

# Early Career Framework

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## Core Induction Programme

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- > Week 3: Establishing the learning environment

Week

## 3: Establishing the learning environment

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### Session Elements

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- practical exercise
- reflection

### Learning Intentions for this session

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You will learn how to:

**Demonstrate consistently high behavioural expectations, by:**

**1e.** Creating a culture of respect and trust in the classroom that supports all pupils to succeed (e.g. by modelling the types of courteous behaviour expected of pupils).

**1f.** Teaching and rigorously maintaining clear behavioural expectations (e.g. for contributions, volume level and concentration).

### You will learn how to:

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**1g.** Applying rules, sanctions and rewards in line with school policy, escalating behaviour incidents as appropriate.

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**1h.** Acknowledging and praising pupil effort and emphasising progress being made.

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### Develop a positive, predictable and safe environment for pupils, by:

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**7a.** Establishing a supportive and inclusive environment with a predictable system of reward and sanction in the classroom.

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**7b.** Working alongside colleagues as part of a wider system of behaviour management (e.g. recognising responsibilities and understanding the right to assistance and training from senior colleagues).

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**7c.** Giving manageable, specific and sequential instructions.

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**7d.** Checking pupils' understanding of instructions before a task begins.

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**7e.** Using consistent language and non-verbal signals for common classroom directions.

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**7f.** Using early and least-intrusive interventions as an initial response to low-level disruption.

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**7g.** Responding quickly to any behaviour or bullying that threatens emotional safety.

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## Research and Practice Summary

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This reading will help you understand some of the theory behind this week's topic. We will start by introducing some of the key concepts (these are in bold). You will also see some suggestions of how to put these concepts into practice. **When using these concepts in your own practice you will need to take account of your pupils' characteristics, the context of your classroom and the nature of the material that you are teaching.**

### Behaviour in KS3 design technology

Toby teaches design technology and only teaches each of his Key Stage 3 classes once per week. Behaviour is especially important in design technology, both for pupils' learning and their safety.

Toby knows that setting and reinforcing consistently high behavioural expectations is important, but he lacks confidence about how to do this, especially as he does not see his classes very often. This makes it harder to establish effective relationships.

Toby asks a senior colleague, Muhammad, for advice. **What strategies do you think Muhammad might suggest?**

You saw last week how maintaining high expectations, particularly about behaviour, is important. This week you will further examine practical techniques that you can use to do this.

Demonstrating consistently high behavioural expectations can help you to create a positive, predictable and safe environment for pupils. Doing this will support pupils' overall school experience, improving their learning and reducing opportunities for bullying.

To consistently demonstrate high behavioural expectations, you should:

- **create a culture of respect and trust** – this can be achieved by doing lots of simple things well, such as actively modelling and reinforcing the courteous behaviour you expect pupils to show you and their peers. For instance, by respectfully listening to others' ideas and actively modelling how to do this and why it matters
- **teach and maintain your expectations** – explicitly teaching and reinforcing your expectations is important. Last week, you used the 'clarify, model, practice, reinforce' framework to establish routines. You could also apply this to your expectations about behaviour
- **use school policies** – schools typically have detailed policies and procedures, especially relating to rules, sanctions and rewards. Ensure that you understand and apply these policies consistently and fairly. This will support pupils to understand your high expectations, provide predictability, and support your colleagues in using the same policies
- **acknowledge pupil effort and progress** – maintaining appropriate behaviour is harder for some pupils than others. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge and praise when pupils are making an effort and to try to link this to the progress pupils are making. For instance, 'Lucy, well done for focusing and settling down to work quickly today. I can see how hard you're trying to follow the rules. You're getting faster at this, which means more time for your learning'

## Using school systems and colleagues for support

As Toby has limited time with each of his classes, it is harder for him to demonstrate and rigorously reinforce his high behavioural expectations.

Muhammad suggested that it is particularly important for Toby to follow the

school's policies closely, as this will help pupils more easily transfer what they already know about expectations of their behaviour to Toby's lessons.

Muhammad suggested that Toby spend some time using the 'clarify, model, practice, reinforce' framework to think about the behaviours that are particularly relevant to design technology. Muhammad worked with Toby to specify, script and rehearse important subject-specific behaviours about safety and listening to instructions, which dramatically improved behaviour and the climate for learning in Toby's lessons.

Muhammad also clarified key aspects of the school's behaviour policy with Toby and showed him some tips for ensuring that he followed through with sanctions and rewards using the school system. Muhammad explained that he made a note of behaviour 'events' in his planner after each lesson and then spent 10 minutes at the end of each day adding these to the school's information management system, so that his colleagues could understand and respond to patterns of behaviour for different pupils. Toby saw how this system could work for him and ensure that behaviour, positive and negative, was consistently followed up and reinforced.

Muhammad reassured Toby that it was his job to help him and it was not a sign of weakness for Toby to ask for help – it is part of being a professional to work collaboratively with colleagues. If Toby needed support, especially with managing disruptive pupils, he knew he could ask for assistance and training from senior colleagues.

Teachers have significant influence over the culture in their classrooms. To maximise learning and pupils' school experience, you should aim to create a positive, predictable and safe classroom environment. Predictability is especially important for pupils as it helps to reinforce your high expectations of behaviour. A key way of developing this predictability is to consistently apply rules, sanctions and rewards in line with your school's policy, and to escalate matters as appropriate.

Fairness is an important part of predictability and it is something that pupils are acutely aware of, so focusing on it will help to ensure the legitimacy of your rules and expectations for behaviour.

To create a positive learning environment, you can:

- **be predictable** – schools use sanctions and rewards in many different ways to reinforce desirable behaviours. The success of any system will be determined by its implementation, and predictability is a key part of this. For instance, sanctions that are only enforced sometimes will be less effective than those that always,

predictably, follow a certain behaviour. Being predictable helps to reinforce the school's high expectations of pupils

- **be aware** – awareness is important for preventing low-level disruption as well as for quickly managing bullying or other behaviours that threaten pupils' emotional safety. To maintain awareness, you should position yourself physically so that you can visually monitor the whole class even when speaking to an individual or small group, and frequently 'be seen looking' so that pupils know you are aware of what they are doing
- **be responsive** – responding early to low-level disruption usually helps to shut it down quickly. 'Least-intrusive' approaches – i.e. those which limit disruption to learning, including non-verbal signals – can be appropriate at this stage, such as pausing abruptly, moving physically closer to disruptive students, or looking at pupils to show that you know what they are doing and that it is not acceptable (the 'teacher glare')

## Responding early using the least-intrusive interventions

Muhammad invited Toby to come and see one of his own classes where he was working hard to reinforce positive behaviours. Toby watched intently as Muhammad explained a key learning point:

'Victorian society became incre...'

Muhammad paused abruptly – mid-word – and looked calmly and directly at two pupils who had begun to talk to each other. The pupils immediately stopped, refocused, and Muhammad resumed his explanation with minimal disruption to the whole class, having reinforced his high expectations of behaviour.

Toby noted how the abrupt pause instantly got the attention of the disruptive pupils with only minimal interruption to learning. Afterwards he reflected on what he had seen and asked himself, 'how can I use that approach?'

**Giving instructions** can be challenging for all teachers, as they need to ensure that all pupils understand what is expected of them. Fortunately, the way that instructions are given can ensure more pupils understand them the first time. If pupils misunderstand instructions, this will waste lesson time and can lead to disruptive behaviour. It can also leave pupils feeling excluded and, in some situations, pose a risk to pupils' safety.

Instructions given to pupils should be:

- **manageable** – pupils' working memory is limited, so it can help to give instructions both orally and visually. With practical tasks, for instance, you may include a written or visual representation of the method in addition to verbal instructions, which pupils can refer back to and check their understanding
- **sequential** – think about how you sequence instructions so that the right information is given at the right time. Where possible, providing instructions at the point they will be needed is useful. For instance, you can break up instructions for multi-phase activities so that instructions for later phases are only given once pupils have completed earlier phases
- **specific** – ensure pupils understand what exactly it is you expect of them. It can be helpful to consider at the planning stage how your instructions may be misinterpreted (i.e. 'what could go wrong here?'), and use this to provide the right level of specificity when teaching
- **check understanding** – after giving instructions, it can be helpful to briefly check that pupils understand by asking questions such as, 'what should you do if/when...?' This should be given higher priority in the case of complicated instructions and for pupils who frequently struggle to understand instructions
- **consistent** – there are some instructions that you will give often, such as getting the attention of a class to 'bring them back' from independent or group work. It can help to use consistent signals for this. For instance, you might use a specific phrase, a countdown or a non-verbal instruction such as raising your hand to gain attention

## Give better instructions

Giving clear instructions is a really essential part of Toby's job. After examining the evidence about clear instructions, Toby gave much more consideration to how he ensures all pupils understand what he expects.

Toby thought it was particularly important to give clear instructions when pupils were doing practical work, because of both the risks to safety and the potential for difficulty in regrouping and guiding the class as they moved around the workshop.

Toby decided to script out some instructions that he would give ahead of beginning practical work. As he often needed to give instructions like this, he decided having a consistent approach would be useful, and that he could adapt this approach to the context of each lesson. 'Victorian society became incre...'

**Thanks everyone [pause for silence]. Today we are going to [e.g. begin painting our birdhouses]. There are [e.g. three] stages to what you need to do. I'm now going to show you each of these stages, and you have a summary of the key steps showing on the whiteboard to help you along the way.**

**[Show and explain each stage clearly. Link to the summary on the whiteboard.] For example:**

1. **clean your birdhouse to remove any dust so that this does not get stuck in the paint [why]. Use the same technique as you can see here [modelling]. Remember to be careful if your birdhouse has any delicate sections.**
2. **prepare your workspace – [further detailed and clear instructions]**
3. **begin the painting – [further detailed and clear instructions]**

**Okay, so that's what we're going to do. Before we begin I want to check we know what we need to do. It's important that we are all clear so that we can work on this task safely and effectively.**

**[Ask targeted questions to clarify key points from the instructions.]**

**For example:**

- **Vicky, what can people do to remind themselves if they get stuck?**
- **Louise, why is it important to remove the dust before we paint?**
- **Chris, what are the tricky bits of the task that you'll need to watch out for?**
- **Finally, does anyone have any questions before we begin?**

By carefully structuring his explanations, and building in checking for pupils' understanding, Toby improved the quality of his explanations, which maximised the time for safe learning. After thinking more about how to give instructions effectively, Toby devised the following questions to help:

- **what are the key things pupils need to understand?**
- **what are the likely misinterpretations and how will I both avoid and check for these misunderstandings?**
- **should the instructions be given all at once, or will it help to phase them?**

## **Self-Study Activities**

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### **Review: 10 mins**

Read the research and practice summary on this week's topic. As you read, reflect on:

1. the practices that you are already doing well
2. the practices you are doing some of the time, but could do more of/more consistently
3. the practices you do not use in your teaching yet

As you work through the activities in this week's self-directed study session and mentor meeting, aim to both refine and extend what you already do well, and to

build your skill and confidence in using practices which are not yet a regular part of your teaching repertoire.

## Plan and Theory to Practice: 30 mins

### 1. Practical exercise

Read the scenario below. Use this to test and extend your thinking around approaches to establishing the learning environment.

- At each numbered point of the scenario, complete the table at the end of the text, using the information in the research and practice summary above and your learning from last week's sessions. The first row has been completed as an example of the sort of answers you might give. You will need to copy the table into your notes so you have space to fill it in.
- Once you have completed the activity, review your responses by reading the commentary at the end of this session plan. Update your own responses as necessary.

The scenario has been written so that it can be interpreted in the context of any phase. You should consider the case in the context of your pupils, school context and specialism.

## Managing a smooth start to lessons

It's early in the first term of the academic year. You are finding that when pupils arrive at your classroom, it takes up to 10 minutes for them all to arrive and become settled and ready to start (1). There are particular pupils who are consistently the last to arrive at the lesson, by which point you just want to get started in order to engage the class in their learning (2). The staggered start to the lesson is eating into important instruction time and creates an unsettled atmosphere, which you then find difficult to eradicate (3). When you begin the lesson, you find that there are some pupils who are not focused (e.g. whispering to one another, fidgeting with equipment and clearly not actively listening) which often means you need to repeat instructions, explain things again, or have some pupils who are ready to move on and some who are unable to because they weren't focused (4).



<b>Point</b>	<b>What is happening here?</b>	<b>What decisions must the teacher make? What are their options?</b>	<b>What would you do here? Why?</b>
1	Pupils are arriving and entering the classroom at different times, often late.	The teacher needs to set a routine in place for how the lesson begins – give clear expectations of pupils and emphasise the importance of punctuality. They also need to consider the school policy on dealing with poor punctuality and ensure they are following the systems in place.	I would establish why pupils were arriving late – if there is a legitimate reason (lesson before is further away, meeting with a member of staff), I would support the pupils in trying to improve this situation. If the lateness is not excusable, I would follow school policy in following up the issue with the specific pupils involved.
2	N/A	N/A	N/A
3	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	N/A	N/A	N/A

## 2. Reflection

Having completed the activity above, reflect on how this connects to your own practice and how you can draw on learning from this exercise to improve your approaches to establishing the learning environment.

You might ask yourself:

- which points of the scenario resonate most strongly with your own experience?
- which points of the scenario would you be most/least confident in addressing?
- who in your school could help you develop your practice further in areas covered in this scenario?
- what immediate change can you make in your practice to improve the way that you communicate behavioural expectations and shape your classroom environment?

### So what could you do in this scenario?

1. Setting out clear expectations at the start of a new year is a powerful way to ensure consistency in your lessons. Decide how you want your lessons to begin – perhaps there is a school policy where all pupils must line up in silence outside the classroom, or perhaps you are allowed to choose how the lesson starts. Identifying a clear expectation which you reinforce every lesson will foster a calm and purposeful start to your lesson.

2. Find out why the pupils are late to your lesson by talking to them calmly, outside of lesson time away from the view of the rest of the class. Consider your school policy on punctuality – apply the appropriate sanction to deal with the late pupils, and continue to do so each time they are late, escalating your response as necessary if this is a repeat occurrence.
3. Preparation is key here. Set the expectation that there will always be the same routine at the start of each lesson. For example, pupils enter quietly and sit at their desk, remove their coats and get their equipment out for the lesson. It may be a good idea to have a task ready for them to engage with immediately, such as a quiz on prior learning, a ‘big question’ that requires deep thought, or perhaps responding to feedback in their exercise books. This will set the tone for a calm and purposeful lesson.
4. Again, this is about ensuring there are clear expectations which you consistently reinforce, ideally through modelling the behaviour you expect from pupils. The example in the research and practice summary of stopping instruction abruptly and looking pointedly at those not listening can be an effective strategy. It would also be appropriate to praise pupils who do conform to your expectations. Furthermore, you may want to reflect on the quality of your explanations – are they sufficiently structured and concise? As with the issue of punctuality, apply your school’s policy in managing the situation, initially aiming for the least-intrusive action but escalating issues as appropriate in line with the policy.

## Next steps: 5 mins

Bring your notes from this activity to your next mentor meeting. Be ready to discuss this activity with your mentor. Use your learning in this session to make at least one positive change to how you establish the learning environment in your lessons over the coming week.

◀ [Previous Week — 2: Understanding teachers as role models \(https://www.early-career-framework.education.gov.uk/ucl/ucl/2-understanding-teachers-as-role-models/2-understanding-teachers-as-role-models/understanding-teachers-as-role-models/\)](https://www.early-career-framework.education.gov.uk/ucl/ucl/2-understanding-teachers-as-role-models/2-understanding-teachers-as-role-models/understanding-teachers-as-role-models/)

[Next Week — 5: Understanding pupils as learners \(h\)](#) ▶

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