

Classroom management

Welcome to Module 13 of your SEN toolkit!

In this module we look at tools and techniques for managing classrooms in a way that takes SEN learners into account

Aims

By the end of this module, I will be able to:

- recognise the different needs of SEN learners relating to the classroom environment
- apply a variety of classroom management techniques to support SEN learners in the classroom in my context
- understand that the differing and sometimes opposing needs of SEN learners don't hinder but help contribute towards a dynamic learning environment for everyone



Why classroom management is important

The way teachers manage their classroom can have a significant impact on how well students behave and how much they learn. Teachers who establish good classroom management, including rules, routines and preparation, often create learning environments that are highly effective.

Unfortunately the statistics don't make for a good reading. The effects of neglecting classroom management impacts on the SEN learners in a significant way. Let's have a look at 10 statistics taken from the UK. (<http://www.dyslexiabytes.org/dyslexia-figures/>)

Which of these statistics surprised you the most/least? Discuss with another teaching colleague.

- 4% of the population has dyslexia such that it becomes a disability.
- Between 60% and 75% of those with dyslexia have some form of phonological processing difficulties.
- 70-80% of people with poor reading skills are probably dyslexic.
- Less than one third of students with neurodiverse conditions receive help from their schools.
- 62% of non-readers drop out of high school.
- Around 80% of those with a learning disability have dyslexia. 90% of all learning disabilities may be rooted in dyslexia
- 25-40% of children with dyslexia have ADHD, while 25% of children with ADHD have dyslexia.

- 80% of people falsely associate dyslexia with some form of retardation
- The cost to the UK of children not mastering basic literacy skills is 198 million to 2.5 billion pounds per year.
- Up to 2 million people in Britain do not know they are dyslexic.

However, the statistics can be reversed if proper classroom management is put in place by teachers to deal with the various learning difficulties in a positive way. Teachers are agents of change and good classroom management can help the process of teaching and learning.

Classroom management strategies will vary in different schools and even in different classrooms, but the truth of the matter is that teachers are asked to be creative and innovative when approaching classroom management. Managing an all-inclusive classroom will be made easier if simple, personalised teaching strategies for the special needs students are implemented. Teachers are agents of change. Teachers can make a difference!

1. Look back at the 10 statistics again, and think about your own teaching context. Can you relate to any of these statistics?

How do teachers manage their classrooms?

In this section you will look at various quotes from teachers and learners in inclusive education and how they manage in their classroom.

When reading the quotes, ask yourself what classroom management strategies each one suggests is an effective way to include and support SEN learners.

Quote 1

“Teachers who have the best managed classrooms are those who spend the first two weeks of class teaching and practicing their procedures and routines (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003)” — Michael Mills, Effective Classroom Management: An Interactive Textbook.

Quote 2

“If I hadn’t arranged my classroom so that certain students had a clear line of sight to me and the board, I would have lost them and they would have not been able to focus on learning. When obstacles are removed, real learning happens.” — Primary School Teacher

Quote 3

“I was lucky I realised early on in my teaching that many children with autism are visual learners. Giving instruction in a visual manner, using pictures, objects, or animation can help the autistic learners process the information in a more helpful and less stressful way.” — Secondary School Teacher

Quote 4

“Lessons in my school were carefully structured. For example, my teachers gave us an

outline at the beginning of the class and this was a helpful aid. It made me remember the main ideas better. I am a student with ADHD and my memory improves when material is meaningfully structured for me.” — Secondary School Student).

We can see that all teachers are facing the same issues regarding classroom management strategies. Teachers can have a potential positive impact if changes to the classroom environment are made. Students can benefit greatly from strategies that aim at removing obstacles and focusing on real learning.

Now reflect on your own teaching context:

Reflexive questions

1. Which of these classroom management strategies do you already use?

2. Which of these quotes do you most relate to? Why?

The Inclusive Learning Environment

In this section, you will be introduced to some techniques for how to manage the classroom.

Part 1: How to create a more inclusive learning environment

All teachers should try and set up an environment that is conducive to learning and individuation. Teachers will therefore have to try and remove barriers so the whole classroom is a safe space for everyone.

Match the different techniques and their meaning:

- | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1. Individuation | 3. Inclusion | 5. Empowerment |
| 2. Differentiation | 4. Mitigation | |

a) is an educational philosophy which states that learners should not be isolated from the 'mainstream' because they have special educational needs (SEN); instead, all learners should learn alongside one another, with adjustments being made wherever necessary to accommodate the specific needs of individuals.

b) is the reduction of unpleasant, harmful or negative experiences for learners within the classroom context.

c) is the accommodation of specific needs and abilities of pupils with special educational needs and is appropriate to age, ability and required outcomes.

d) is the process by which students gain power, access to resources and control over their own learning. In doing so, they gain the ability to achieve their highest personal and collective aspirations and goals.

e) is when the pace of learning is adjusted to meet the needs of each student.

Which of these techniques do you use at the moment in your classrooms?

Now we will take a look at Mitigation Techniques that can help you to identify the difficulties that the classroom environment places on SEN students. Read Philip's story and try to identify the different techniques that are used to mitigate positive classroom management.

Philip's Story

It is the first day of sixth class. The teacher is aware that the class had a very difficult time over the last school year. Some pupils found it very hard to learn and pay attention in class time. At times a few of these pupils would shout at each other, be out of their seats and refuse to do what they were told. One boy, Philip found it especially hard to control his behaviour and has since been

diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. He has access to a special needs assistant to give him further support.

On the first day of sixth class, Ms Murphy discusses classroom rules with her new pupils and asks them to offer some ideas about what ground rules they think would be useful. She makes some suggestions about respecting each other's differences and similarities, agreeing signals for silence, asking permission to leave the room, and pupils only speaking one at a time. The pupils think these are fair rules and suggest that they have time every Monday morning to check in with each other for five minutes before class starts. Each pupil will talk to their neighbour and one pupil will report back to the class each week on how their neighbour has got on over the weekend.

Ms Murphy agrees to try this out for a month and review it at that stage. She tells the pupils that while she knows it is hard always to follow rules, if they are broken deliberately, privileges will be taken away. Ms Murphy describes clearly what the school day will be like and sticks up a weekly visual planner so pupils know what to expect. She explains the aim of each lesson and checks that they understand. She responds to pupils who are doing well with more challenging questions while making sure that the quieter pupils are participating and meeting curriculum goals.

Classroom activities include reading, drawing, writing, completing worksheets, discussing the lesson with their neighbours and setting homework. Ms Murphy always has a plentiful supply of extra pens, pencils and drawing material. Each lesson has a specific goal and begins with a visual or oral picture of what successful learning looks like. Ms Murphy always uses a variety of materials, strategies and approaches in her lessons and gives her pupils a range of tasks

which are suited to the diverse needs of individual pupils. On three occasions during the week the resource teacher comes into the class and teaches with Ms Murphy. Sometimes the class is divided into groups at this time and the two teachers work with different groups.

Ms Murphy asks pupils to think about what they want to learn and what they wish to change this year. She helps all the pupils to keep a weekly learning journal on new things they have learned and what other things they'd like to learn. She asks them to note what they liked about different lessons and to talk to her about any problems or questions they might have. Ms Murphy uses her assessments of the pupils to guide her in planning future lessons and to inform her about their strengths and difficulties. The pupils themselves always know what they are aiming for in every lesson.

An individual behaviour plan has been drawn up for Philip that sets out targets for him to achieve over a six-week period. At the moment he is working on two targets: to bring the correct books to school and to enter the classroom quietly and sit at his assigned place. Philip, his parents and teacher were involved in agreeing these targets and will review the plan after six weeks. Philip, his parents, the teacher and the SNA are all clear about what is to happen if Philip seriously misbehaves in the classroom.

What are the common techniques used in the example?

Do you know any other techniques to mitigate these challenges?

Can you think of further examples of challenges learners face?

Part 2: Using different mitigation techniques in the classroom

What problems faced by learners can different mitigation techniques help to solve? Think about your own teaching contexts, and try to identify a problem that a learner might face, but which could be solved through each of the techniques below. For example, how could 'chunking' help a SEN learner?

Problem faced by learner	Technique to mitigate problem	Description of the technique
1.	a) Chunking	An activity which involves breaking down a difficult text into more manageable pieces and having students rewrite these "chunks" in their own words.

2.	b) Lines of sight	Learners are arranged in the classroom so that they have a clear way to look at the board, the teacher and important places, removing barriers in their way.
3.	c) Managing noise and distractions	There are a variety of reasons for students acting out and being disruptive, distracted or noisy. Whether it's an annoying buzz of ceaseless chatter or outright disruptive noise, controlling a noisy class is all about establishing your authority and developing strong classroom management strategies that work for you.
4.	d) Delivering instructions	Our way of delivering instructions in class can have a substantial impact on our learners' engagement and the overall effectiveness of the lesson.
5.	e) Managing clutter and mess	A messy, unkempt, or clutter-filled classroom sends the message to your students that poor behaviour and middling work habits is acceptable—regardless of how often or how forcefully you say otherwise.

Now reflect on these techniques and ask yourself the following questions:

1. Are there any techniques here that you are already implementing in your own classroom environment?

2. Can you put any of the other ones into action?

3. Which of the techniques mentioned above are the easiest / hardest to implement do you think? Why?

There are various other ways to manage classrooms successfully by using differentiation in the classroom. This can be achieved by looking at the pace of your teaching, having clear outcomes, the classroom environment, the way to approach tasks, support and accommodations.

Now let's look at the various forms of differentiation by presenting some case studies. Complete the table by using the case studies to identify how each technique helps, and how they can be implemented.

Case Study 1: Learning stations

Several years ago, I was teaching 27 sixth graders and had five different learning stations set up in my room. Within three months, my class increased to 35 students, and most of the learning stations were dismantled to make room for student desks. As I glanced around my crowded room, my eyes came to rest on the computer recently hooked up to the internet and I realized that the internet could provide powerful learning stations for my students.

Even after I began creating "Internet-based" learning stations, I always like to have a mixture of these virtual stations and "real" stations in my classroom. Using the internet to create learning stations can provide students with opportunities to learn the curriculum in different ways.

There is no right or wrong way to organise learning stations, and you may want to alternate your stations use throughout the year. The number of stations you have at one time may depend on the size of your room, the number of helpers in your classroom, and the curriculum. There is a plethora of ways you can schedule learning stations in your classroom. They may be used on specific "learning stations" days or as a time when students can follow up on a lesson recently taught in the class. You may wish to have learning stations up and running at all times so that when students are done with their work, they can spend time in a station.

Case Study 2: Study buddies

Have you ever heard the phrase “two heads are better than one?” Well, it’s true. Study buddies help increase your knowledge and academic scores.

According to a study, 23% more students passed their tests because they studied with another student instead of studying on their own. While they call it “classmate peer-coaching,” we like the term “study buddy” better.

The reason for the higher score? Studying with another student helps cement the information you’ve learned while also filling in concepts you don’t fully grasp.

Case Study 3: Considering / working with different types of input vs output

The inputs are the objectives and objectified contents that teachers put in while the processes are the methods of delivery of contents. Outputs are the end-product of educational inputs and process and those must be assessed based on objectives.

When I started teaching my Primary School pupils I thought that I just could give them my input by just talking at them and expect the output in return. However, I soon realised that other ways of teaching were needed, particularly for my SEN students, who would find it more difficult to understand and follow my teaching. I now implement many different strategies in my classroom teaching and we do lots of group work, peer work, etc. I have even taken the step to let students assess each other. I thought I was losing control over my class, but instead my pupils have benefited a lot from more fun teaching and learning by doing.

Case Study 4: Forms of accommodations / support

Jack is an 8th grade student who has learning disabilities in reading and writing. He is

in a regular 8th grade class that is team-taught by a general education teacher and a special education teacher. Modifications and accommodations provided for Jack’s daily school routine include the following:

- Jack will have shorter reading and writing assignments.
- Jack’s textbooks will be based upon the 8th grade curriculum but at his independent reading level (4th grade).
- Jack will have test questions read/explained to him, when he asks.
- Jack will give his answers to essay-type questions by speaking, rather than writing them down.

Modifications or accommodations are most often made in the following areas:

Scheduling. For example, giving the student extra time to complete assignments or tests breaking up testing over several days Setting. For example, working in a small group working one-on-one with the teacher Materials. For example, providing audiotaped lectures or books giving copies of teacher’s lecture notes using large print books, Braille, or books on CD (digital text) Instruction. For example, reducing the difficulty of assignments reducing the reading level using a student/peer tutor Student Response. For example, allowing answers to be given orally or dictated using a word processor for written work using sign language, a communication device, Braille, or native language if it is not English.

Because adapting the content, methodology, and/or delivery of instruction is an essential element in special education and an extremely valuable support for students, it’s equally essential to know as much as possible about how instruction can be adapted to address the needs of an individual student with a disability. The special education teacher can contribute his or her expertise in this area, which is the essence of special education.

Part 3: Reflecting on your own practice

Let's think of ways to apply all these techniques in your own context.

How can these case studies be implemented in your own classroom environment?

Make a list of things you will do to apply the various techniques in your own classroom.

I will implement the following techniques	When and how



Making a difference in your classroom management

As mentioned before, teachers are agents of change. However, to make a difference in the classroom environment, you will need to make changes and adapt. Here you will prioritise the changes you will make to your classroom as a result of this unit. You will make a wish list and prioritise in terms of importance in your own context.

Let's have a look at the mitigation techniques we have studied. Complete the table and describe what you can do to apply each technique in your own classroom, and when. (You may add further techniques to the list if you wish).

Mitigation Techniques	What can I do	When can I do this by?
Chunking		
Lines of sight		
Managing noise and distractions		

Delivering instructions		
Managing clutter and mess		

Now let's create a roadmap for introducing one of the empowerment techniques of your choice above.

1. Choose one of the mitigation techniques listed above
2. Now create a list of changes you would like to make to introduce this technique. Which are the most feasible?
3. Organise the activities into a timeline to help you to apply in your classroom environment.



7 things to reflect upon after having completed this module

In this section, think about what you have learnt in this module, and how it could impact on your own teaching practice. Read through the seven-point checklist, and ask yourself which of these points you feel comfortable dealing with, and which require further work

1. In this module, I have learned that I can make a difference to SEN learners by implementing classroom management techniques:

a) Fully agree b) Partly agree c) Mostly disagree d) Strongly disagree

2. In this module, I have realised that I need to prioritise techniques:

a) Fully agree b) Partly agree c) Mostly disagree d) Strongly disagree

3. Mitigation Techniques can help you to identify the difficulties that the classroom environment places on SEN students:

a) Fully agree b) Partly agree c) Mostly disagree d) Strongly disagree

4. In this module, I have learned that I must implement techniques in a gradual way:

a) Fully agree b) Partly agree c) Mostly disagree d) Strongly disagree

5. In this module, I have learned that mitigation techniques will work if I introduce them bit by bit and have a definite plan of action:

a) Fully agree b) Partly agree c) Mostly disagree d) Strongly disagree

6. In this module, I have learned that a concrete timeline for implementation is needed:

a) Fully agree b) Partly agree c) Mostly disagree d) Strongly disagree

7. What I have learned in this module has encouraged me to think of new approaches to my future classroom management in the context of SEN learners:

a) Fully agree b) Partly agree c) Mostly disagree d) Strongly disagree

Check your understanding

Take a short quiz to check you've understood the main points of the module.

Read through the questions and choose the best answer for each. You can find a detailed explanation for each correct answer at the end.

1. Individuation...

- a) is when the pace of learning is adjusted to meet the needs of each student
- b) is when we recognise the uniqueness of individuals as human beings
- c) is when we acknowledge the individual.

2. Mitigation techniques are used...

- a) to help students overcome their fears
- b) to reduce the unpleasant, harmful or negative experiences for learners within the classroom context
- c) to manage the classroom in the context of SEN teaching and learning.

3. Chunking...

- a) is an activity which involves breaking down a difficult text into more manageable pieces and having students rewrite these "chunks" in their own words
- b) is an activity to re-arrange the classroom as a positive experience for

- c) is a fast-paced activity to get students ready for class as soon as possible.

4. The number of learning stations you have at one time may depend on:

- a) your own interest in SEN students and how much the school budget allows
- b) the principal (director) allowing to re-arrange the classroom in the school context
- c) the size of your room, the number of helpers in your classroom, and the curriculum.

5. Study buddies get better grades because:

- a) studying with another student helps cement the information they have learned while also filling in concepts they don't fully grasp
- b) learning is more fun and the concepts are better understood
- c) when they are together, they isolate themselves from the rest of the class to focus on just learning and the curriculum.

Answers

1.a, 2.b, 3.a, 4.c, 5.a

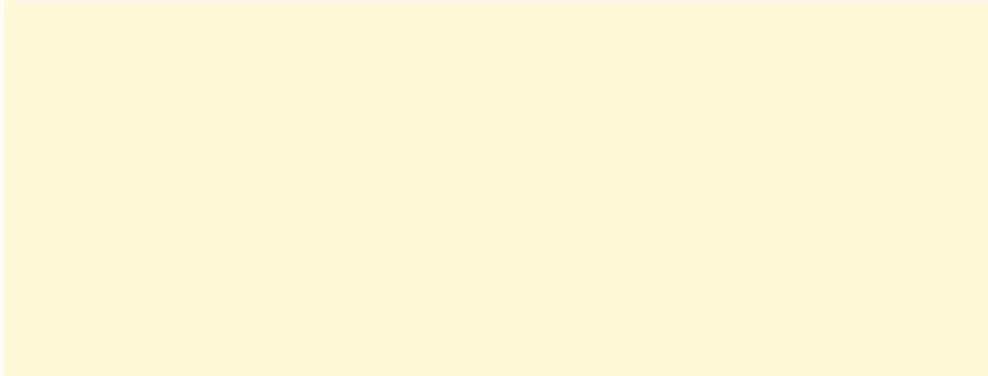
Reflexive question

What will you do differently in the classroom next week as a result of this module?

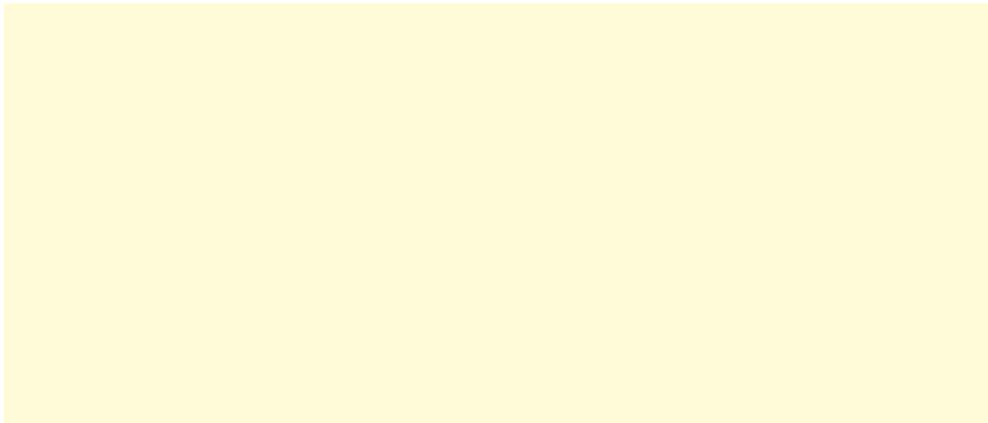
Reflect on the module

In this final section, think about what you've learned this module and how you can use this in your day-to-day working life.

1. What is your biggest takeaway from this module about classroom management in the context of SEN teaching and learning?



2. What mitigation techniques would you be willing to implement to accommodate the basic needs of SEN students in the classroom?



3. In what way would you put into action the various differentiation techniques in the classroom context? (ie. Learning stations, Study buddies etc.)

