

Effective discipline in the classroom

Effective discipline is important for maintaining a positive atmosphere in the classroom and supporting students' learning. Teaching strategies that support positive behaviours begin by making expectations clear, teaching children how to meet them and reinforcing children's appropriate behaviour. When needing to address particular behaviours for individual children, it can be very helpful to work with parents and carers to develop a positive discipline plan.

Example: Teaching Susie how to get focused

Susie's class two teacher was concerned that she always seemed to be losing or forgetting things and often distracted others in class. The teacher talked to Susie and her mother about the problem. Together they came up with a plan to get Susie focused and improve her attention in class.

What the teacher did

First, Susie's teacher made sure that Susie knew what was expected of her. She explained that it was important for Susie to be prepared for class with everything she needed so that she could keep up with her learning.

Her teacher asked Susie whether she could think of things that might help her remember to bring her things to class, including her homework. They decided that Susie would make a list each afternoon of the things she would need for the next day and she would check the list when she packed her bag for school.

The teacher also reminded Susie of their class rule about respect. She explained that when Susie distracted others it was stopping them from learning. The teacher asked whether Susie thought it was respectful to distract others. Susie agreed that it wasn't.

Susie's teacher explained how she planned to help Susie remember to get on with her work and stop distracting others. She would use a chart to record each time that Susie was able to keep on track with her lesson without distracting others. At the end of each day the teacher wrote about Susie's successes in her diary. Her parents told Susie how pleased they were with her progress and let her choose a privilege such as a special meal, a treat or an activity she liked each time she reached a new goal.

Susie's teacher also explained that if Susie did distract others she would give her one reminder. If it continued, Susie would need to come to the front of the class and sit near the teacher's desk.

Susie's teacher made sure to follow through. She praised Susie when she brought her things along and whenever she observed her being focused in class. On a few occasions when Susie began distracting others she gave her one reminder and then quietly asked her to come and sit near the teacher's desk. This was done without disrupting the class or embarrassing Susie.

How it works

Makes expectations clear

Teaches positive behaviours

Sets basic rules and refers to them

Reinforces positive behaviours

Collaborates with parents or carers

Uses logical consequences

Consistently follows through

Further follow up

After two weeks, Susie was bringing everything she needed to class and seemed to be more thoughtful about looking after them. She had managed to get through the day without distracting others four times, and had only had to sit near the teacher's desk twice. At this point Susie's teacher and parents decided that the note would go home after two days in a row of positive behaviour. After a whole week of positive behaviour her teacher nominated her as student of the week. She got an award from the Principal and her name was published in the school newsletter.

Remember

There are many reasons why children behave in undesired ways. As well as applying basic techniques of positive discipline, it remains important to address children's learning and emotional needs at school in order to provide effective support for mental health and wellbeing.

This resource is part of a range of KidsMatter Primary information sheets for families and school staff. View them all online at www.kidsmatter.edu.au



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