



Teaching Skills 15: Noisy class – some ideas to try!

Here are a few tips for keeping students engaged throughout the lesson:

Have a lesson outline on display and tick off tasks as they are completed. Boys, in particular, benefit from knowing exactly where they are up to in a lesson and what's coming next:

- Starter – 5 mins
 - Video – 10 mins
 - Teacher demo – 5 mins
 - Pair work – 20 mins
 - Game – 10 mins
 - Plenary – 10 mins
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- **Have frequent structured breaks** – brain breaks, stretches, energisers, 'serotonin' breaks.
 - Have a stock of alternative, 'emergency' activities on hand and be ready to change tasks if students start to become bored or frustrated.
 - **Use the room – move around the whole floor space, spending time with all students.**
 - Brief support assistants prior to the lesson on their specific role with individual students. They are also a key part of the scanning – redirecting pupil behaviours – management of noise.
 - **Break down work into manageable chunks and give them short term individual work targets – 'In the next ten minutes you need to complete the first three questions.'**
 - Include hands-on, kinaesthetic tasks.
 - **Avoid verbal/oral overload** and teacher-talk by writing down instructions/criticisms or putting them on a presentation.
 - **Keep a check on noise levels. It's no use waiting until everyone is shouting around the room before you try and get them quiet again – better to be proactive and keep the volume at an acceptable level.** Students don't like being nagged though so you should try and **avoid constantly playing the "OK, there's too much noise. Let's have you quiet please"**. They get sick of that. Instead, **make use of the strong characters in the class and put them in charge of noise levels on their particular table or area of the room.** They'll usually appreciate the responsibility.

Provide pair work and cooperative learning tasks – students enjoy working with peers

There are two important things to remember when dealing with ALL NOISY CLASSES:

i) **What you allow, you encourage**

Sometimes there is so much going on in the classroom that we might miss off task behaviour. Our eyes can't be everywhere at once and it is understandable that some off task behaviour goes unnoticed. The thing we have to remember is that every time a pupil gets away with - moving without permission, talking out of turn, shouting out, talking across the classroom and we don't say anything, every time they interrupt us... **we are effectively encouraging them to do the same again.**

And it doesn't stop there because it's not just the perpetrator who will repeat the action. Other students who witness these behaviours going unchallenged will feel they can do the same, so a lack of vigilance can create an environment where 'anything goes'.

Once the problems start to take root, they escalate and get harder to stamp out. It is much easier dealing with problems when they are small and before they become established.

The way to stop this is obviously to be vigilant and to jump on any problem as soon as possible. Be constantly on the move, teach from each corner, walk round the tables and speak to all your pupils. Let them know this is your room, that you really do have eyes in the back of your head, and you are aware of everything that is going on.

ii) **Keep a record of repeat offenders** - Keep an accurate record of individual students who are causing problems in your lessons and deal with them accordingly – the school behavioural management plan. In even the worst of classes, there are seldom more than 5 or 6 main culprits who are responsible for the bulk of the noise problem (you've heard of the 80/20 principle, right?) so this needn't be as much work as it seems and the benefits far outweigh the extra work involved.

Be quick to find something to praise

We are often too quick to look for (and find) faults but the quickest way to make lasting positive changes to their behaviour is always with positive comments. When was the last time you did something to please someone who was constantly nagging you? If they make a slight improvement be quick to jump on it and „catch them being good“.

Consistently follow school behaviour plan and stepped consequences, e.g.:

- Move them to an isolated seat
- Take time off them at break/after school
- Notify them of a letter/phone call home
- 'Park' them in another class

NOTE: When moving up through a hierarchy of consequences it's best to give a clear, fair warning to remind students of the consequences of their actions should they continue. Also try to give „take up time“ to follow your instructions rather than standing over them expecting immediate compliance. With audience pressure, that's a tall order.

“John if you don't make a start now you'll be... (insert consequence of choice). Is that really what you want? I'm going to go and help Sasha but I'll be back over in 2 minutes and I'll expect to see that you've completed that first one. OK?”

Try addressing individuals rather than the whole class at once.

'Divide and conquer' - Walk round table groups and desks and speak to individuals, calming them down, solving minor problems and explaining that you need them to be settling down.