessarily following instructions… So I just talked to my colleague who works next door."
>
> **TEACHER**

Teachers make an effort to build positive relationships with students, by learning about their interests. Having connections in the community can also support these relationships.

> "[Students] know we know their family and their cousins and their aunties. And… we know they're going to be at netball on Saturday."
>
> **PRINCIPAL**

5) Reflective questions

These questions are for leaders and teachers to consider, individually or in a team discussion.

→ *What kinds of things do we do to get to know students? How well do we get to know every student?*

→ *How can we make an effort to talk with each student more regularly? Who is missing or 'flying under the radar'?*

→ *Do we share important information about students with other school staff? Are we proactive in doing this or do we wait until we're asked or if there is a problem?*

→ *What are the relationships like with students' parents and whānau? What could we do to strengthen information-sharing with them?*

→ *How well do students get on with other school staff? Is there someone they really connect with? What could we learn from this relationship?*

Practice area 2: Use a consistent approach across the school to prevent and manage challenging behaviour (proactive)

This practice area is about being clear on what behaviour management looks like, across the whole school. Consistent approaches help students to know what to expect, reflect on and monitor their own behaviour, and focus on learning. A whole-school approach also provides a strong foundation from which to build the flexibility that is needed for some students.

When this is going well, all teachers and leaders are on the same page about how to manage behaviour, and all students know the standard of behaviour expected of them.

In this section, we set out why it is important to have a consistent approach to managing behaviour across the whole school. We also offer practical guidance on how teachers can build this area of their own practice.

Overview of this section

This part of the report sets out useful information about how teachers and leaders can use a consistent approach across the school to prevent and manage challenging behaviour. It includes:

1) what this practice area is

2) why this is important

3) what good practice looks like in real life

4) good practice example

5) reflective questions.

1) What is this practice area?

A whole-school approach to behaviour management means all staff and students have shared understandings and clear expectations around behaviour. A whole-school approach includes training for teachers and support staff (e.g. teacher aides) on how to implement agreed behaviour management strategies, as well as careful monitoring across the school through systematically tracking behaviour data.[8]

The key practices discussed in this section are:

a) establishing a clear school-wide behaviour approach and consistently apply this

b) using data to track school behaviour

c) ensuring teachers are skilled in and supported to implement evidence-based behaviour strategies.

2) Why is this important?

Behaviour management approaches are more likely to have a positive impact on student achievement outcomes if they are well understood and implemented consistently across the whole school.[9] This is because a whole school approach makes expectations and norms around behaviour clear for everyone. Clarity and consistency help students to know what is expected of them, and to reflect on and monitor their own behaviour.[10] This creates a predictable experience for all students, overlapping with and reinforcing classroom-level strategies.[11]

Implementing school-wide approaches takes more initial effort than making changes at the classroom level. Strong leadership is required to clarify for all staff how and why to use consistent language, and to agree on definitions of challenging behaviour, responses, and consequences. Staff turn-over and time pressures can present barriers to this area of practice.

3) What does good practice look like in real life?

The key practices that we focus on are:

a) establishing a clear school-wide behaviour approach and consistently applying this

b) using data to track school behaviour

c) ensuring teachers are skilled in and supported to implement evidence-based behaviour strategies.

It is important to think about which of these will be the right fit for your particular school or classroom.

Practice Area 2

a) Establishing a clear school-wide behaviour approach and consistently applying this

School leaders set the scene for their school's approach to behaviour management. This means building and overseeing expectations and approaches to ensure that they are applied consistently. It helps to have well-documented policies and procedures available to all teachers as well as the school community. This key practice includes having a system and culture of using data to inform decision-making.

Some schools choose to adopt an evidence-based behaviour programme or 'packaged' approach (e.g. Positive Behaviour Four Learning, PB4L). In these cases it is vital that schools implement programmes or packages properly, according to the programme's guidance. Some school-wide programmes take several years to embed and will often involve intensive staff training.

Real-life strategies

We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well...
Developing 'codes of conduct' for students, staff, and the school board. One school we visited introduced these from the start of each year. A school leader told us that students are often the best advocates for promoting their code of conduct to peers, especially when guiding students coming in from another school.
Having a teacher-only day at the start of the year to set out how their school values can be modelled in the classroom. We also heard that it helps teachers and teacher aides if ideas and tips about this come through weekly emails to staff, newsletters, and wall displays.
Explicitly teaching the school's values to students through deliberate strategies that are set out in documents. These documents are most effective when they include examples of what it looks like for teaching and learning.
Being clear about behaviour 'non-negotiables' at the school. One intermediate school we visited puts extra effort into communicating these 'non-negotiables' in the first six weeks of school, noting how important it is to make these clear for new students who come from multiple different feeder schools. The school also sends out newsletters to parents and whānau describing these non-negotiables along with the school values.
Using a structured behaviour management plan that is published. One school leader told us how their school behaviour management plan has multiple levels, including 'reflective steps.' The leader noted that this is a much more effective strategy than just 'going punitive straight away.' We heard that clear communication around these plans helps them get buy-in from the school community.
Using a flowchart for behaviour responses to ensure consistency between staff. We heard that a shared flowchart helps guide teachers on how to respond to certain behaviours, and identify thresholds that mean additional support is needed.

We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well...

Encouraging students and parents and whānau to read and give feedback on school policies. This also provides an opportunity for parents and whānau to share ideas to improve school policies. For example, one school told us how feedback led to them adding extra details to their bullying policy. Schools we visited included in their strategic plans the commitment to provide a safe and secure learning environment.

Focussing on a behaviour expectation every Monday throughout the year.
We heard that it's effective to have a behaviour or value as single a focus across the entire school, rather than individual classes having different focuses at different times. Teachers told us that it helps them if they are sent a slideshow each week to show students how to practice the value.

Sending a confidential survey out to students to gather data on behaviour.
School staff told us it has been valuable to get feedback from students themselves, including their thoughts on the classroom environment, and what teachers could do to give students greater support around behaviour.

Using a 'try 4 before the door' approach. This means that teachers try at least four different response strategies before removing a student from the classroom.

Having a folder for teachers that outlines behaviour management practices and lists different consequences. Teachers told us that it helps when they have something they can easily look to for guidance. These folders are introduced to them at the start of the school year.

> "[Across our school] we talk in a positive rather than a negative. So not having things like 'don't run inside,' [instead saying] 'walking feet' ... that whole language behind it as well."
>
> **TEACHER**

> "If students were to be verbally abusive to one of my teachers, then there's not a lot of talking that goes on then. I think that's really important to note. That's part of our culture. Our teachers know that. Our parents know that. Our kids know that if you were to swear at a teacher and be aggressive towards a teacher, you're going straight to me."
>
> **PRINCIPAL**

Practice Area 2

b) Using data to track school behaviour

Effectively implementing a school-wide approach to behaviour management requires careful monitoring, through systematically gathering and analysing behaviour data. This includes monitoring and evaluating specific behaviour management programmes to know their impact and see where adjustments are needed.[12]

Schools should use data (e.g. about behaviour, incident frequency, attendance, etc.), that helps paint a picture of the overall effectiveness of the approach, identifies which students require additional support, and helps inform where teachers might require further training. Data can also be used to review the success of targeted approaches and programmes for individual students.

> "A lot of that data informs us as well … if a student who hasn't previously been flagged up to us all of a sudden is now struggling … and is being removed from class quite regularly, then we realise that actually there might be something deeper there as well. And we can start to dig into that."
>
> **LEADER**

Real-life strategies

We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well…
Tracking all behaviours on a Student Management System (SMS). Some schools we visited include information on what, when, where, and how behaviour incidents occur, along with a summary comment about actions the school takes in response. Where they identify that a student tends to behave poorly in one particular area of the school, or with a certain teacher, then the school can take steps to manage this. We heard that SMS data is most useful when it is reviewed regularly.
Having the senior leadership team rove around classrooms. We heard that having a hands-on leadership team makes a big difference in teachers feeling well supported to manage their classroom. School leaders do in-class observations and visits to ensure consistency and to offer additional support and modelling.
Showing behaviour data to parents and whānau during meetings. Schools shared that data gives a good starting point for conversations with parents and whānau, providing clear evidence of their child's behaviour patterns. This helps support joint decision-making around strategies going forward. We heard that data software that produces infographics is particularly useful for this purpose.
Analysing student survey data relating to behaviour support programmes. In one school, students were randomly selected to see whether they knew the school's PB4L values, and if they had been acknowledged by staff for 'doing good' in the last week.

We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well...

Having behaviour as a standing agenda item during staff meetings. This way it never gets overlooked because there is always a 'ring-fenced' place for these discussions. Staff meeting prompts included the biggest behaviour issues, time to focus on target students, and discussing what interventions teachers are using and how well they are working.

Getting external input and support. We heard that this is useful because people from outside the school offer a fresh and neutral perspective. For example, one school we visited had an external PB4L representative take stock on how well they were implementing the PB4L programme. The school now works to try and maintain and improve on this benchmark. We also heard from schools who had worked with a KiVa (an international behaviour programme) team to offer professional development that is specialised to the programme being run in the school.

" Having the ability to enter the data into eTAP and talk about that as a staff ... [we notice that] there might be some flashpoints – it might be at morning tea, or the transition back in after lunch – and then we can put things into place as a staff around that. "

PRINCIPAL

c) Ensuring teachers are skilled in and supported to implement evidence-based behaviour strategies

It's likely that different staff members may have diverse views about what the best approach is for managing behaviour. School leaders must clearly articulate a whole-school behaviour management approach and take deliberate steps to build shared understanding and consistent practice across all staff and all classrooms. This might include training, observation, modelling, and reflection opportunities for teachers and teacher aides. Without strong leadership to ensure clear, shared understandings and practices across all staff, students can experience inconsistent practice which then has a negative impact on learning and behaviour.

Real-life strategies

We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well...

Holding a workshop day for teachers run by the Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour service (RTLB). RTLB provides practical behaviour management strategies and help teachers develop their own plans for managing their students.

We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well...

Carrying information from professional development through to syndicate/team meetings. Teachers told us that it is effective to review and share during smaller team meetings, where there are more opportunities for discussion.

Having a 'go-to' staff member who has specific responsibility for supporting behaviour. For example, a PB4L coach or a specialist class teacher who supports other teachers who are having difficulty with behaviour management.

Having a clear, stepped process for supporting staff in response to stressful events. In one of the schools we visited the process looked like this:

1)   talk with teaching colleagues during a team meeting
2)   talk privately with the team leader
3)   team leader talks to deputy principal
4)   deputy principal consults senior leadership team.

4) Good practice example

The leadership team in this primary school has put effort into embedding a consistent approach to behavioural management across the school. The school has well-documented behaviour management procedures that teachers regularly look to for guidance. The document uses consistent language and includes suggested consequences and praise for certain behaviours.

> "This is quite concise... a really good document to follow... It's the consistency. If they're in my room... [or] another teacher's room. They know if they've been working really well and they've really pushed themselves, they're most likely going to get a token for that. So I think it's really good. It's consistent no matter what teacher is going to be dealing with it."
>
> **TEACHER**

This school makes use of data to track behaviour trends. Leaders note which weeks tend to have the most behaviour incidents, what types of incidents these are, which students are involved, and how frequently these students behave poorly. The data is presented in graph form. Teachers take time to analyse the data during meetings and discuss potential solutions as a group, ensuring a shared plan of action. The school also compares this data to past years to see if a negative trend is developing.

> "From that we can establish hotspots and whether we need an extra duty teacher or a place to watch out for, or a [particular] child."
>
> **TEACHER**

5) Reflective questions

These questions are for leaders and teachers to consider, individually or in a team discussion.

→ *Does our school have a set of current behaviour expectations, policies, and procedures in place? Do we know whether these reflect classroom practice consistently?*

→ *Do we have our 'finger on the pulse' and know what the behaviour situation is like across the school? How often do we look at behaviour data to identify trends/patterns and what we need to do to address them?*

→ *How well supported are staff in dealing with behaviour issues? Do they know what to do? How consistent is our practice?*

→ *What opportunities are staff given to talk about and reflect on behaviour in their classrooms? What about opportunities for students?*

Practice area 3: Use strategies in the classroom to support expected behaviour (proactive)

This practice area is about teachers setting up their classroom for positive behaviour. Effective classroom management reduces challenging behaviour and student disengagement, which is linked to improved attendance and higher student achievement.

When this is going well, teachers set up clear behavioural expectations and refer to them often. They also carefully design the physical classroom environment and routines to support learning.

In this section, we set out why it is important to use proactive strategies in the classroom that support expected behaviour. We also offer practical guidance on how teachers can build this area of their own practice.

Overview of this section

This part of the report sets out useful information about how teachers can use strategies in the classroom to support expected behaviour. It includes:

1) what this practice area is

2) why this is important

3) what good practice looks like in real life

4) good practice example

5) reflective questions.

1) What is this practice area?

Classroom strategies for managing behaviour start with setting high behavioural expectations and clear, logical consequences for challenging behaviour. These are developed and implemented with students, documented, discussed often, and consistently applied.

The physical environment and classroom routines are carefully designed to align with agreed expectations, supporting focused and on-task behaviour. This might include having interesting 'arrival tasks' to get students engaged as soon as they enter the classroom or when giving specific behaviour-related praise throughout the lesson. Visual reminders, like posters or charts, remind students of expectations in the classroom and can be used as a tool to support student self-management.

The key practices discussed in this section are:

a) developing and implementing with students a set of class behavioural expectations and consequences

b) establishing and reinforcing clear and consistent class routines that are taught from day one

c) organising the layout of the classroom to support positive behaviour

d) giving specific praise and incentives for positive behaviour throughout lessons

e) displaying visual aids about expected behaviours around the classroom.

2) Why is this important?

Effective classroom strategies reduce challenging behaviour and lead to improved achievement, better attendance, and a more purposeful learning climate.[13] They do this by supporting positive learning and social behaviours that align with the core values of the school.[14] The classroom environment – including the rules and expectations within that environment – is a powerful tool for discouraging challenging behaviour and encouraging focused learning.

Having solid routines in place for actions like borrowing materials and working with others also promotes a calm, well-ordered classroom environment.[15] It is important that students are explicitly taught how these routines look, through teachers describing, modelling, and providing helpful feedback for students.[16] Even simple strategies, like greeting each student at the door or altering the classroom layout, can have a powerful impact on behaviour and achievement.[17]

Teachers offering specific praise or rewards to students for positive behaviour increases the chances of students showing them. Praise and incentives are particularly important and effective for students who often get corrective feedback, or who experience punishment outside of school.[18] Praise and incentives are an effective part of a wider school strategy and culture of valuing positive behaviours.

Practice Area 3

3) What does good practice look like in real life?

The key practices that we focus on are:

a) developing and implementing with students a set of class behavioural expectations and consequences

b) establishing and reinforcing clear and consistent class routines that are taught from day one

c) organising the layout of the classroom to support positive behaviour

d) giving specific praise and incentives for positive behaviour throughout lessons

e) displaying visual aids about expected behaviours around the classroom.

It is important to think about which of these will be the right fit for your particular school or classroom.

a) Developing and implementing with students a set of class behavioural expectations and consequences

Expectations around behaviour and consequences are most effective when students have been involved in the process of developing them and *agreeing* to them. Good quality classroom expectations focus on supporting positive learning and social behaviours, and are worded in ways that everyone can understand and remember. They should also align with the core values of the school and wider school community, usually documented in the school charter.[19]

Discussions about expectations should include agreed ways of behaving as well the potential consequences of behaviours: positive consequences for positive behaviours, and corrective consequences for negative behaviours.

Real-life strategies

We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well…
Communicating what to expect for classroom behaviour management strategies to students *before* school starts. This means teachers can spend more time focussing on classwork, and less on managing behaviour and developing expectations.
Explicitly teaching the behaviour expectations and going through them with students. One school we visited had a goal of students being able to recite their expectations off by heart.
Training the class on how to respond to certain escalated behaviours. We heard that this is an effective way of managing the class and keeping a sense of predictability during an extreme behaviour incident.
Asking students about their expectations for good classroom behaviour. We heard that students are more responsive to rules when they feel they have contributed to those expectations.

We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well...

Having students sign an agreement with their teacher where they commit to following the behaviour expectations. In one school we visited, a teacher created a 'treaty' which is signed by students and then sent to their parents and whānau. This helps students feel accountable for their actions, which encourages self-management. We heard that the clearer the description of each behaviour expectation, the more easily students can follow them.

> "We always start our year with ... [our values]. We do it our way at each school. We spend the first seven weeks teaching around our school values [and] forming a class treaty with each other."
>
> **TEACHER**

b) Establishing and reinforcing clear and consistent class routines that are taught from day one

Classroom behaviour expectations should be supported by a set of clear and consistent class routines that set students up for success. Having routines in place for actions like borrowing materials, transitioning between activities or spaces, and collaborating with others creates a calm, well-ordered learning environment.[20]

These expectations and routines have the greatest impact when they are explicitly taught in the first few classes, and then regularly revisited.[21] Explicit teaching includes the teacher describing, modelling, and providing helpful feedback for students.[22] For younger students, role-playing and 'thinking aloud' (where the teacher explains their thinking as they practise a particular routine) are helpful ways of modelling the behaviours that will best support focussed learning.

Real-life strategies

We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well...

Displaying a class timetable for the day. We heard that using visual displays and organisers to show students what they are learning and what they will be doing next helps students feel in control and stay motivated.

Starting all classes with a revision activity to allow students to settle in. We heard that this is an effective routine for getting students ready for new learning.

Having students line up outside classrooms. The teacher then invites them in and greets them.

Having two minutes of silence after the lunch break. We heard that this has a calming effect, helping get students settled and ready to focus.

c) Organising the layout of the classroom to support positive behaviour

The layout of the classroom plays a vital role in supporting positive behaviour. It can help promote learning and pro-social behaviour, by providing clarity about which spaces are for independent work, collaboration, or accessing learning devices.[23]

The classroom should be organised to encourage collaboration between students where appropriate, while also considering how the layout influences certain behaviours, like being distracted by friends. It can also be useful to have quieter spaces in the classroom for students to go to self-regulate or calm down.[24]

> "Usually if we need it there'd be a breakout space. It might be a designated library area, depending on the makeup of the class, it can sometimes be a tent or a single desk. For some children who can't work next to a particular child or for certain kids, it might be wobbly seats or cushions or certain sensory items that might help them with their learning or feel settled and safe."
>
> **TEACHER**

Real-life strategies

We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well…
Setting aside time at a teacher-only day at the start of the year for teachers to set up their classrooms. This dedicated time supports teachers to focus on a *deliberate* classroom set-up.
Organising desks into groupings rather than lines. This encourages robust discussions about schoolwork, as well as the development of learning behaviour.
Allocating seats. One school we talked to found it effective to involve the students in this process. One school we spoke to found it useful to get information from students' previous schools about who works well together.
Having sticky dots on the mat for each student to sit on (colours or names on dots). We heard that in primary school settings, this helps young students to feel 'special' about carefully assigned seating arrangements.
Having breakout spaces or tables for students to use flexibly, at appropriate times. These can be useful for independent activities and small group work.
Having revolving seating plans for junior secondary classes. We heard that this can be a good way to encourage collaboration and positive behaviour among Year 9-10 students who are new to the school. Revolving seating can also be optional, for example for students that require more predictability.

> **We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well...**
>
> **Providing 'calming spaces' for when students are feeling overwhelmed.** One primary school we visited has weighted toys and teddy bears in these spaces. Teachers set clear expectations around how this space is to be used and the choices that are available for students in the space.

d) Giving specific praise and incentives for positive behaviour throughout lessons

Classroom behaviour expectations aren't just about what *not* to do. Good quality expectations set out what positive behaviours are expected and valued in their school. This way, teachers and students have a clear shared understanding of 'good' behaviours which can then be reinforced by teachers.

Effective teacher praise focuses on what a student has done, has attempted to do, or is currently doing. Incentives are more 'future focused' and communicate positive expectations and a belief that students can get better. Teachers can offer specific praise or a reward to students after the desired behaviour has occurred, to increase the chances of students showing these positive behaviours in the future. This is particularly important and effective for students who tend to get corrective feedback, or who experience punishment outside of school.[25] Incentives might include rewards like letting students choose their own seats.[26]

> " Students a few times a year get awarded … an award for their effort and seeing progress throughout the year. So it's not just for those students that are top scholars, but seeing the hard work and what the mahi can actually achieve. "
>
> **DEAN**

Real–life strategies

> **We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well...**
>
> **Telling students at the start of the day what good things/values teachers are looking out for that day.** We heard that having clear expectations for each day gives the students a clear focus and motivation for positive behaviour.
>
> **Offering students specific feedback and feedforward for behaviour, as well as for their schoolwork.** This communicates positive expectations for both areas, and signals to students that they are both important. We heard that it also helps students to reflect on what went well yesterday and what needs to be focused on the next day.

We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well…

Linking praise with student goals. We heard that being able to see their progress and achievements encourages students to keep improving their behaviour.

Using tokens, school badges, certificates, or wrist bands as part of a rewards system. We heard that this gives students a sense of pride for their good behaviour and helps teachers keep track of how students are going. One school we visited places tokens near the principal's office. Whenever a student earn a token, the principal asks what the student did, and praises them for their achievement. This strategy has the added benefit of helping the principal build positive relationships with students.

Using a house system with house points, house leaders, and other leadership opportunities. Students earn house points by showing good behaviour.

Developing incentive plans and charts. If completed, the students earn a reward at the end of the day, like a game. This gives students a goal to work towards and encourages consistently positive behaviour throughout the day.

> "We also have our [school awards], which is a school wide system, and that's around acknowledging positive behaviour and that's linked to our house system."
>
> **PRINCIPAL**

e) Displaying visual aids about expected behaviours around the classroom

Clearly displaying expectations in the classroom allows the teacher to easily refer to them and supports students to develop self-management skills through referring to them independently.[27] There is also value in displaying other visual supports, like key messages and reminders about classroom timetables and routines.[28]

Real-life strategies

We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well…

Encouraging students to refer to posters about behaviour expectations as a way to hold themselves accountable. Teachers and students can refer to these posters when correcting or affirming behaviour. We heard that this is an effective way of encouraging students to become more aware of their own behaviour, and that it helps when students know that their behaviour is being noticed by their classmates.

We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well...

Having flow charts or flip charts which show how to behave during certain activities or tasks. For example, expectations for positive debate during group tasks.

Using emotion visuals. In one school, students move their printed names next to a picture that represents the emotion they are feeling. This strategy can be particularly effective for students who are not confident at communicating verbally. In another school, students use a flow chart they have created together on ways to get back to a more positive emotional 'zone.'

4) Good practice example

This secondary school gives teachers time to set up their classrooms before the school year begins. The principal told us how important it is, especially in the junior part of the school, that the classroom is a 'welcoming space' for students to set them up for the learning ahead.

The school's expectations around uniform, devices, and behaviour are clearly written in the front of students' school diaries. All teachers go through these expectations with their students at the start of the year. Having expectations clearly recorded like this means parents and whānau can easily access them.

> "...The diary is the basis, sort of golden rule. And we always would go back to the diary."
>
> **STUDENT SUPPORT DIRECTOR**

Teachers carefully plan how they group students together in class. Students do a lot of collaborative work, so teachers need to know who works well together and who does not. They note that one issue with having students pick their own groups is that some students end up being left out or isolated. A well-constructed seating plan mitigates this.

> "Teachers can make sure that that groups that work well together are put together and that students that don't work well together are not. So that is something that we do across the board."
>
> **PRINCIPAL**

Practice Area 3

The school's expectations are regularly revisited at staff meetings and school assemblies.

> "That's in writing in there for them to see. And we have policies that are available for all of them to be able to view."
>
> **PRINCIPAL**

If teachers notice a particular issue arising, for example uniform standards slipping, then it is made a focus of the next school assembly.

Homeroom teachers have the flexibility to develop their own classroom rules – as long as they are linked to the school's overarching expectations. Five or six times a term on a Thursday, homeroom teachers spend an hour with their students focussing on teaching students positive behaviours. For example, one positive behaviour included 'not being a bystander,' and telling a teacher if you see unacceptable behaviour. These times also offer teachers a chance to get to know their students better and develop a rapport with them.

> "We found [it] has been invaluable, especially for me as the dean... We use [these classes] more as a resilience programme to try and get the students to make decisions about their behaviour."
>
> **DEAN/TEACHER**

5) Reflective questions

These questions are for leaders and teachers to consider, individually or in a team discussion.

→ *Does each class have a set of behaviour expectations and consequences, and do students know about these and understand them?*

→ *How do we reinforce behaviour expectations with students and make them more visible to students? Do we refer to them regularly, or just every now and then?*

→ *What do routines look like in the classroom? Are they regular and well-structured and predictable? How purposeful is the layout of our classrooms?*

→ *Is praise for students useful and specific (e.g. "I really like the way you...") or vague (e.g. "Good job")? Do all students get praised?*

→ *Is there an incentive system in place for positive, on-task behaviours? How do we keep track of how often different students are rewarded? Are there some that we miss?*

Practice area 4: Teach learning behaviours alongside managing challenging behaviour (proactive and reactive)

This practice area is about explicitly teaching and reinforcing behaviours which help students to focus on their work.

When this is going well, rules and routines are well established. Students are well supported to self-regulate their behaviour and work together effectively in class, and teachers spend less class time on managing challenging behaviour.

In this section, we set out why it is important that teachers deliberately teach students to adopt learning behaviours, alongside managing challenging behaviour. We also offer practical guidance on how teachers can build this area of their own practice.

Overview of this section

This part of the report sets out useful information about how teachers can teach learning behaviours alongside managing challenging behaviour. It includes:

1) what this practice area is

2) why this is important

3) what good practice looks like in real life

4) good practice example

5) reflective questions.

1) What is this practice area?

This practice area involves explicitly teaching students positive classroom behaviours like listening to instructions, working well with classmates, monitoring their own behaviour, and persisting with classroom tasks. Setting students up with positive learning behaviours reduces the need to manage challenging behaviour, ensuring that all students are able to engage in class work and achieve in school.

Practice Area 4

What are learning behaviours?

A 'learning behaviour' is any *behaviour* that supports *learning*, including behaviours like paying attention to the teacher, getting along with classmates, and being focused during class.[29]

Teachers can help students to develop learning behaviours by working to ensure that all students in the class can access the curriculum, engage with lesson content, and participate fully in lessons.[30] Learning behaviours are supported by positive social behaviours that encourage cooperation, strengthen student engagement, have a positive impact on learning.[31] Teachers can encourage these by modelling self-regulation, and providing specific feedback to students that prompts them to regulate their own behaviour.[32] This can also include teaching metacognitive strategies (encouraging students to understand how they think and learn), which supports self-regulation.[33]

In some cases, students may display disruptive or challenging behaviour because the work is too difficult, or they don't have the appropriate scaffolding or support.[34] It's also useful to keep in mind that being well-behaved does not necessarily mean students are actually engaging with the content of the lesson (also known as being 'passively disengaged'). Teachers may need to use a targeted approach for individual students.

The key practices discussed in this section are:

a) using classroom teaching practices that promote focused learning

b) providing opportunities to learn positive social behaviours with peers

c) coaching and prompting students to regulate their own behaviour.

2) Why is this important?

Teaching and reinforcing learning behaviours reduces the need to manage challenging behaviour. This is because the more engaged and motivated students are, the less likely they are to behave poorly, and the less time teachers need to spend managing behaviour.[35] Once learning behaviours are well-embedded in the classroom, teachers can focus more on teaching planned lessons, rather than responding to behaviour issues. Learning behaviours are key to academic achievement across all students in the class.[36]

3) What does good practice look like in real life?

The key practices that we focus on are:

a) using classroom teaching practices that promote focused learning

b) providing opportunities to learn positive social behaviours with peers

c) coaching and prompting students to regulate their own behaviour.

It is important to think about which of these will be the right fit for your particular school or classroom.

a) Using classroom teaching practices that promote focused learning

Ensuring that classes are well-paced and motivating, and that classwork is not too difficult or too easy for students, reduces the likelihood that they will become disengaged and behave poorly. It is helpful when students have a stake in, and feel in control of, their learning. During lessons, teachers can check in on the level of focused learning by, for example, asking 'check-for-understanding questions,' or looking out for signs of passive disengagement like tapping fingers on the table, off-topic discussions, or playing with a pen.[37]

Real-life strategies

We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well...
Having multiple teaching spaces around the classroom. Teachers at one school we visited spend time during lessons 'roving' around the classroom and interacting with different groups of students, to monitor and support on-task behaviour.
Talking quietly. We heard that this is an effective way to calm down the 'atmosphere' of the classroom, and set the tone for focused work.
'Chunking work' into small, achievable pieces with brain breaks. We heard that this is more effective in some classrooms than having students work for long periods without breaks. It also helps students to better measure their progress and self-regulate as they work through a task.
Engaging in discussions, feedback, and surveys with students about topics they are interested in learning more about. Including student voice helps teachers choose topics that get students engaged and focussed on their learning. For example, in one classroom the teacher brainstorms with students on the whiteboard about topics they would be interested in. The teacher collates this information before deciding the best topic to focus on, based on students' interests and what would work best within the curriculum.
Finding the 'Goldilocks zone'[38] where work is not too hard and not too easy. This is about finding the right level of challenge for students, where is a task is not so easy that they get bored, but also not too hard for them to engage at all. Teachers check that they have the right 'zone' by monitoring the class for signs of disengagement.

> "[I] worked with a group of boys that were so disengaged in their writing. But as soon as I introduced robotics, a purpose for their writing, all of a sudden the engagement completely turned around. And same with younger ones. I mean, we were writing stories and you introduce a picture of Pokemon or a rugby player that they follow, that engagement changes. So it's just being aware of the interests."
>
> **RTLB PROVIDER**

> "The same class can be beautifully behaved in maths class, beautifully behaved in art, and then their behaviour is appalling in English or P.E.…. So some of the challenge is about teaching and pedagogy."
>
> **EXPERT**

b) Providing opportunities to learn positive social behaviours with peers

Classes that encourage cooperation between students have a positive impact on learning. In a cooperative classroom environment, students teach and learn from each other, and are confident to bring their own knowledge and experiences to a task.[39] The teacher is deliberate in assigning peers or groups based on the needs and dynamics of their students. Collaborative work encourages positive social behaviours, strengthens student engagement, and increases achievement.[40]

Some students find it hard to work well with others, and some activities trigger disruptive behaviour. These students benefit from a learning environment that celebrates positive social behaviours and celebrates 'collective success'.[41] In some cases, these students require more targeted action – see practice area 6 of this report.

Real-life strategies

We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well…
Explicitly teaching students social skills. Key social skills include working together, respecting self and others, and contributing to a group task. Teachers in primary schools find it valuable to use resources like role-playing scripts, books, and stories to teach social expectations and social skills.
Identifying a group of 'model students' or 'student leaders'. These are students who display positive behaviours, whom other students can look to.
Introducing a buddy system. This encourages classmates to work together, and have their collaborative learning skills.

> **We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well…**
>
> **Having senior students lead school events and mentor younger students.** Strategies include peer support programmes, or a 'tuakana-teina' approach with younger students having a senior 'buddy' or mentor. We heard that this develops senior students' leadership skills and benefits younger students through a positive example.
>
> **Having scheduled 'circle time' to unpack issues.** This is a chance for students to discuss things with their teacher and classmates in an open setting.

c) Coaching and prompting students to regulate their own behaviour

Students who can self-regulate have learnt resilience, self-control, and how to manage their emotional responses to stressful situations, such as another student's disruptive behaviour. They are aware of their own behaviour and potential consequences for challenging behaviour. Self-regulation helps students to focus on their own learning, rather than distracting – or being distracted by – others in the class.

Students learn behaviours by observing their classmates. For example, if they see their peers behaving poorly as a way of getting what they want (e.g. by whining or being aggressive), this is likely to influence their own behaviour.[42] Teachers can make a difference by setting clear and consistent expectations, modelling self-regulation, and providing specific feedback to their students that prompts them to regulate their own behaviour and responses.[43]

Real-life strategies

> **We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well…**
>
> **Using 'zones of regulation' to allow students to identify their emotions that affect behaviour, reflect on them, and communicate with others.** One school has a wall display with various emotions written on it. Students place their name next to the emotion they are feeling. We heard that this is effective for encouraging students to be aware of how their emotions impact their behaviour, and also informs the teacher if they need to intervene.
>
> **Asking students to deliver a message across the school.** Teachers told us that this physical activity is a good way to calm students down after behaving poorly and give them something new to focus on.
>
> **Having a designated area in the classroom or school where students can sit and 'cool off'.** We heard that this is an effective way of deescalating disagreements. One school we visited gives students the choice about when they are ready to re-engage.

Practice Area 4

We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well...

Having a 'sensory room' for students that are overwhelmed. We heard that this is a good strategy for overstimulated students, and particularly effective when use proactively (before behaviour escalates).

Having a check-in with students later on after an incident. This helps to give students time to process what happened in an incident before talking about it. In one school, staff use a written 'check-in sheet' which is then made available to all teachers and senior staff.

Holding 'restorative practice' conversations to restore relationships between students. These conversations support students to understand the impact their actions can have on others, and encourages them to improve their behaviour.

Including a reflection activity during detention/punishment, such as writing apology letters. This encourages students to reflect on their challenging behaviour with a clear head.

4) Good practice example

Teachers in this primary school provide classroom environments that purposefully encourage on-task behaviour. During class time, there are multiple workstations with a range of different activities. Students self-manage their workload using 'graphic organisers' on the classroom walls which show which activities to go to next. This practice prevents students becoming disengaged and prone to challenging behaviour.

> "Working all around at different stations, [students] are all engaged, they're all moving because they've all got work that's targeted at their level. They talk about success criteria. They talk about 'what does good work look like?'"
>
> **PRINCIPAL**

This school facilitates positive social connections between students by having buddies, peer tutors, and several student leadership groups. Buddies are selected by staff. Teachers have found that older students who behaved poorly in the past can benefit from the responsibility of being a 'buddy' for younger students.

> "We set up an older student who was really struggling with behaviour but related really well to the little dudes. So he became… [their] big buddy."
>
> **PRINCIPAL**

If a student needs to calm down, one strategy teachers use is to get them to be a 'runner' and carry out assorted tasks around the school.

> "It's literally giving them a piece of paper and then they run around the school to give it to the teacher… [in] the furthest away part of the school… Running there and running back is sometimes enough time that they just feel like they're… de-stressing a little bit and they can come back in or they can just sit quietly before they come back in again."
>
> **DEPUTY PRINCIPAL**

5) Reflective questions

These questions are for leaders and teachers to consider, individually or in a team discussion.

→ *Do we regularly check on all students during class time, for example asking how they are going with a particular task? Are all students engaged and focused?*

→ *How are our students' social skills and self-regulation skills? How can we support them to develop these skills to better focus when learning alongside their classmates?*

→ *Do we give students the opportunity to calm down and then reflect on behaviour incidents? Do we make time to have a debrief or check in with them?*

Practice Area 4

Practice area 5: Respond effectively to challenging behaviour (reactive)

This practice area is about teachers responding to challenging behaviour when it occurs, with evidence-based practices. This involves teachers having a range of strategies and the confidence to make good decisions about what response is needed.

When this is going well, teachers have clear planned responses for incidents of challenging behaviour ranging from corrective feedback to larger-scale logical consequences.

In this section, we set out why it is important for teachers to respond effectively to challenging behaviour, and offer practical guidance on strategies teachers can use to build this area of their own practice.

Overview of this section

This part of the report sets out useful information about how teachers can respond effectively to challenging behaviour. It includes:

1) what this practice area is

2) why this is important

3) what good practice looks like in real life

4) good practice example

5) reflective questions.

1) What is this practice area?

This practice area is about teachers being well prepared and feeling confident to respond effectively to challenging behaviour. Having a set of pre-planned responses for common behaviours means teachers can respond efficiently and effectively, preventing the behaviour from escalating. There is a range of responses that teachers can use, ranging from low-level (e.g. corrective feedback) to high-level responses (e.g. logical consequences).

The key practices discussed in this section are:

a) planning responses to common and frequent behaviours in advance

b) responding appropriately using relevant strategies, including:
- corrective feedback
- reminders ('warning' at secondary school level)
- redirections
- logical consequences.

2) Why is this important?

Occasional challenging behaviour will occur in even in the most well-organised classroom environments. This means that teachers need to be prepared to respond to challenging behaviour, alongside embedding good-quality behaviour expectations and preventative practices. Without immediate and appropriate responses from teachers, challenging behaviours can quickly escalate and present risks to students and school staff.[44]

For less serious behaviours, structured feedback from teachers helps students develop better self-management skills. In the same way that teachers may provide feedback for students' classwork, feedback around behaviour has the best effect when it:[45]

→ is timely and given as soon after the behaviour incident as possible

→ is given as calmly and privately as possible

→ is linked to the school's behaviour expectations

→ starts with what the student does well, and what they should do differently to avoid a future incident.

For more serious or recurring behaviours, it's most effective to enforce logical consequences that reinforce agreed rules and expectations, are proportional to the student's behaviour, and support all students to know what behaviour is expected at school. Logical consequences should reflect agreed schoolwide practices.[46]

After some incidents, students may need to be given time to 'cool off' and reflect. During reflection, students focus on the impacts of their behaviour, and what might have triggered them. This allows students to better understand their triggers and strategies they can use to better self-manage their behaviour in the future.

3) What does good practice look like in real life?

The key practices that we focus on are:

a) planning responses to common and frequent behaviours in advance

b) responding appropriately using relevant strategies, including:

- — corrective feedback
- — reminders ('warning' at secondary school level)
- — redirections
- — logical consequences.

a) Planning responses to common and frequent behaviours in advance

While some behaviours can't be predicted, teachers will often notice patterns emerging in the behaviours that occur in their classroom. Where there are predictable types of challenging behaviour, teachers can draw on their experiences to plan out an effective approach going forward.[47] Identifying the best strategies to use ahead of time is more likely to lead to behavioral change in students.[48]

Real-life strategies

We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well…

Developing a school-wide book that lists the responses and consequences for different behaviours. Teachers add in new behaviours as they occur and the consequences that are used. One school also uses this book to document behaviour incidents.

Having senior leadership respond to students. Teachers told us that one of the most effective responses to a serious incident or highly challenging students is to involve someone from the senior leadership team.

Using humour when possible. We heard that this is effective tool for defusing situations.

> "I just use a lot of humour for deflection away from an issue… praising someone else up and turning it into something funny and then that issue is forgotten about and the tension is back where it should be."
>
> **TEACHER**

Developing a flow chart of how to respond to behaviours that sets out when to escalate to a higher level. This is something teachers look to regularly for guidance to support them to respond to challenging behaviour more efficiently and consistently.

> **We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well...**
>
> **Debriefing with colleagues after a behaviour event, and brainstorming responses as a group.** Teachers we talked to spend time reflecting on how they have responded to incidents in the past. This helps them to feel more prepared for future events.

b) Responding appropriately using relevant strategies

→ Corrective feedback

→ Reminders ('warning' at secondary school level)

→ Redirections

→ Logical consequences

Strategies can range from low-level responses (e.g. reminding a student of the behaviour expectations), to higher level responses, (e.g. meeting with parents and whānau to develop individualised plans). Where there are repeat incidents of challenging behaviour, teachers and leaders should work together to implement higher level systems for responding, that link in with agreed schoolwide practices.[49]

Real-life strategies

> **We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well...**
>
> **Using a warning system with three strikes.** One secondary school uses coloured cards to deliver these warnings, so students are clear about each escalation. This school's three strikes are: a verbal warning, a quiet chat with teacher, a dean's referral.
>
> **Using a calm tone of voice, low volume, and facial expressions to communicate subtly with students.** Teachers told us that something as simple as raising an eyebrow can be enough signal to students that they need to pay attention. This conveys strength and helps teachers to set the tone of the classroom.
>
> **Having discreet conversations with students.** Teachers told us that being quiet but firm with a student is more effective than telling them off in front of the whole class. Teachers also use these conversations to remind students of agreed school/classroom behaviour expectations.
>
> **Designing consequences for students around giving back to school and making up for any harm.** For example, in one school we visited, students have the opportunity to choose from a small range of agreed consequences.
>
> **Debriefing with students after an incident.** We heard that this is an effective way to draw a line under the incident.

Practice Area 5

Short story: Clear planning for consequences

An intermediate school has published a structured behaviour management plan, which is well-known and available to all school staff and parents and whānau. This plan lays out clear escalations and consequences for different challenging behaviours.

> "I'm very clear with the parents and whānau that we have reflective steps… We don't go punitive straight away. We have a levelled approach to it, and I think we've got quite a bit of buy-in from them since we brought that in about three years ago."
>
> **PRINCIPAL**

4) Good practice example

All teachers in this large urban primary school use a flow chart to guide them on how to respond to behaviours and when to escalate to a higher level. The flow chart is on the wall in every classroom, and sets out the procedures for dealing with behaviour – assessing how serious it is, and then moving through a restorative process. It is designed to align with the PB4L programme they have at the school. The principal told us that the flow chart ensures "that [each] student is getting some consistent management."

Leaders and teachers monitor students after behaviour incidents. If the students involved are still upset about what happened the next day, then the principal will invite them to come and debrief in the principal's office. The principal notes that talking through what happened is an effective way to resolve any remaining issues.

> "[If students] feel like it's an injustice, then I'll always invite them to come back at morning tea and sit. We sit together and we can talk about what actually happened, then… some will even take the opportunity and come back again at lunchtime just to clear it from their head. But… [they're] far better. They take home a clear mind [rather] than… one that's loaded."
>
> **PRINCIPAL**

5) Reflective questions

These questions are for leaders and teachers to consider, individually or in a team discussion.

→ *How do we respond to more challenging behaviours when we have used up all proactive strategies? Are our responses effective?*

→ *Do we know what to do if a student's behaviour escalates or starts to get out of hand? Are we prepared with a plan in place?*

→ *Who can we go to on the staff if a student's behaviour is becoming really challenging?*

→ *Are we flexible in how we respond to different behaviours, or do all students get the same response regardless of their actions? How could we implement a wider range of logical strategies and consequences?*

Practice area 6: Use targeted approaches to meet the individual needs of students (reactive)

This practice area is about responding to behaviour by using targeted, individualised approaches to respond to challenging behaviour when it occurs.

When this is going well, teachers are able to adapt their practices to more effectively manage students with more severe challenging behaviour. They also develop useful plans for managing the behaviour of these students in collaboration with their parents and whānau, other school staff, and outside experts if required.

In this section, we set out why some students benefit from targeted reactive approaches and offer practical guidance on how teachers can build this area of their practice.

Overview of this section

This part of the report sets out useful information about how teachers and leaders can use targeted approaches to meet the individual needs of students. It includes:

1) what this practice area is

2) why this is important

3) what good practice looks like in real life

4) good practice example

5) reflective questions.

1) What is this practice area?

Targeted approaches are intended for students with the most challenging behaviour. Leaders and teachers work with experts, and parents and whānau, to plan and implement specific strategies for individual students, that align with the whole-school behaviour management approach. Students will often be involved in the process of developing their own plans.

There are a range of behaviour support available to schools in Aotearoa New Zealand which should be accessed when typical behaviour management strategies are not effective. Schools can draw on expertise from RTLB, Social Workers in Schools (SWIS), counsellors, and through funding programmes such as the interim response fund and Te Kahu Tōi: Intensive Wraparound Service, and other supports.[50]

The key practices discussed in this section are:

a) adapting approaches to individual needs, for students with more challenging behaviour

b) planning with school staff, the student, their parents and whānau, and others (as required) to address and respond to extreme or persistent behaviour

c) getting expert help when required.

2) Why is this important?

A school's usual approach to behaviour management is designed to prevent and respond to the majority of behaviours in a school, but may be insufficient to meet the needs of the most challenging students. In these cases, a school's clear expectations and norms around behaviour should form the backbone of a more targeted approach to behaviour management for these individual students.[51]

Targeted approaches are most effective when tailored to students' needs and the context in which their behaviour is most likely to occur (e.g. during a particular class, activity, or time in the day).[52] When designing targeted approaches, schools also need to consider influences in students' lives from outside of school.[53] For this reason, it is effective to include parents and whānau, the student themselves and relevant health/psychological professionals in the development of the plan. This allows teachers to match their response with underlying causes and influences on that student's behaviour (see practice area 1 of this report for more about knowing and understanding students and their influences).[54]

In cases of extremely challenging behaviour, a targeted approach implemented by experts or specially trained teachers is required, to ensure practices are effective.[55]

> "You've got to look at what's underneath the behaviour and what's causing it … [the behaviour is] just one part of the puzzle. It's not going to change the behaviour if we haven't figured out that the behaviour is actually like. … It's just going to come back."
>
> **PSYCHIATRIST**

Teachers and leaders should work together to ensure that targeted approaches are not perceived by others to give differential treatment to, or lower behaviour expectations for, any one student.[56] This is important for reinforcing strong schoolwide expectations.

3) What does good practice look like in real life?

The key practices that we focus on are:

a) adapting approaches to individual needs, for students with more challenging behaviour

b) planning with school staff, the student, their parents and whānau, and others (as required) to address and respond to extreme and persistent behaviour

c) getting expert help when required.

a) Adapting approaches to individual needs, for students with more challenging behaviour

There is strong evidence that having the flexibility to adapt behaviour management strategies to students' individual needs has more of an impact than a one-size-fits-all approach.[57] The needs of more challenging students require more planning, especially for school events like camp or sports days. This planning is not only for the particular student, but also to guide adults and staff who may be involved with the event. When designing targeted approaches, schools need to consider the needs of the individual students, and the context in which their behaviour is most likely to occur (e.g. during a particular class activity or time in the day).[58]

Real-life strategies

We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well…
Using safety plans for high-risk students which lay out clear protocols. When this works well, each staff member is aware of and has access to the plan. We heard that it's helpful if each plan includes a photo of the student so that they can be easily identified by all staff.
Creating 'transition sheets' which provide information about students when they change classes or schools. This informs school staff about students' behavioural needs, and helps schools adapt their behavioural approaches when they need to.
Including students in the development of their behaviour management plan. We heard that inviting students to join planning meetings, or contribute to planning through one-on-one conversations with a trusted staff member, can make them feel more involved and more likely to follow the plan.
Seeking mentor support for extreme challenging behaviour. In one school, a mentor for a Māori student takes part in cultural activities with them, which supports their relationship-building outside of a 'teacher-student' dynamic.

> **We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well…**
>
> **Using functional assessments to understand students' behaviour.** These involve teachers reflecting on behaviour incidents through completing a 'function of behaviour' report. These support teachers to look at why the student was acting in a certain way, and helps them build their understanding of the individual behaviour – and reflect on the best response for next time.

> "[We] have a Year 9 boy that's had some challenging behaviour this year. What has worked has been getting his teachers together and sharing with them all the student's aspirations and their… aspirations for his future. And teachers have been able to see the person rather than the problem. And that's… been quite transformative in their relationships with him and… his behaviour in class."
>
> **RTLB PROVIDER**

b) Planning with school staff, the student, their parents and whānau, and others (as required) to address and respond to extreme or persistent behaviour

Students with a history of extreme or persistent behaviour benefit from an explicit documented, in-depth behaviour management plan to help teachers to address and respond to incidents.

To ensure that the plan is robust, the evidence says that the process of designing it must:

→ be collaborative, with an effective partnership between parents and whānau, teachers, leaders, and experts as required

→ empower the student and includes their voice wherever possible. This could be through having them present while the plan is being developed

→ consider the student's successes and their challenges

→ build a support team around the student and their teacher(s) and ensure every one engaging with the student understands the plan and what is expected of them

→ ensure that the school's decisions are based on evidence supported by data and not just 'intuition or experience'.[59]

This plan should guide strategies to prevent behaviour incidents from occurring (proactive), as well as strategies for managing an incident if it does occur (reactive).

> "We've put together a positive learning support plan and behavior support plan for him. And he signed it off. The parents signed it off. We were all on the same page and there was really clear expectations of this is what you do, this is the consequence."
>
> **LEARNING SUPPORT COORDINATOR**

> "[Behaviour planning meetings] can't just be about adults brain-dumping what's wrong – it's got to start with the young person. Ask them. Start with them. What do they say they need? If we apply a plan, but they haven't been there in the planning bit, why would they take it on board?"
>
> **EXPERT**

Real-life strategies

We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well…
Developing a home-school behaviour book. These are used to keep up regular communication between parents and whānau and the school. One school's books for more challenging students go between home and school each day, with details of the students' behaviour, and any important messages. ERO also heard from an expert that these sorts of communication books are also particularly useful for disabled students who travel to school in taxis, to keep up regular contact with their parents and whānau.
Brainstorming with other staff and experts on strategies that work. In one school, a specialist classroom teacher follows up from these brainstorming discussions by sending out reminders of different behaviour management strategies that staff should use.
Setting up goals with students and their parents and whānau. For example, if a student goes five days a row with 'good comments' from their teachers, then they get a reward at home.
Informing students' parents and whānau about after-school detentions. We heard that it helps to tell parents and whānau when and why their children are facing detentions and invite them to comment.

Example from overseas: Establishing a morning entry class.

For students who are agitated or anxious at the start of the day, a reception class offering a quiet space and particular activities that engage students, can prove useful for getting them off to a good start each day.

c) Getting expert help when required

Students, their contexts, and their behaviours are diverse. Teachers may not have the specific expertise or capability to respond to all types of behaviour that they encounter in the classroom. There is a range of behaviour support available to schools in Aotearoa New Zealand which should be accessed when typical behaviour management strategies are not effective. Teachers and leaders can draw on expertise from RTLB, Social Workers in Schools (SWIS), counsellors, and through funding programmes such as the interim response fund and Te Kahu Tōi: Intensive Wraparound Service, and other supports.[60]

Real–life strategies

We heard from teachers and school leaders that the following strategies work well…
Having clear systems and structures in place for staff to know where to get support. This might have multiple tiers of support starting with seeking advice from a team leader, up to working with the DP or the principal.
Leveraging positive relationships between students and their counsellors. We heard that it can be important for students to have someone they can talk to who is *not* a teacher. Counsellors can help students to contribute to their behaviour management plans. One school ensures that their school counsellor also has a connection with the child health team at the local hospital.
Accessing a psychologist or other specialists to assess and diagnose students. This might be through arranging visits, or one secondary school we visited employs an in-school psychologist.
Using Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) when there is a need for a referral. RTLBs conduct observations, then come up with a recommended behaviour management plan. Teachers also learn from RTLB strategies.

4) Good practice example

This large urban intermediate school develops tailored behaviour management plans for challenging students, with clear steps to follow, 'levels' of escalation, and documentation requirements.

> "If this was a first offense… the teacher would be managing their situation with possibly some guidance from their team leader… That would be logged into our behaviour plan. If it was a recurring behaviour… [then] there would definitely be contact to the parents at level two. The parents would be notified… through an email. But at level three I would be… having a phone conversation with them, and we would be putting some things in place to support that child."
>
> **PRINCIPAL**

This school shares that for some students, involving them in the process of creating their own behaviour management plans is highly effective for reducing behaviour incidents.

> "For example, we have one child that's on [level] one at the moment. Theirs is very much tailored to what they're working on, and it's framed in a really positive way. So it's not, 'You will not do this, you will not do that.' It's all about what I [the student] am going to do, what I am going to see. And that is shared with myself, the teacher and the parent… That usually has a really positive response."
>
> **PRINCIPAL**

This school's Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO) visits classrooms to gather key information about how students are behaving. They combine what they learn from these observations with information from meetings with parents and whānau to determine the next steps in individual students' behavioural management plans.

> "Teachers will email me in regards to certain students. I will go in and do observations of them and give them feedback. I then decide whether or not we need to call a meeting. I meet with families quite often to discuss what we're noticing… If you get just one little tiny breadcrumb [of information from families], you go, 'oh, okay, I get it.'"
>
> **SENCO**

5) Reflective questions

These questions are for leaders and teachers to consider, individually or in a team discussion.

→ *Have we made sure that we are keeping a record of everything that is being done to support our students with more challenging behaviour? How well informed are parents and whānau?*

→ *What supports have been put in place to meet the needs of all students? Are we proactive in keeping informed about how well these are working?*

→ *Do we know how to access the range of external supports and resourcing in the local area when students' behaviour has really escalated? What barriers are there and how can we overcome them?*

→ *How well do we know the Government legislation and Ministry of Education policies/procedures relating to behaviour? For example, the stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions, and expulsions guidelines, the physical restraint guidelines, and the Education and Training Act 2020. Should we check that our understandings are up to date?*

→ *Supporting student behaviour can be challenging for teachers – do we check in often with our colleagues? Do all teachers have capacity and good support?*

Chapter 3: ERO's recommendations for change

This good practice report is focused on what leaders and teachers can do to impact behaviours within their schools. However, we know that ensuring positive behaviour isn't just up to schools – it requires shared responsibility and deliberate, joint actions.

Based on what we found out about the significant behaviour challenges across Aotearoa New Zealand classrooms, ERO is recommending urgent changes. In this section, we outline the five areas that require action across agencies, to ensure teachers and staff are well set up and supported to manage classroom behaviour – and to be able to focus on great teaching and learning.

Teachers and leaders can make a big difference through improving their practices at a classroom and school level. The most powerful practices for shifting behaviour are set out in Chapter 2 of this report.

However, the significance of the behaviour challenges that ERO identified (detailed in our companion evaluation report and summarised in Chapter 1 of this report) need strong and decisive actions to enable schools to manage behaviour. In this chapter, we outline the five action areas that ERO is putting forward as recommendations for a cross-agency response.

ERO's recommendations are:

Cross-cutting: Moving to a national approach.

Recommendation 1: Prioritise classroom behaviour and move to a more national approach to support all schools to prevent, notice, and respond to challenging behaviours effectively. This needs to include a more consistent set of expert supports and programmes for schools, based off a stronger evidence base of what is effective.

Area 1: Increase accountability and set clear expectations

Recommendation 2: ERO to include a sharper focus in its reviews of schools on schools' behavioural climate, policies, and plans for managing behaviour.

Recommendation 3: Provide national guidance to school boards on clear minimum expectations of the behaviour climate, and for boards to set clear expectations for behaviour across their schools and ensure that these are understood by teachers and parents and whānau.

Area 2: Greater prevention

Recommendation 4: Increase in-school and out-of-school support that identifies and addresses underlying causes of behaviour, e.g. intensive parenting support, access to counselling to reduce anxiety, and support to develop individualised behaviour plans.

Recommendation 5: Examine school size and structures within larger schools – noting that behaviour in large schools is more of a problem than in smaller schools.

Recommendation 6: Support schools to monitor behaviour, identify issues early, and ensure information on prior behaviour is passed between settings (e.g. early learning to schools, primary to secondary).

Recommendation 7: Support schools to adopt evidence-based practices that promote positive behaviour and increase consistency of how behaviour is managed within the school.

Area 3: Raising teachers' capability

Recommendation 8: Increase the focus on managing behaviour as part of Initial Teacher Education (building on the practice of the Initial Teacher Education providers who do this well) and within the first two years of induction of beginning teachers, and within the Teaching Standards (Teaching Council).

Recommendation 9: Increase recruitment of more mature Initial Teacher Education students who are better able to manage behaviour.

Recommendation 10: Prioritise evidence-based professional learning and development for teachers on effective approaches to managing behaviour and consider nationally accredited professional learning and development.

Area 4: Greater investment in effective support

Recommendation 11: Increase availability of specialist support for students (e.g. educational psychologists, this will require increasing supply).

Recommendation 12: Identify and grow the most effective (and value for money) supports and programmes and embed these consistently in all schools, including evaluating the effectiveness of current programmes (such as Positive Behaviour for learning).

Recommendation 13: Review the learning support workforce and funding models to ensure schools and teachers can access the right supports at the right time.

Recommendation 14: Prioritise support for schools with the largest behavioural issues, including larger schools and schools in low socioeconomic communities.

Area 5: Effective consequences

Recommendation 15: Provide clear guidance to schools on what the most effective consequences for challenging behaviour are and how to use them to achieve the best outcomes for students.

Recommendation 16: Ensure suspensions remain a last resort and that they trigger individual behaviour plans and the support needed for successful changes of behaviour.

Conclusion

Good classroom behaviour is critical for creating learning environments in which students can learn and achieve, and teachers can be most effective. But ensuring positive behaviour isn't just up to schools – it requires shared responsibility and joint actions.

This good practice report describes the six most powerful areas of practice that evidence shows make a real difference to classroom behaviour. This is intended to be a practical resource for leaders and teachers.

Behaviour in schools impacts on learning

Classroom behaviour impacts the learning of all students. Maintaining good behaviour in school classrooms is crucial for creating an environment where students can learn and achieve. In classrooms with good behaviour, teachers are able to better use their time teaching, and less time reacting to and managing behaviours. This places far less strain on their health and enjoyment of the job, allowing them to teach at their best. For students, better behaviour in classrooms means less disruptions, allowing them to focus on learning.

ERO's companion *evaluation report* shares findings from our *evaluation* on behaviour in classrooms and the impact of behaviour on students and teachers, showing that behaviour is a significant challenge throughout Aotearoa New Zealand's schools.

ERO also reviewed international and local evidence to find the most powerful practices for managing challenging behaviour in schools.

ERO identified six key areas of practice

These six evidence-based areas of practice are a combination of 'proactive' (preventing challenging behaviour) and 'reactive' (responding to challenging behaviour) approaches.

Proactive	**Practice area 1**	**Know and understand students and what influences their behaviour** This involves teachers sourcing information about the range of factors that influence student behaviour. These include past behaviours and incidents, attendance and achievement information, individual needs, and family or wider community contexts. Knowing about these influences equips teachers to understand classroom behaviours and choose effective strategies.
	Practice area 2	**Use a consistent approach across the school to prevent and manage challenging behaviour** A whole-school approach to behaviour management means all staff and students have shared understandings and clear expectations around behaviour. A whole-school approach includes training on how to implement agreed behaviour management strategies, and careful monitoring across the school through systematically tracking behaviour data.
	Practice area 3	**Use strategies in the classroom to support expected behaviour** Classroom strategies for managing behaviour start with setting high behavioural expectations and clear, logical consequences for challenging behaviour. These are developed and implemented with students, documented, discussed often, and consistently applied. The classroom layout (e.g. seating arrangements, visual displays) aligns with these expectations.
Reactive	**Practice area 4**	**Teach learning behaviours alongside managing challenging behaviour** This involves explicitly teaching students positive classroom behaviours like listening to instructions, working well with classmates, monitoring their own behaviour, and persisting with classroom tasks. Setting students up with positive learning behaviours reduces the need to manage challenging behaviour.

Reactive	**Practice area 5**	**Respond effectively to challenging behaviour** This involves teachers being confident in a range of effective responses to challenging behaviour. Strategies include clear and immediate feedback to correct minor challenging behaviours like talking at inappropriate times, as well as logical consequences for more serious or recurring behaviours.
	Practice area 6	**Use targeted approaches to meet the individual needs of students** Targeted approaches are intended for students with the most challenging behaviour. Leaders and teachers work with experts and parents and whānau to plan and implement specific strategies for individual students, that align with the whole-school behaviour management approach.

Leaders' and teachers' practice can make a difference to student behaviour

Behaviour is a challenge, but schools have the power to make meaningful change. The evidence shows, that clear and consistent schoolwide practices make a real difference for students. This report is focused on good practice for teachers and leaders, using robust evidence to clarify 'what good looks like' for managing challenging behaviour. It is intended to help inform positive shifts to teachers' and leaders' practices – setting students up for better achievement and engagement.

Useful resources

There are a range of useful resources available for leaders and teachers around supporting student behaviour. Some key resources are linked below, as well as a list of interventions and tools available to schools, linked to our six practice areas.

What is it?	Link
The Education Endowment Foundation's 2021 resources on improving behaviour in schools	Improving Behaviour in Schools	EEE (educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)
ERO's 2022 report on the experiences of disabled learners in schools	Thriving at school? Education for disabled learners in schools (ero.govt.nz)
ERO's 2022 and 2023 attendance reports	Missing Out: Why Aren't Our Children Going to School? (ero.govt.nz) Attendance: Getting Back to School (ero.govt.nz)
The Ministry of Education's information page about behaviour resources	Learning and behaviour supports for schools and kaiako – Education in New Zealand (www.education.govt.nz)
The Ministry of Education's severe behaviour service resource page	Behaviour Support – Information for teachers and schools – Education in New Zealan (www.education.govt.nz)
The 'Educultural Wheel' framework, developed by Angus MacFarlane for use in Aotearoa New Zealand schools	NZC – Resource (education.govt.nz)
ERO's 2019 evaluation on bullying in our schools	Bullying Prevention and Response in New Zealand Schools.pdf (ero.govt.nz) Bullying Prevention and Response: Student Voice	Education Review Office (ero.govt.nz)

Interventions and tools available

There are a range of evidence-based programmes and tools currently available for teachers and schools in managing challenging classroom behaviour. These interventions vary in approach and uptake. In addition, there a range of therapeutic tools and interventions such as cognitive behavioural therapy, trauma informed approaches and other assessments. Some of the common programmes and interventions used in Aotearoa New Zealand schools are listed below.

→ **PB4L School-Wide** looks at behaviour and learning from a whole-school as well as individual child perspective.

→ The **PB4L Restorative Practice** model focuses on building and maintaining positive respectful relationships across the school community and offers school staff a range of best-practice tools and techniques.

→ The **Incredible Years** teacher programme focuses on teachers of children aged three to eight and provides a range of approaches to foster a positive learning environment in the classroom by strengthening classroom management strategies and promoting children's pro-social behaviour and school readiness. There is also an Incredible Years parent programme, which can be used in conjunction with the in-school programme for consistency.

→ **Understanding Behaviour and Responding Safely (UBRS)** is a Ministry of Education led series of modules that teaches school staff strategies for prevention and de-escalation, used as a precursor to restraint training.

→ **KiVa** is school-wide anti-bullying programme from Finland.

→ **Social Workers in Schools (SWiS).** Only certain schools are eligible for this service.

→ **School counsellors** – note that not all schools have a dedicated counsellor.

→ **Kaupapa Māori: Huakina Mai** is a behaviour initiative that promotes whānau, schools, and iwi working together to build positive school-wide culture, based on a Kaupapa Māori worldview. This initiative works upon practice-based evidence that student/whānau success is improved through strong relationships, and teachers' knowledge and care of their students.

→ **Kaupapa Māori: Te Mana Tikitiki** programme also lies within the Kaupapa Māori worldview and uses tikanga and Te Reo Māori to build resilience, self-esteem, and confidence to uplift the mana of young Māori students and improve learning and achievement.

→ **Functional Behaviour Assessment** or **Ecological Assessment** analysis identifies where, when, and the likely reasons for behaviours of concern. The assessment is used to inform a behaviour support plan to address the reasons for behaviours occurring. This is used as an intervention for students who require intensive, individualised support to improve their outcomes.

→ **Resource Teacher of Learning and Behaviour (RTLB)** service – there are 40 RTLB clusters nationally.

→ Local **Ministry offices** (Learning support).

→ Ministry **Interim Response Fund.**

→ Ministry **Behaviour Crisis Response.**

→ Ministry **Te Kahu Tōī – Intensive.**

→ **Mana Ake** provides support to children in Canterbury, in Years 1-8 at school, promoting wellbeing and positive mental health.

→ **Check and Connect: Te Hononga** is a two-year, educational mentoring programme for students in Years 9-11 who are considered at risk of disengaging from school.

→ **Te Tupu | Managed Moves** provides short-term wraparound support for students (Years 3-8), schools, and whānau who may be experiencing challenges.

Table 1: *Common interventions and their main links to ERO's six practice areas*

	1. Know and understand students	2. Use a consistent approach across the school
PB4L School-Wide		✓
PB4L Restorative Practice		
Incredible Years for Teachers	✓	
UBRS (Understanding Behaviour and Responding Safely)		✓
KiVa		✓
Social Workers in Schools (SWiS)	✓	
School counsellors	✓	
Kaupapa Māori: Huakina Mai	✓	✓
Kaupapa Māori: Te Mana Tikitiki	✓	
Functional Behaviour or Ecological Assessment	✓	
Resource Teacher of Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) Service		
MoE Local Ministry Offices (Learning Support)		
MoE Interim Response Fund (IRF)		
MoE Behaviour Crisis Response Service		
MoE Te Kahu Tōī – Intensive Wraparound Service (IWS)		
Mana Ake		
**Te Tupu	Managed Moves**		

3. Use strategies in the classroom to support behaviour	4. Teach learning behaviours alongside managing challenging behaviour	5. Respond effectively to challenging behaviour	6. Use targeted approaches
		✓	
✓	✓	✓	
✓	✓	✓	
			✓
			✓
			✓
			✓
			✓
			✓
			✓
			✓
			✓
			✓

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