

*4th Edition*

# CLASSROOM BEHAVIOUR

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE  
TEACHING, BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT  
AND COLLEAGUE SUPPORT

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## About the author

Bill Rogers taught for many years before becoming an education consultant and author; he lectures widely on behaviour management, discipline, effective teaching, stress management and teacher welfare across the UK and Europe, Australia and New Zealand. Bill also works as a mentor-teacher, team-teaching in challenging schools. He is well aware of the challenges of teacher leadership in schools today.



Dr Bill Rogers read theology at Ridley College Melbourne University, then psychology and education also at Melbourne University. He is a Fellow of the Australian College of Education, Honorary Life Fellow of All Saints and Trinity College, Leeds University and Honorary Fellow at Melbourne University Graduate School of Education. He has written many books for SAGE Publications. This particular book, *Classroom Behaviour*, has been translated into several languages in its various editions.

To find out more about Bill's work, visit his website [www.billrogers.com.au](http://www.billrogers.com.au) where you will find full details of how to book him for a workshop or training event.

## Introduction: “I never thought I’d become a teacher”

“There’s some corner of a foreign field that is forever England ... a dust whom England bore ... gave once ... a pulse in the eternal mind ... gives somewhere back the thoughts England by England given ...”

**Rupert Brooke (The Soldier)**

### “The thoughts of England” ... given “somewhere back ...”

My formative schooling was in England. I never thought I’d become a teacher; I had mixed success at school. It wasn’t the work; I could handle that (by and large) – it was the culture of control and authority. Few teachers encouraged or allowed students much expression of their views or ideas. I also had many “run-ins” with petty, mean-spirited and, at times, cruel teachers: “shades of the prison house begin to close upon the growing boy”. Being chastised – even hit and caned – was an occupational hazard in those days (the mid-1950s to the early 1960s). On one occasion, at the age of 11, I was caned for breaking a pencil that another pupil had snatched from me. I had snatched it back, he wailed and I got “caught”. I was blamed in the ensuing fracas, and later caned. I was also caned for “answering back” on a number of occasions, for drawing pictures in my workbooks instead of listening to the teacher and for sneaking off to the shops at lunchtime (a major crime in those days). When a teacher was unfair, unjust, I’d try to make – what I thought – was a just point. I was punished yet again.



I survived – we all did – but I never thought I’d become a teacher.

In the 1950s (after the Second World War) many of the male teachers in my school would have served in the armed forces, and they didn’t take kindly to students appearing as even mildly challenging to adult authority. I suppose I was heralding the view that I had basic rights. At the heart of these rights was the desire to be treated with fundamental dignity and respect; strangely, I had no problems with the teachers who gave such respect. Thankfully there were a few ...

I can recall one particular teacher walking up to me (1961), in front of the class, and grabbing my shirt. (I’d been whispering something to a friend behind me.) He then pushed me with his fingers in my chest and said, “Were you brought up or dragged up, Rogers?” He didn’t like me. I stood up, heart thumping, and said, “It’s none of your bloody business!” (I was a little taller than him, even at 15.) No one was going to “have a go” at my parents or their parenting. I then turned and walked out of the class. The class was hushed – *waiting*; it was all very dramatic. As I walked out of the classroom several students gave me a knowing and “thank you” look ... I didn’t see “the git” (as we’d nicknamed him) for a week. He didn’t even put me on detention, surprisingly – he must have realised he’d gone too far (even then). He merely kept out of my way until the end of term.

I recall, as a student at school, looking out of classroom windows many, many, times (particularly when bored or when the teacher droned on and on). I could see, in the distance, the green fields and trees and gentle low hills of Hertfordshire. The window seemed to say, “Come!” I couldn’t.

I left school at 15; I ran away. I left because I’d been caught putting up a large picture of all the teachers I disliked on the central school noticeboard. It was 1962, just two days to go until the end of term. I’d spent a long time on this painting – in oils on a very large canvas – the faces painted in the manner of Salvador Dali; the faces of the teachers “melting”, merging into the darker, swirling, background. I had come into school early, that particular day, with the unsigned painting rolled up hidden under my blazer. It was my message, my “statement”; a parting *coup de grâce*. I was observed by a prefect as I surreptitiously pinned up the painting. He reported me, although he didn’t have to. I hadn’t signed it, though my friends knew ... At the form assembly our senior master held up the painting (thereby giving it a second public viewing), looked at me and said, “You know what is going to happen to you, don’t you, Rogers?” Well, I’d been caned before. I sighed, frowned, shrugged my shoulders looking suitably mollified. He hadn’t seen any humour in my actions ...

He rolled up the painting and as he dismissed the class I had seen him put it on the desk in his office area adjacent to the form classroom. I hid, a little way up the corridor and when he wasn’t looking, I sneaked in and retrieved my property, stuck



it under my school jumper and – *en route* to Period One – put it back on the notice-board yet again (surreptitiously). Later that morning the Form 4 students were watching a film in the upstairs double classroom; a black and white nature film (*Otters in Canada* or something like that). It was probably a “filler activity”, it being within the last two days of summer term. We were whispering in the darkness, pretending to be absorbed in the film, when a knock on the door heralded yet another prefect. The teacher turned off the projector, a beam of light from the opened door fell across the front of the darkened classroom and a voice said, “Mr Smith wants to see Billy Rogers *immediately*”. The teacher said something like, “Alright, if he’s here I’ll send him as soon as the film has finished”. He didn’t seem to take the prefect’s words particularly seriously – at least the “immediacy” part. The door closed, and the darkness and the noise of the film gave me enough “cover” to sneak out. I whispered to my friend, “Don’t say anything, I’m off – home”. I tip-toed quietly, my back pressed along the wall, moving carefully in the darkness. I opened the door as quietly as I could, “escaped” and found partial freedom.

We had a letter a week later, from the headmaster (after school closure for the summer term – we didn’t have a phone). “We are deeply disappointed with your son’s behaviour ...” it went on, or words to that effect. My parents asked me what I wanted them to do about “all this”. Wisely, they let me go to another school – for six months or so. Just before my sixteenth birthday my family migrated to Australia (for ten English pounds). Excellent value. I didn’t know (how could we) what future would await us as the ocean liner left England’s green and chalky cliffs ...

Many years later, on one of my many trips back to England to conduct seminars, and lectures, on behaviour management and discipline issues in schools and universities, I met a teacher whose father had taught me at the high school where I had painted “*the picture*”. I relayed the account of the painting episode and he shared it with the local press (I didn’t know he had passed on the story). The article detailed me as a self-proclaimed academic failure, who failed his 11-plus exam and whose strongest schoolday memories were of canings received for rebellious behaviour but who is now an education consultant on that very topic.

I was a little annoyed at the line in the press “self-proclaimed academic failure ...” (I’ve never said that or believed that): annoying journalistic licence I suppose. But there is a lesson in this trip down memory lane. You can’t predict where a student will go or what he or she may become. Some of my teachers had said – in effect – and sometimes in words, “You won’t amount to anything ...”, and then had added the *because* statement of the day: “because you didn’t listen” or “won’t listen”, or “because you won’t concentrate or apply yourself”. There is also the lesson that *learning is lifelong*, that education doesn’t finish at school, or with school. There is, obviously, a difference between *schooling* and *education*.

I eventually became a teacher – many years later. Some of my teachers way back at least taught me how *not* to discipline: how not to embarrass, criticise and shame children. They also taught me how *not* to teach. Of course, thankfully, I had a few good, kind and generous teachers too. We always remember such teachers. They affirmed, encouraged and believed in me and enabled me to continue learning and value learning and education to this day. They also enhanced an early, and positive, belief that “I could do it”.

It was Haim Ginnot<sup>1</sup> who spoke of the crucial consequences of teachers’ actions which have the power to affect children’s lives for better or worse. Being able to open, or close, the minds and hearts of children is a responsibility for all teachers to reflect upon. In my journey as a teacher I have had to rethink many aspects of classroom behaviour, teacher behaviour, the purposes and limitations of discipline and management, and how we can establish and sustain more cooperative classrooms, where rights and responsibilities work together for the benefit of all.

This book is the outcome of many years of in-service training with teachers and countless hours in the classroom with colleagues as a mentor-teacher in Australian and British schools.

Having made over 40 visits to the UK (and Europe) to conduct seminars, and professional development, in schools and with education authorities and universities, I hope the link between my Australian teaching and consultancy experiences and my in-service work in the UK will continue to find a receptive (and useful) audience here.

## **A few important prefacing notes to the text from here on ...**

### **Tactical pausing (...)**

This book has many case examples and case studies illustrating distracting and disruptive behaviours. These are drawn directly from my work with colleagues as a mentor-teacher. All the practices and skills explored in this book are drawn primarily from those mentoring experiences (as well as supported by research in these areas).

In many of the dialogue exchanges between teachers and students – within those case studies – throughout the book, you will find a set of brackets with an “ellipsis” (...). This signals (in the text) a typical teacher behaviour I choose to describe as “tactical pausing”. This is a conscious behaviour whereby the teacher *briefly* pauses in their communication to emphasise the need for student attention, or allow some processing by the student of what the teacher has just said. It can also communicate (to older children) a sense of expectant “calming”.

For example, if we beckon, or direct, a student to come across to us, in the playground, from several yards away, we need to get eye contact first; a cue to "attention". This is easier (obviously) if we know the student's name. If we don't, we probably lift our voice (as we look in their direction) – without shouting – and say, "EXCUSE ME (...)! EXCUSE ME (...)" (Do we want to be excused?) Or we may say, "Oi (...)! Oi (...)" We might use a generic, "FELLAS (...)! Fellas (...)", or "Guys (...)". Having "called" them, we – then – tactically pause ... The tactical pausing (...), in directional language, is our attempt to initiate and sustain some attention and focus.

In the classroom we frequently include tactical pausing when engaged in management and discipline. Several students are chatting away as the teacher seeks to settle the class at the beginning of a lesson. She scans the room with her eyes (saying nothing). As the restlessness settles she says, "Looking this way and listening (...) ..."; she tactically pauses. Lowering her voice she repeats, "Looking this way and listening, thanks (...)". Again she tactically pauses to engage student take-up ... Sensing the class attention and focus, she *then* says: "Good morning everyone ..." and begins another teaching session. Tactical pausing is a small aspect – but an important small aspect – of overall teacher behaviour.

### No disclaimers

There are books whose disclaimer reads: "All characters are fictitious ... any resemblance to ..." It's the opposite in this book. Every example and case study, even the briefer "snatches" of teacher–student dialogue, are drawn directly from my teaching/mentoring role in schools. My own teaching, these days, comes out of periodic peer-mentoring – working directly in a team-teaching role with primary and secondary teachers who are seeking to be more consciously reflective of their day-to-day teaching, behaviour leadership and discipline. Mentoring is a joint professional journey: there is no superior–inferior relationship. The aim is to build *reflective* professional practice (see Chapter 8).

In this book each skill or approach suggested is supported by case examples (and case studies) taken from recent teaching situations that I have been involved in as a mentor-teacher. I have been engaged in such mentorship (often in very "challenging schools") over the past 15 years.

I have changed the names of colleagues (teachers) and students wherever ethical probity demands. I have even changed grade and subject allocations and gender where I thought necessary, without changing the behavioural context and meanings of the real examples and situations noted. As I wrote each case example, each



“snatch” of teacher–student(s) dialogue, the memories of particular classes, and particular students – even particular days – came back – easily, quickly. I could even “relive” some of the emotion that occasioned some of the more difficult discipline situations my colleagues and I have had to address.

In sharing these case examples with you, my aim is always to draw forth concepts, approaches, principles, practices and skills of effective teaching, management and discipline. As I write, I am also acutely aware of the fact that, as a teacher, you are constantly on the go from the moment you walk in the school gates. Being acutely aware of what the day after day after day of teaching can be like, I have sought to address ineffective as well as effective teacher practice, always distinguishing between what one *characteristically* does and what one does as a result of bad-day syndrome (p. 22f).

There is never a stage when we stop being a reflective teacher (or learner). I hope this book enables your own professional reflection and supports and encourages you in your teaching journey.

### **Theories, positions and this book**

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There are a number of well-established theoretical positions addressing behaviour management and discipline in schools. Like any theoretical approaches, these range across a continuum, normally categorised (in the literature) as ranging from explicit teacher control (for example, particular forms of assertive discipline) to “non-directive” approaches (for example, “teacher effectiveness training”). These theoretical “positions” – on a continuum – are in part philosophic, in part pedagogic and in part psychological, and they all have implications for one’s values and practices as a teacher. This book is not a discussion of differing theoretical approaches, positions or “models”. When “my” approach has been noted and discussed in different behaviour management texts I am portrayed as somewhere in the middle of a theoretical continuum – broadly described as “democratic discipline” or “positive behaviour leadership” or “interactionist” or “referent power”. If readers are interested to peruse theoretical models, I would suggest the excellent texts of Edwards and Watts (2008), Charles (2005), Wolfgang (1999), Tauber (1995) and McInerney and McInerney (1998).

There is, fundamentally, nothing new in these theoretical “models”. At base they delineate the degree, and kind, of teacher leadership exercised in behaviour management and discipline. They also highlight the degree, and kind, of leadership intervention a teacher should exercise in matters of discipline. While I have found many theorists very helpful in my practice as a teacher, and in my research as





university lecturer and writer, my interest has always been focused on how to bring our "philosophy", our values, our delineation of ourselves as teacher-leader *within the practicalities of day-to-day* teaching. And, further, how we utilise our behaviour leadership to build positive, working, relationships with our students.

In writing this text I have sought – at every point – to ask not just *why* I should lead and discipline in a given way (the value question), but *what* and *how* I should lead, guide, enable, manage, correct and support students (the utility question).

## Note

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- 1 Haim Ginott was a professor of Psychology at New York Graduate School (1922–73). He did much to develop a model of discipline that advocates dignified, respectful and congruent communication with one's students. His emphasis on the positive power of teacher leadership has always been a source of great encouragement and assistance in my own journey of teaching and mentoring.