2

A normal teaching day?: A case example of supply teaching

You come most carefully upon your hour.

(Shakespeare, *Hamlet, I: i)*

Liz Smith is a supply teacher in her mid-thirties; she's back teaching (after a break for family commitments). She enjoys a few days' teaching, in different schools most weeks; sometimes she gets several straight days at one school. She's had an early morning call from the 'supply provider'. Sometimes she gets the call the night before. Today she's got a grade 6.

Liz gets to school early – East London. She has not taught in this particular school before. It's 8.15 a.m. She knows how important it is to get to a school early; paperwork, directions, check out the classroom, get focused etc. She parks in a place far from any spot that looks like it is reserved, or those that the regular teachers will want to use. (It's just early 'protocol'.)

She unpacks her 'gear' – a large plastic tub and a bag. She has brought the normal supply teacher's 'kit': extra pens, rulers, pencils and paper; chalk, duster and whiteboard markers just in case (she's been caught before); a range of user-friendly worksheets (just in case – for 'early finishers' and the few 'bored' students); several 'largish' laminated rule-posters outlining, in bold colourful lettering, the basic rules she'll remind the class of at the outset of the day. She's even brought her own cup (not as a 'Linus blanket' but another just-in-case 'protocol'). At one school, some years back, she'd gone into the staff room at morning tea, reached for a cup from the shelf and some miserable person had said 'That's *my* cup!' She felt like telling her to . . . She didn't, she 'apologized'.

'What kind of class will I have?' Liz muses as she heads for the admin-

istration. She knows she's got 11–12-year-olds (grade 6); she's a little anxious (naturally) she hasn't worked at this school before. As a supply teacher she's had a wide range of classes – mostly at the hard-to-manage end of the distribution through to the 'lunatic' (she rarely goes back to those schools).

The office secretary is inviting, helpful – she welcomes her and hands her a 'pack'. Smiling she says, 'I'm sure you've seen one of these before?' The 'pack' contains a user-friendly map of the school, the names of the teachers and their respective classes, the specialist teachers and aides (some schools even include small photos of staff). The bell times (recess) and assembly times are set out along with the day's timetable. 'I've written in your photocopy number for the day.' Dropping her voice she adds, 'Limit 60 . . . OK? Cheers.' The secretary points out that her ' "teaching buddy" – we couldn't really think what else to call them – for today is Carmel Brown (6B) she'll probably be in the staffroom or her class. She'll take you to her room, show you round, be on hand. Hope you have a good day with 6D.'

Off to the staffroom (the map helps) where she sees several teachers having an early cuppa and a chat; one approaches, welcomes her to the school and introduces her to the others.

'Have you got Paula's class?'

'Paula?'

'Paula Davies, 6D.'

'Oh yes.'

One of the teachers gives a wry grin, 'I wish you the best . . . Watch out for Troy.' The speaker heads off to her class. (How many Troys, Nathans and Melissas has she been warned to 'watch out for' since taking up supply teaching? One of the other teachers notes, 'They're not that bad really. Who's your teaching buddy?' They chat for a while and Carmel Brown (teaching buddy) comes in, walks over and introduces herself. Liz goes down the corridor with her colleague to yet another class. It isn't always this welcoming, this supportive. She's learned to take the rough with the smooth.

She checks with her colleague about any particular routines she needs to be aware of with the grade 6s.

- Do they line up before coming into class; how?

- Any special seating plan?
- Any particular ways their regular teacher gets whole-class attention? (p. 58).

School-wide routines are noted in the support teacher's pack. Her support colleague runs through the 'time-out plan' – 'just in case'. (This too is listed in 'the kit plan'. The first 'time-out' port-of-call is the teaching buddy's classroom.)

'All the best, Liz.'

Carmel moves into her class next to Liz's classroom for the day; it's 8.30 a.m. She scans the room, checks out the seating arrangements (rows), resource books and class pets (just goldfish). It is a bright, attractive (if old) classroom environment. It 'feels' OK – *she now has to make it OK*.

The teacher's desk is quite tidy; it's not always the case. In some classrooms she has worked in it looks somewhat like a tip. She sometimes can't find the class roll, or any set-work, or the set-work that is left is ambiguous or minimalist ('revise work on Tudor houses . . . ' 'Revise pattern and order . . . ' 'Check all spelling lists . . . ' – What spelling lists?). On those days her personal armoury of work topics, worksheets, activities and games always comes in handy and often gives the students a 'novelty-break' from their normal 'fare'.

The regular teacher has left some set-work in a folder on the teacher's desk. She notes that the first period includes literacy, a full grammar revision (with lesson framework) on prepositions. There are some worksheets to extend the class discussion. 'Hmmm . . . prepositions?' – she gets an idea and decides that a quick visit to the infant department might help. She notices that there are no rules posted up anywhere in the classroom – well it's term three.

Liz quickly puts up her three rule-posters – blu-tacked to the chalkboard. Their language is positive, concise, behavioural:

To learn well here:
- we put our hand up in question/discussion time,
- we use our 'partner-voices' inside,
- if we need teacher assistance we . . .

To show respect here we:

To feel safe here we: (see pp. 68–70)

At 8.55 a.m. she hears the first bell – the reminder/warning bell for

students to come in from the playground (or wherever) to class. This school has a 'lining-up' policy; Liz goes to the classroom door.

She's aware that some of the class will be a little anxious at the arrival of the 'new' teacher; she'll be 'different'. Some students will be naturally inquisitive. 'Will she be strict?' 'Nice?' 'Nasty?' 'A pushover?' 'Will she have a sense of humour?' 'What kind of work will we do?' She knows that the students will be asking such questions as soon as they see her at the door. Some of the students, she knows, will actively test her mettle. 'What can we get away with today?' (She's used to that.)

A few students run up and brake sharply at room 15's classroom door. 'Where's Ms Davies?' Another adds, 'You gunna be our teacher?' Another adds provocatively: 'You're not our teacher!' ('Is that Troy?' she wonders). She doesn't answer these questions, she gives a general answer to them all. 'I'm Ms Smith. Your regular teacher is away today. I'll be taking your class.'

She is pleasant but she won't start mini-discussions now, outside the classroom. She'll give the full introduction later. She scans the restless group in a rough semblance of 'a line', and says, 'Settling down, everyone.' She pauses to give some take-up time. The bulk of the students have arrived. 'Troy' says, 'When we going in?' (Poor chap has been standing outside his classroom for 40 seconds.) Another adds, 'Yeah, what you doing here, Miss – you going to be our teacher?' (Troy's mate has an attentionally sing-song voice.) She *tactically* ignores this comment. She sees them settle, she adds, 'My name is Ms Smith, I'll be taking 6D today while Ms Davies is away . . . Before we go in, folks – remember we're going into a classroom; I notice a few hats and coats still on. Thanks.'

This descriptive reminder is a conscious preference over merely telling them (e.g. 'Take your hats and coats off') or asking 'why': 'Why have you got your hats on when we're clearly going into a classroom?' 'Why are you head-butting him down the back there?' (to two lads down the back of the line who are playfully punching each other). Instead she lifts her voice and says: 'Boys, playtime's over – we're going into class.' (Sometimes she'll add 'We keep our hands and feet to ourselves here'.)

'When we go in,' she adds, 'please sit quietly in your regular seats. Thanks. Off we go.'

She opens the door, stands aside and greets them, smiling, as they come in. If any push or shove she'll direct them to 'stand aside for a moment – thanks', adding 'In our class we come in without pushing and shoving.' Her tone is clear; she is defining (briefly) a purposeful entry to class. If she lets them just barge in, noisily, coats and hats still on, pushing and shoving it will make the next 10 minutes that more difficult. She knows that how a teacher establishes entry to a classroom is crucial – it's a defining part of the lesson or day.

The class files in, (just a few minutes of the day have passed!) Some slump in their seats (Troy?), some return her smile, most sense a 'businesslike' start. Liz waits for the group to initially settle. She stands at the front of the room, scanning the faces, now and then making brief eye-contact (a few look away). She looks relaxed, expectant of their co-operation. Her body language is 'open' (no folded arms, no dropped head or tense frowning). With a restless class she often cues the expectation of whole-class attention and focus by a verbal cue: 'Settling down', with a brief tactical pause to allow take-up, adding 'Eyes and ears this way,

thanks.' She's learned that whenever she gives management directions it helps to *focus on expected behaviour* instead of focusing merely on the negative behaviours: 'You shouldn't be talking should you?' (Not a helpful question!) She also knows that standing with her arms folded, tapping her foot ('I'm waiting, *thank you*!') or pacing up and down while trying to get attention ('You're too noisy! Be quiet!') only telegraphs corresponding motoric restlessness in those students with 'undiagnosed ADD' (attention deficit disorder)!

She is aware of her general body language; her manner, her tone of voice. She is not an 'actor' but she is aware she needs to project a confident teacher-leadership where she is seen to be sure, in herself, in her role. As they settle she briefly acknowledges those students who are attending, and listening ('Thanks') as she makes scanning eye-contact.

Confidence

She is aware that the way she 'presents' (comes across) needs to look, and sound, confident. While naturally anxious at times (with some of the secondary classes she has taken) she knows these are students – children and young people. She knows they respond to confident, positive, relaxed leadership. She smiles often; her relaxed and positive demeanour and spatial presence often – almost always – sees a positive correspondence in her students.

Her 'dress' (she would rather dress 'up' than 'down') befits her role; she has seen supply teachers who appear to have no regard for any sense of reasonable professional dress. She looks 'smart' (without overdoing it; she is aware – in part – that clothes 'maketh' . . .). She looks as if she means business – the business of teaching.

They are 'settled' now; a few are leaning back a little languorously in their seats (she *tactically* ignores that for now). A few are leaning back in their seats; she gives some brief eye-contact to those students adding, 'Four on the floor with your seats, thanks.' Again her tone is pleasant and expectant as she quickly reclaims whole-class attention. She 'formally' begins: 'Good morning again; as I said outside our classroom just before my name is . . . '

A few students start to 'gas-bag' to each other while Ms Smith is

addressing the class. She pauses. The students in question look up. She asks them their names then describes their behaviour 'Crystal, Tiffany, Elisa,' Ms Smith *tactically* ignores the sibilant sigh of Elisa. 'You're talking, I'm trying to speak to our class.' She already starts to use some inclusive language ('*our* class'). She sometimes adds a brief *simple direction* to the descriptive comment e.g. 'Looking this way and listening, thanks.' Again her voice tone *sounds* as if in addressing their behaviour it is no 'big deal'; she is keeping the flow and tenor of her discipline 'least intrusive'. She has learned to direct students to expected *behaviour* using action phrases (verbs/participles), e.g.: 'Hands up without calling out.' 'Looking this way, thanks.' She is conscious not to use 'requests' (e.g. '*Would you mind* putting your hand up to ask a question?').

Liz resumes the flow of the lesson quickly. If a student is cockily rude, calling out silly or provocative comments, she will firmly, briefly, assert: 'That kind of comment is unacceptable (even totally unacceptable) in our classroom' (p. 33) or 'I don't speak to you like that I don't expect you to speak to me rudely' or 'We've got a class rule for respect. I expect you to use it.'

She is aware that when she needs to use an assertive tone or manner she avoids any hostile or aggressive tones: pointing, gesticulating fingers, overly raised voice (as distinct from a firm voice; replete with serious intent). She has learned to briefly, specifically, *describe* what it is that is offensive in the student's behaviour, and assert that such behaviour is unacceptable. She then continues without holding grudges (the hardest part!); she appears unthreatened by some of these young 'cocksparrows'.

On rare occasions she has had to direct a student to leave the classroom and take time-out – to go to a 'set place' or 'person' as nominated in the school's time-out policy (pp. 89–93). As she marks the class roll a few students give false names. She has already said it will take a while to learn their names; she'll 'do her best with their help'. 'Each time I speak to you personally, even in whole-class discussion please give me your name.' (She's learned Troy's name already and Crystal, Tiffany and Elisa). One of the students responds to the roll call with a name that evokes laughter. She suspects the 'game' adding, 'You've either got a humourous name or you're using two names. I'm sure you didn't mean to make it difficult for me?' She leaves it at that and moves on. One lad uses a girl's name (to giggles). Ms Smith pauses, and says in a firm whisper, 'When

you've remembered your real name let me know.'

Her straight-faced, pleasant, repartee is returned with the lad raising his eyes to the ceiling, and giving a wry grin. She moves on – keeping 'the flow'.

A student walks in late. He's surprised to see a different teacher: 'Who are you?'

'My name is Ms Smith, welcome to our class; what's your name?'

'Kent,' (he frowns, a bit suspicious).

'You're late,' she says this merely as an acknowledgement, she is pleasant – smiling. She doesn't ask *why* he's late (at this stage in the lesson). All she is doing is *redefining the moment* by 'stopping him', acknowledging what is occurring (his lateness) and directing him to a seat. She has seen other teachers let students walk in five minutes late, walk past their teacher (ignoring the fact that they're talking to the class), and the student then starts chatting to a few classmates as they take their seat behaving as if the teacher doesn't exist.

'Kent, there's a couple of seats by the window, thanks.' She gives a brief incidental 'direction'. As she reclaims the flow of speaking to the class group, taking her eyes off him, he says, 'But I sit with Adam and Craig down the back there.' He points to the back row. Ms Smith has no idea if he normally sits there; anyway all the back row is 'filled' and she is not going to have the drama of a big seat rearrangement now (she *may* do that later). She is well aware that confronting language is counter-productive (e.g. 'I don't care who you sit with, I said sit there!')

She *partially* acknowledges what he's said (she's learned that this avoids most counter-challenge) and redirects, 'Those seats down the back are taken – for now there are spare seats by the window. Thanks, Kent.'

She beckons him to move across to that seat. He shuffles off; wry mouth, rocking his head (is he trying to say something? Probably). Ms Smith is *tactically* ignoring the student's body language and quiet mutter. Her eyes are now, quickly, back on 'her class group' and she reclaims the 'flow' of the establishment of the day's activity.

'Before we start any of our lessons today, you'll have noticed I've got some posters on the board here. They are the classroom rules I'll be using with you today. I know your regular teacher, Ms Davies, has rules with

you. I've checked with the principal and, as you'll see, these rules are almost the same as those Ms Davies made with you back in August.'

If at any point a student calls out or butts in she will point back to the rule-poster as a visible reminder, and may add, 'Remember our rule for asking questions/or for class discussion, thanks.' Some calling out behaviour she will *tactically* ignore, but if it is repeated she will direct the individual, or whole-class, to 'remember our rule'. The rule-posters address three core rights: *the right to learn* (without disruption or unfair distraction); *the right to feel safe*; *the right to have one's person/property treated with respect* (no put-downs, teasing) and highlight the basic, fair, responsibilities that flow from those rights.

OUR LEARNING RULE:
We all have a right to learn:
– this means we have expected materials,
– give learning time our best shot,
– hands up (without calling out),
– partner-voice and co-operative talk (in class learning time).

OUR SAFETY RULE (covers behaviours like appropriate movement, use of equipment, keep hands and feet to yourself).

OUR RESPECT RULE (covers behaviours like personal space, property of class and other class members, use of language [not put-downs, cheap shots, swearing]).

She holds up a small, fluffy toy rabbit and starts the first formal lesson for the day (prepositions).

The novelty of the rabbit sees smiles and mild surprise on the faces: 'What's all this then?' She takes the rabbit to the board writing the word 'preposition'.

Facing the class she says, 'I've a box here and a rabbit – haven't named him yet. He's stuffed, I mean (she winks) he's a stuffed toy.' (She'd raced down to the infant department to get a toy animal before class time.) 'This rabbit's home today is this box. I'll need a volunteer to help him home.' A dozen hands shoot up. Several students call out 'Me!' 'Can I come up?' Stating the obvious, yet again, she says, 'A number of students are calling out.' (She is careful not to say 'all' students.) 'Remember our class rule,' (she points briefly to the poster), ' "Hands up without calling out". Thanks.' She'll have to reinforce this fair expectation (via the rule)

several times – patiently. She knows it's important not to simply accept calling out (even with hands up).

Several hands stay up, she numbers them off, '1, 2, 3 . . . You can put your hands down, I'll remember. Ta.' One of the boys calls out quickly, several times 'Me, me, me, me,'. The teacher holds up a 'blocking-hand' (palm out). He stops – their eyes meet across the room, every student obviously listening in – 'I thought your name was Daniel not Mimi.'

'What?' (He doesn't immediately get the dry wit.)

'Mimi?' (me me, me me)

'Oh – yeah.'

She adds, 'Hands up and I'll listen, Daniel.' She drops eye-contact and resumes the flow of instructional time.

She chooses a student – Mandy. 'Now, Mandy, a bit of help for the rabbit. First – he needs a name.' Mandy chooses 'Heath'.

'So, Mandy, how will Heath get *into* the box, or *on* the box or, maybe, – *under* the box?'

Using the unusual, kinaesthetic, novelty (the rabbit) she develops the key elements in this unit of work: the main nouns, 'box' and 'rabbit'; the key verbs 'jumps', 'hops', 'crawls' and the prepositions 'in', 'on', 'over', 'near', 'by' etc.

Mandy chooses a preposition and – several students later – the main concept is sinking in as the words build on the board. She then extends the language. 'What kind of rabbit? Fat? Lazy? Big? Small?' One of the boys (Daniel) suggests that 'his' rabbit, 'Fritz', 'waltzed' 'towards' 'the box'. 'Has Fritz been watching *Neighbours*?' she smiles at him. Students contribute to a more involved and extended sentence structure that forms the basis for the on-task phase of the lesson.

One of the boys, Troy, asks if he can go to the toilet. As she is still in the middle of whole-class teaching she gives a conditional direction: 'When I've finished class teaching time I'll organize a toilet break.' She has learned that a 'conditional' direction ('when/then') nearly always meets a co-operative response.

She never asks a student 'why' they want to go to the toilet 'now' or 'why didn't you go at recess time?' Nor does she simply say, 'No, you can't.' She knows a straight negative (on a toilet request) can easily create unnecessary conflict.

On occasions (in other schools, mostly secondary) she had a few students 'demand' to go to the toilet (during whole-class instructional time). 'I'm desperate for a pee Miss – desperate!' On such occasions she lets them go but keeps a careful record of time and how long. She always checks the school's 'release from class' policy (as it varies across schools; p. 119).

Ms Smith clarifies the set learning task and the key worksheets for 'learning-task-time'. Before she finishes the whole-class phase of the lesson she clarifies the importance of 'partner-voice' – co-operative talk (talk that doesn't focus on *Neighbours* or *Home and Away*; how to get her assistance and appropriate movement around the room.

She discusses with them the meaning of 'partner-voice' inviting their understanding. 'Remember . . . there's 28 of us in here; a small room, a lot of voices, we need to make the effort: 'soft voice', 'eye-contact', 'speaking with the person next to you – not *the student three seats away.*' She smiles as she emphasizes this point.

While the noise level of students' voices and normal movement will naturally rise during on-task learning time, she will verbally, and non-verbally, cue the class if group noise gets too loud. She will also encourage individuals when they make the effort to use a quiet, working voice. Sometimes she will non-verbally cue to a few students by indicating 'volume turn-down'. She consciously makes an effort to keep any corrective discipline encouraging and positive and to keep the emphasis on teaching and learning.

During the on-task phase of the lesson, Ms Smith circulates around the room to encourage, give feedback, refocus off-task students, help etc. She's learned that it is important to circulate rather than sit at her desk and seek to 'manage' from there. She notices a couple of students sitting, doing nothing, turning around talking (and distracting) other students. She says, 'I notice you're not working' (she describes what they *are* doing). She's about to add the question designed to encourage some responsibility (e.g. 'What are you supposed to be doing now?') when one of the students says: 'I haven't got a pen.' The other student says. 'My pencil case was stolen from my locker.'

She's been caught before on this one. Rather than ask why they haven't got pens or rulers (or whatever), she alerts them to access her yellow box. 'See that box over there (she points to the 10'' × 4'' × 4'' box). There's pens

in there – red and blue pens.' The student whinges, 'Yeah, but I haven't got a ruler or any paper.' 'There's paper lined and plain next to the box, and rulers in the box.' The student mutters 'Shit.' The teacher adds a quiet parting aside, 'There's none of that in the box, there are pens and rulers.' She 'leaves', giving him take-up time and a quiet, implied, task reminder, 'I'll be back.' Each ruler, pen, pencil has a tip of yellow tape (visible). Some supply colleagues often put their names on the pens, etc. Other supply colleagues lend the pens and record the student's name in a 'loan book'. Either way it is thinking preventatively rather that reacting to events as they come. (She's learned to avoid asking 'why' a student doesn't have appropriate, necessary, equipment. That only ends in 'avoidance', 'excusing' or arguing (p. 30, 48).

A couple of boys are playing with small toys, half doing their work. Ms Smith suspects these boys may not be working too well together. She muses about the possibility of directing them to work separately (there are a few spare desks).

She goes over and asks to see their work. 'Hello boys, let me try to remember your names. How's the work going? Let's have a look.'

She is conscious of using 'proximity' and 'personal space' thoughtfully. She doesn't pick up the students' work without basic courtesies such as 'I'd like to have a look at your work, thanks.' 'Can I have a look?', 'How's it going then?' 'Do you mind if I write the correct spelling in the margin?'

She has a brief task-focused chat with the boys ('What are you supposed to be doing now?'). Her tone is pleasant, inquiring, positively focused on the work requirement. As she begins to move away she turns and says, quietly, 'Michael . . . I want you to put those Harry Potter toys in your desk or you can leave them on my table until recess'.

He protests he wasn't playing with them. She replies, 'Even if you weren't, I want you to put . . . ' (she repeats the directed choice). She knows that *simply* taking a student's personal toy, or trinket, will probably result in an unnecessary, and pointless, power struggle. Whenever she has given a student a directed choice ('in your desk or on my table') she hasn't yet had a student put their *objet d'art* on the teacher's table. On occasions where students refuse to put distracting objects away she will make the consequences clear through a deferred consequence (see p. 86, 87). She will not get drawn into power struggles.

The two students get back to work; slowly. There are a few sighs which she tactically ignores (p. 41f). She exercises a lot of conscious, *tactical*, ignoring, which keeps the flow, and focus, of her leadership on the main issue of teaching and learning.

Later in the lesson she comes across to the two boys to 're-establish' the working relationship with them (at their desks). She is pleasant; neither condescending or recriminating. She gives some brief, descriptive feedback, 'Aaron . . . you've completed that section on the common prepositions – that's an interesting use of adverb there in the way you've described how your rabbit jumped onto the box "immediately". What made him jump immediately?'

When Liz encourages her students she is conscious to:

- keep the focus on their effort, energy and contribution rather than to *globally* praise – 'That's great', 'marvellous', 'fantastic', 'brilliant'. These global words, as such, give no feedback about *what* was 'great', 'brilliant' or 'wonderful' etc.
- not qualify her encouragement/feedback e.g. 'You've written several thoughtful sentences here. *If you'd done that when I asked earlier in the lesson I wouldn't have had to remind you half a dozen times would I?*'
- to keep the encouragement 'private' (as it were) and not 'loudly' hold up a student's work and remark on it. As students get older they tend not to respond too positively to 'public praise' when the focus is academic feedback.

She is consciously aware of even *basic* posture reinforcement such as a smile, even a brief verbal acknowledgement, 'That's it', 'You've got it', 'That's right', 'Well done', 'You're on the right track'; an *appropriate* touch on the arm/shoulder when the student is back on task. 'That's it, Jonathan, you've set out the work plan, well done . . . Now what do you need to do next?'

This brief 'connecting reinforcement ' is very important, particularly if we have had to discipline a student earlier in the lesson. Even just coming back to the student's workplace to acknowledge, affirm and to give task feedback can be a form of re-establishing those normative working relationships between teacher and student. It is important, though, not to

discount any positive reinforcement given, i.e.: 'You've started very well, yes that's how to link the noun and the verb . . . *now if you had done that the first time instead of wasting time like I said before then you would have got much more work done, wouldn't you?*'

She continues to rove around the classroom; scanning, generally encouraging individuals, re-forming, clarifying, giving feedback and brief written comments where necessary.

If students have trouble working together, she will make the consequences of their task-avoidance, and distracting behaviour, clear to them through a 'choice': 'If you continue to keep distracting each other by talking I'll have to ask you to work separately – think about it. 'She will then move off and leave the consequences of their 'choice' with them. She will not brook discussion of the veracity of their protestations or their whining discounting – 'Gees, Miss, others talk and that as well!'

The most disruptive incident she has had today was with Troy. She had had a few 'run-ins' before recess when he had been wandering around during the on-task phase of the lesson hassling some of his 'class-mates'.

Having directed him back to his seat for the third time ('What are you supposed to be doing now Troy?' she had asked quietly, but firmly) he kicked a chair, it fell over and he swore (not at Ms Smith but at 'the ether'). 'F___!! Can't do nothing in here!! F—-ing do nothing.' She had been warned that Troy sometimes 'loses it'.

At this point in the lesson she directs him to leave 'our classroom'.

'Troy, I've asked you to settle down and work by the fair rules. You've continued to . . . ' (Here be *brief* and *specific* about the student's behaviour.) 'It's better you leave now.' (She resists the temptation to add 'before I snot you one!') She's doing her best to keep 'calm', assertive by 'calm') 'Go to . . . ', (the time-out option). 'I'll get together with you later to see how we can work things out.'

He walks out, pushing the door loudly, adding an *ex parte* 'Shit!' She doesn't comment on this but resumes the flow of the lesson. She will follow up with him at lunch recess. The policy at this school is that each department has nominated colleagues they can send a student to for 'time-out' (p. 89ff).

She welcomes him back (after lunch) having had a talk with him for 10 minutes at lunch time with the deputy head. No recriminations but a

positive reminder about what is expected after lunch recess (p. 87ff).

The bell will go soon – Liz has set her watch alarm for five minutes before first recess. She cues the whole-class for class attention (by 'tinging' a small glass with her pen).

'Eyes and ears this way . . . Thanks . . . ' She waits for them to process the whole-class direction. She is aware that if she starts talking over their natural working noise, or through it, it will only reinforce to the students that it is 'OK to talk while the teacher is up the front talking to us'. She waits for them to settle, cueing the half dozen individuals still working or 'chatting'. 'A number of students are still working. Dean, Siobhan, Hanady . . . Eyes and ears this way . . . Paul . . . Troy . . . Pens down. Thanks.'

She will not talk to the whole class, or give closure and exit directions, *until* they are all attending. She knows how easy it is to reinforce that pattern of behaviour where students are only half-listening, half-chatting *while* the teacher is talking. Even if she is 'only' here – at this school – for a day she wants to reinforce positive teacher leadership (she may be back!).

There are five minutes to go before recess. She has a quick whole-class recap of the lesson on prepositions, reinforcing they key ideas and skills of this unit of work. Any student who calls out she will *tactically* ignore, if they call out a second time she will give a positive, brief, rule reminder, 'Travis . . . remember hand up. Thanks.' Then, at that point, she will acknowledge any other students with their hands up (who are not calling out).

'Alright before we go out to recess a few reminders *for us all* . . . in a moment I want you to straighten the furniture, a quick tidy-up: pick up any litter off the floor, *off* . . . That's another preposition (off) and drop it *in* the bin on your way *out* (two more prepositions; they're everywhere). Thanks. Also, chairs *behind* the desks and we'll leave row by row.' A few students sigh (she tactically ignores this). 'Siobhan, your row first . . . Carmen, your row second, Travis, your row last.' She is well aware that this brief, prefacing, reminder is basic, but important. She has seen whole classes race out noisily where teachers do not clarify and enforce that expectation.

The bell goes. The first row leaves. As they do a couple of boys in the front row try to 'duck out'. 'Michael . . . Sean . . . back behind your chairs.' They sigh and click their tongues – 'Gees . . . it's recess.' The second row

leaves. As they do she says to Michael and Sean, 'I want to see you for a couple of minutes after class.' 'What for?' Michael whines. Michael pushes his chair hard against his desk; Sean mutters loudly, 'Can't do nothing here with her!' 'Two minutes,' she says as she turns away from them and directs the last row out.

Michael and Sean stay back sulkily leaning against the wall. Approaching them she says, 'I know you're probably annoyed that I've asked you to stay back for a couple of minutes.' She is not angry with them, she is pleasant but decisive.

'Yeah well, we didn't do anything – what do we have to stay in for?'

'I've asked you stay back only to remind you about our class rule for respect. Michael . . . Sean . . . I'm concerned about you trying to rush off before the bell and then getting uptight, kicking your chairs and saying what you did, Sean ("'Can't do nothing with her"). I won't speak disrespectfully to you so I don't expect you to speak disrespectfully about me.'

'It's not fair – the bell's gone,' whines Michael. She partially agrees, 'You're right, the bell had gone. In our class though the bell is a reminder for the class that class learning time is over – it's my job to dismiss the class (direct you all to leave). You two tried to beat the bell, eh?' (She smiles at them.) Boys – it's only a few minutes past the bell, that's all. I want you to enjoy the rest of playtime *and* the rest of our day together. OK?'

Michael and Sean reluctantly return a wry and jaded smile. She makes a conscious effort to finish this brief after-class chat as amicably as possible.

This brief follow-up has not taken long and the rest of the class will soon pick up the 'tribal tom-toms' re: the fact that this new teacher does not simply 'let things go'.

The boys wander off to recess. Ms Smith tidies up and heads off for a cup of tea.

As the day progresses she is conscious that the class are slowly 'getting used to her' and getting used to her 'style' and leadership approach. They are realizing that although she is decisive, and at times assertive, she is positive and encouraging in her feedback and general manner towards them. Her teaching has been largely enjoyable, and she has sought to keep them on-task at all times. To those few students who have engaged in

task-avoiding behaviour she made the consequential options clear: 'If you choose not to do the work now I'll have to ask you to stay back and complete it at recess.' She is always sensitive to the possibility that some students will have problems with the work. She will always adjust or modify task expectations with students and obviously so for students with special needs (something she checked with the grade leader that day). What she doesn't do is bargain, or 'plead' with the students: 'Well what work *do* you want to do then?'

A few students had moaned that 'This work was boring'. Rather than defend 'her work' she will acknowledge (sometimes with humour) that work can be boring sometimes but 'It is the work that we've all been doing today. How can I help you get it done more enjoyably?'

She has had students (in some schools) blatantly refuse to engage in the set learning task (or modified learning tasks). Rather than argue, or threaten, again she makes the consequences clear – *deferred* consequences. If she has a student say 'I don't care' she points out positively, briefly and firmly that she cares and then gives the student take-up time. If they in any way begin to interfere with other students' learning time she will give the 'choice' to stay and work by the fair rules or be directed away (out of the class) for time-out. At all times she avoids getting drawn into an 'argumentative' scenario, making clear, briefly, that their behaviour is 'their choice'.

Often, in such cases, the student's behaviour is an expression (perhaps a normative expression) of attentional or power-seeking behaviour ('I can do what I want and you can't stop me!'). It is unreasonable to expect a supply teacher to engage in the longer-term counselling support that the regular teacher would normally be engaged in. Supply teachers should be expected to teach, lead and discipline professionally and positively, and enjoy 'no blame' back-up when that small percentage of recidivist students effectively 'holds a class to ransom'.

By and large the day has gone well. As the clock winds towards 3.30 p.m. she is aware she needs to allow for pack-up, tidy-up and last feedback/marking for the afternoon session. She has had some 'fun' word games in the last 20 minutes, to finish with a more relaxed session.

She makes sure there is a monitor to hand out the 'notices' for that day. She reminds the class that the bell will be going soon – five minutes. 'Let's do the cleaner a favour. Last bits of litter off the floor, chairs on the

table. Thanks for tidying your desks so quickly. Remember, too, we leave row by row. Sean and Michael, your row first – walking (in two minutes).' She thanks them for their support as a class group this day.

'I've enjoyed my time with you all. I wish you all the best. You never know I may meet you again.' She scans the room as the school bell sounds, beckoning Sean's row to go. She has chats with a few individuals as they leave. Some come up to thank her. In *some* schools children have come up to her privately and asked her if *she* can be their *normal* teacher. ('Can you come and be our teacher all the time, Miss?'). She has a chat with the few parents who have come to pick their children up.

Liz makes sure she leaves the classroom tidy. If the teacher's desk is 'chaotically messy' (it is in some schools) she is careful to leave the class roll in another prominent place (rather than tidy the teacher's desk in a

way that might add insult to injury – she has been in some classrooms that seem to have an entrenched 'pig-sty' aesthetic).

She leaves a note explaining what she has covered that day and a brief, positive, comment on any students she has had to follow through with regarding time-out procedures (p. 89ff).

Liz hops into her car, having said goodbye to the head teacher (when she can find her/him). As she drives out of the car park she reflects, again, that today wasn't too bad. 'I even enjoyed myself at times.' She muses, briefly, that some of the students might remember what a preposition is (or at least how a 'rabbit' can move in relation to a box!).

There are many supply teachers like Liz in the profession. They do much more than simply 'cover' a class: they teach. Such teachers are invaluable to the profession of teaching, they support both their colleagues and, of course, the students. Over a day, or more, they enable a class (and a school) to be what they exist for – a workable, even enjoyable, learning community.