What do I need to do to set myself up for success?

Once you have a clear understanding of what you want to achieve as a literacy teacher, and have decided upon the procedures and routines that you'd like to use, it's time to get started. However your classroom, its resources and the print around its walls will all impact on your students' success. The pictures of classrooms used in this section are full of successful possibilities.

Arrange the classroom for literacy success

The size of your classroom, the number of students in your class and the grade that you are teaching will all require different room arrangements. Usually each room has an area where the whole class can gather, desks where students can work independently or cooperatively, designated areas for various subjects, storage for class resources and an area for the teacher. Figures 42 to 45 give various examples of creative classroom arrangements.

Figure 42   This Year 4 classroom has an area for the class to gather in front of the easel and whiteboard, as well as designated areas for storage and subject-specific equipment. The layout was influenced by the consideration for students to be able to refer to print around the walls.

Figure 43
This double classroom for kindergarten has a large library area and reading 'igloo', art and science tables and areas for dramatic play.

Figure 44
Desks in this small Year 1 room have been 'sacrificed' to ensure that there is enough space for students to work in groups around the room. Even though four students share a desk built for two, they seldom, if ever, find themselves sharing the space at the same time. Innovative class routines were planned in conjunction with innovative classroom layout. Students' work is celebrated and takes 'centre stage' on this free-standing display.

Figure 45 This small Year 1 room has space for numerous computers, a library area, maths and literacy equipment storage as well as an area for the teacher's desk and professional resources. Thoughtful planning and a tidy classroom are essential in this small room.

Teachers need to make the most of the available space in their rooms, regardless of the size. (Refer to Figures 46 and 47.) These classrooms have areas that enable the whole class to gather in front of the easel, interactive whiteboard or chalkboard. Students have a space of their own and various areas are designed for specific purposes.

Figures 46 and 47 Frequently used resources and equipment are stored within easy reach of the teacher's chair, especially during whole class shared reading and writing sessions and during class discussions.

It is equally important for teachers to have a space of their own to plan and to store programming and student information. Teachers have to organise space to suit their record keeping and planning needs. (See Figures 48 and 49.)

Figures 48 and 49
These show instances of the organisation of the space available to suit teachers' needs.

Classroom libraries are essential to every literacy classroom. They should be inviting, comfortable and full of a variety of interesting and treasured texts. If space cannot be spared for pillows or couches then classroom libraries can be stored and displayed on top of shelves and in book boxes. See Figures 50, 51 and 52 for some examples.

Figures 50, 51 and 52   Classroom library arrangements.

Technology now plays a central role in literacy classrooms. The amount and type of electronic equipment that is available to teachers will influence room layout. The equipment must be easily accessible to both teachers and students (Figure 53).

Figure 53 Computers and printers need to be close to the power source.

Additional areas could include space for writing, as well as special interest areas such as: science and mathematics, art and crafts, construction material, toys and games, home corner, the class puppet theatre, shop and school bag storage (Figure 54).

Figure 54 The layout of this kindergarten classroom encourages students to participate in engaging learning centres.

Gather equipment that supports literacy development

The equipment that teachers have will influence how they teach and what they ask students to do. Some of the equipment shown here is supplied by schools, e.g. books, pencils, paint, glue, while some equipment is made by teachers, helpful parents or friends, e.g. pillow slips for use in the class library, word cards for literacy games. Some equipment is bought from educational suppliers and still other equipment can be found in local shops, e.g. plastic containers for pencils or books. Additional equipment such as milk cartons or old newspapers are rescued from rubbish piles and reused. Figure 55 shows equipment frequently used by teachers and Figure 56 show equipment that is made available to students.

Figure 55 Writing centres can include: pens, pencils, various paper, scissors, glue, stimulus pictures and topic cards. Innovative storage ideas save space in the classroom.

Figure 56 Felt-tipped pens, a ruler or pointer, stickers and glue are kept near the easel for use during shared reading and writing. An interactive whiteboard will require appropriate, additional equipment.

Students also need equipment at their fingertips, e.g. pencils, glue, scissors, word lists, calculators, dictionaries and even water bottles, name cards and number lines. This equipment will need to be stored neatly on or nearby their desks. (See Figures 57 and 58.)

Figures 57 and 58   Equipment that students access regularly is stored in containers on their desks.

The smooth running of classrooms is facilitated when equipment is well organised and is easily accessible to students and when routines for collecting work for marking has been established. See Figures 59 and 60 for some excellent examples of organised material.

Figure 59   Craft equipment is made easily accessible.

Figure 60 Labelled boxes facilitate the easy collection of students' work.

Teachers organise their equipment to facilitate assessment and to support casual or visiting teachers. (See Figures 61 and 62.)
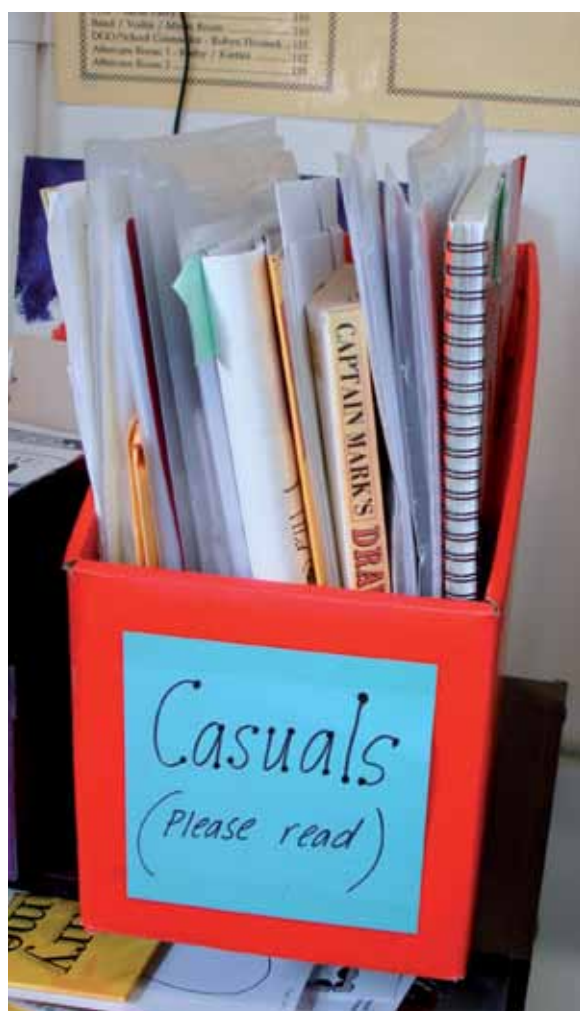
Figure 61 Information for casual teachers, which may include songs, games and activities that students already know, as well as school routines and policies.

Figure 62 Samples of students' work gathered for assessment.

A wide variety of reading materials need to be made available to students in the literacy classroom. Materials can be gathered for inclusion in literacy centre activities and for use during guided and independent reading. (See Figures 63 and 64.)

Figures 63 and 64
Reading materials can include: big books, home readers, workbooks, wordbooks, factual texts and narratives on the class topic.

Mathematics programs are enhanced when students engage with each other, while using a variety of hands-on materials. Their mathematical understandings will also be supported as they read and discuss quality texts. So also, students study and read about the environment. (See Figures 65 and 66.)

Quality texts and a range of resources such as computers, printers, digital cameras, tripods, microscopes, light tables, listening posts (see Figures 67 to 69) enhance learning opportunities across all subjects.

Figure 65   A mathematics corner in a classroom.

Figure 66   A display of environmental science resources.

Figure 67
A range of resources that enhance student learning.

Figure 68 A classroom listening post.

Figure 69
Computers and printers conveniently placed.

Entice students to engage with classroom print

Print that is displayed in classrooms can serve a variety of purposes and take various forms. It can be students' work or published materials. It may celebrate students' achievement or support class routines. It could describe the learning journey that students are undertaking or articulate class goals. And, most importantly, you and your students should use it regularly. The following figures record various displays of classroom print and their uses. Generally, students refer to and use room print that's inviting, instructive and helpful. These classrooms are both filled with purposeful text, but the print in this kindergarten class is very different from that found on the walls in the Year 4 room. (See Figures 70 and 71.)

Figure 70   A kindergarten display.

Class discussions and teaching and learning activities are reflected in the print displayed around the classroom. The examples on the following pages show jointly constructed text, a word wall and reminders about punctuation and grammar. (See Figures 72 to 78.)
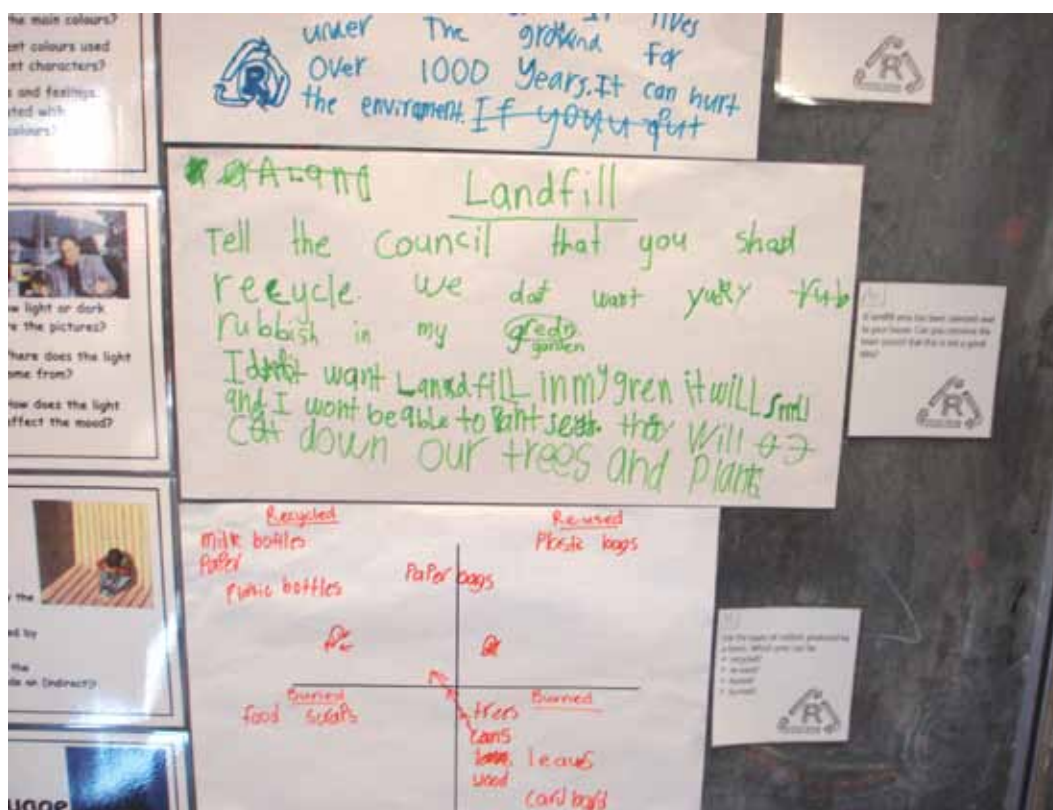
Figure 72
An example of Grade 1's recorded class discussions on recycling.

Figure 73
An example of a Word Wall.

Figure 75 A punctuation display.

Figure 74 A display of connectives.
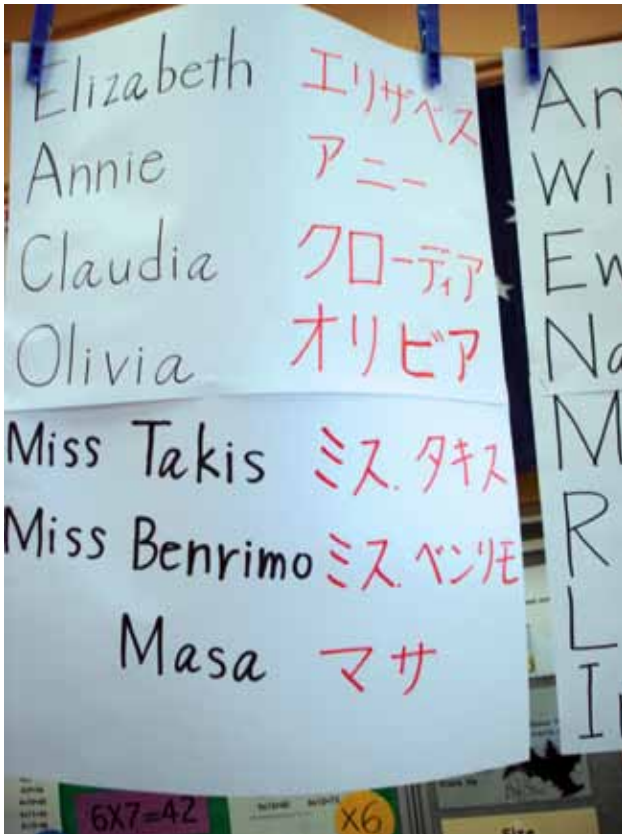
Figure 76   Print can be displayed in English, as well as other languages.

Figure 77   Classroom print can stimulate discussion about authors and literature.

Figure 78
Classroom print can record and celebrate students' work.

Classroom print supports learning and literacy understandings in all subject areas. (See Figures 79 to 82.)
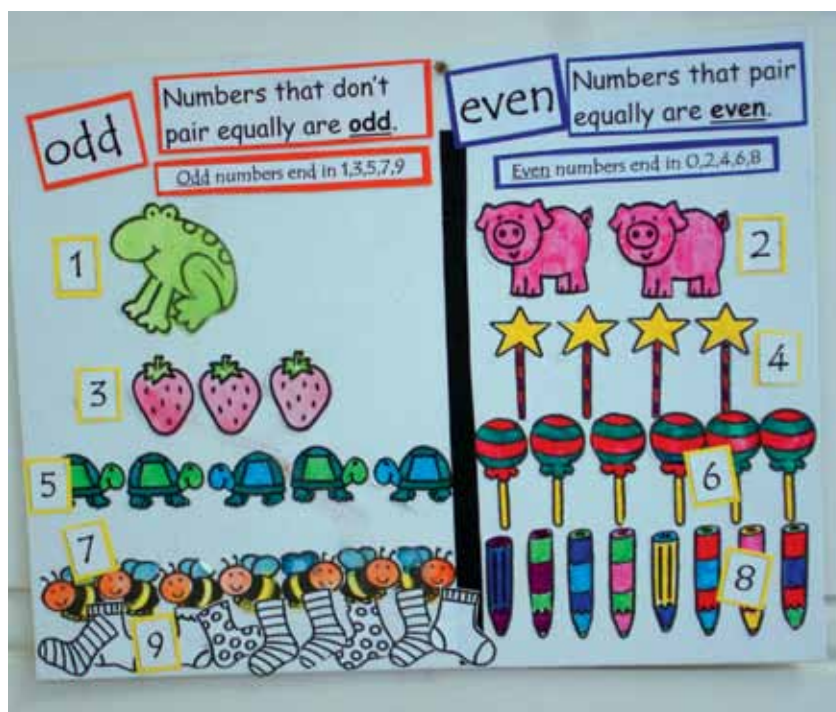
Figures 79, 80 and 81 Examples of various classroom print.
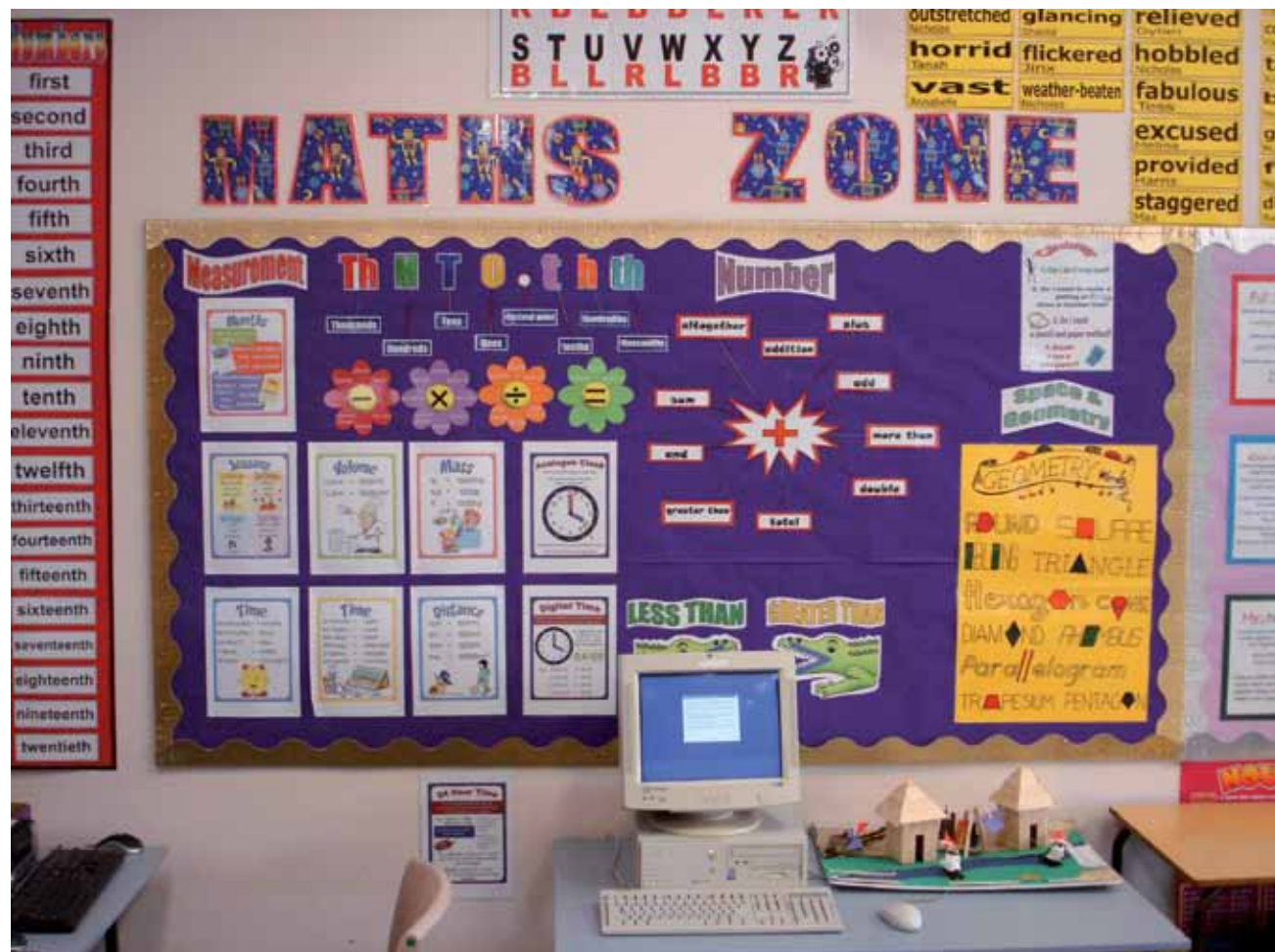
Figure 82   Another example of classroom print.

Classroom print supports the organisation and
management of information and can be displayed
and referred to throughout the day, including
student responsibilities and learning outcomes.
(See Figures 83 and 84.)
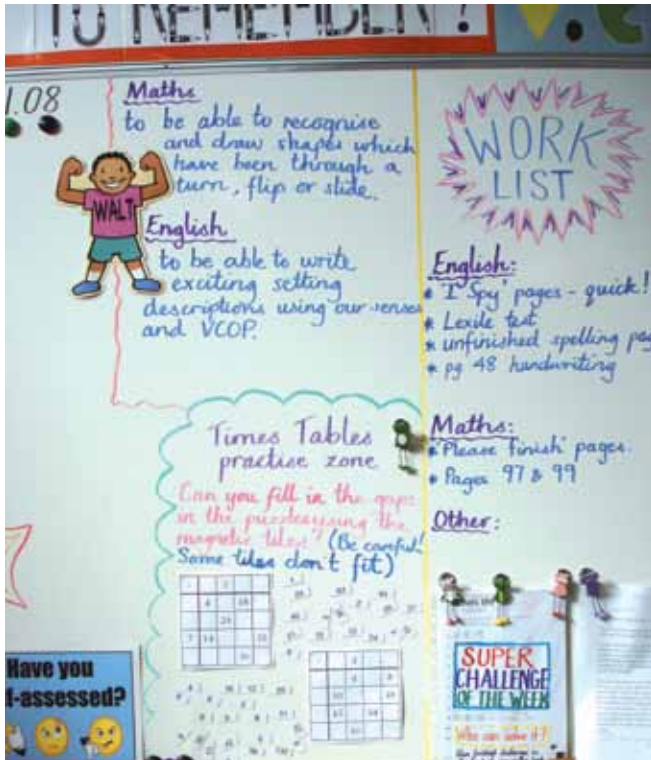
Figures 83 and 84
Displays with learning
outcomes and student
responsibilities.
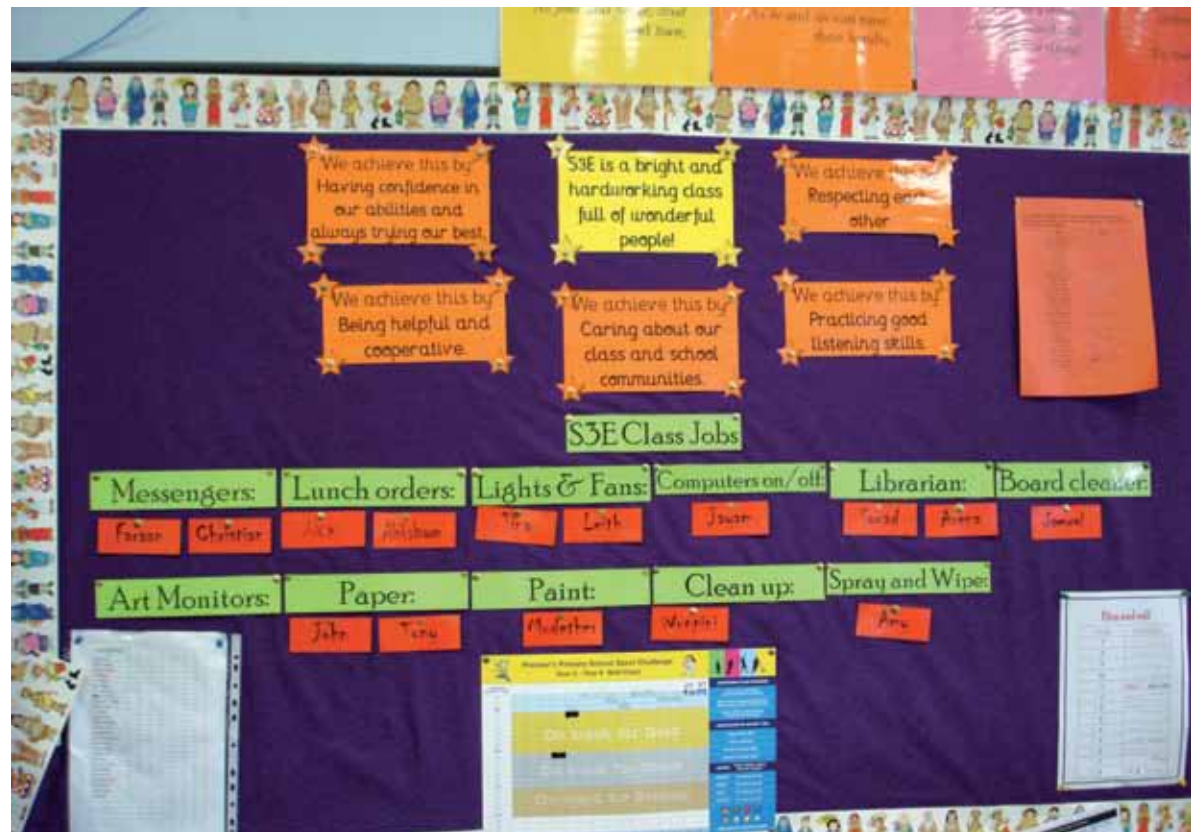
Literacy centre task boards help students to take responsibility for their own learning. Students give oral presentations, following the suggestions on the news roster and their responses can be displayed.

Figure 85 A task board.

Figure 86 A list of news topics.

**Figure 87** A record of news discussions for week 3.
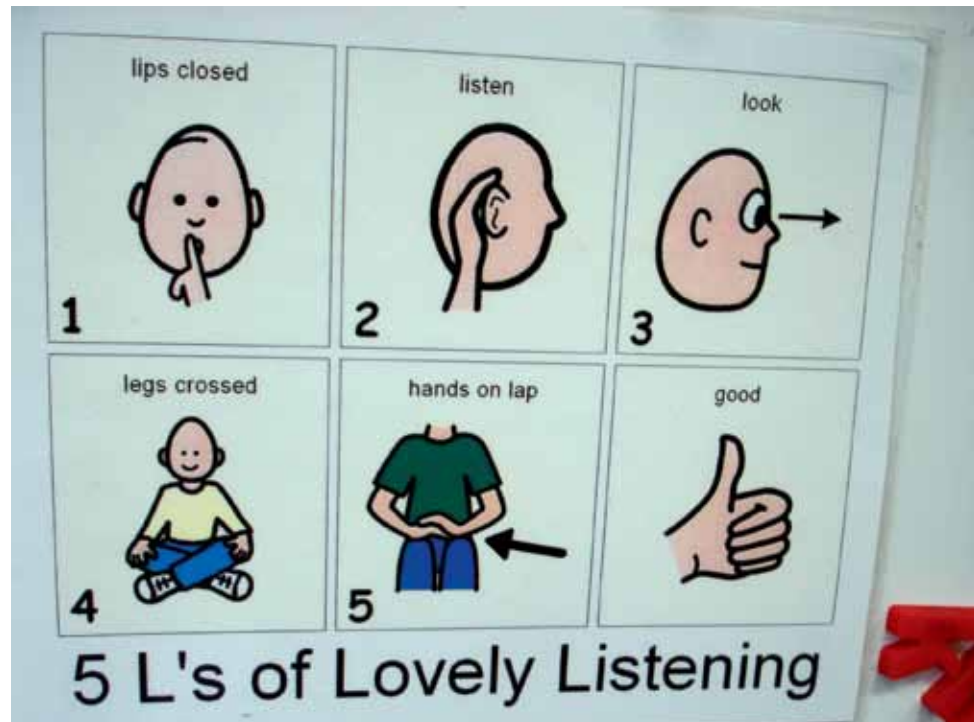
Figures 88 and 89
Class rules.

Class rules and expectations are displayed and referred to regularly as shown in Figures 88 and 89.

Rules are agreed to by kindergarten students who sign a contract, entitled here 'I agree to keep us happy and safe at school'. Students also agree to the consequences. (See Figure 90.)

Values are discussed and reinforced. (See Figure 91.)
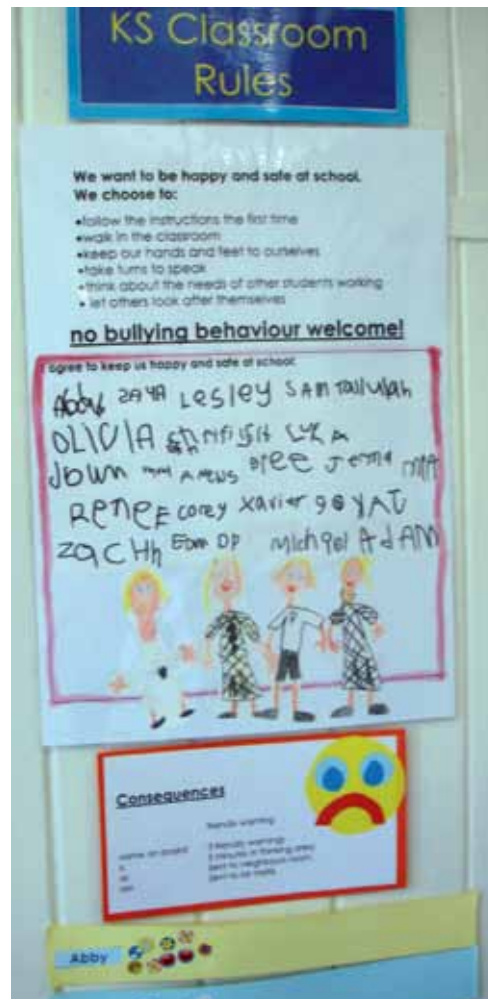
Figures 90 and 91
Rules and 'contracts' for kindergarten students.

Appropriate behaviour is encouraged through a room display as the 'traffic light' wall display. A student's name is written on a peg, which is attached to the 'traffic light'. Each peg stays around the green light if students are behaving appropriately. If students need to be reminded about their behaviour, their peg is moved to the yellow and finally to the red traffic light. Students understand the consequences of their pegs being moved from around the green light. (See Figure 92.)
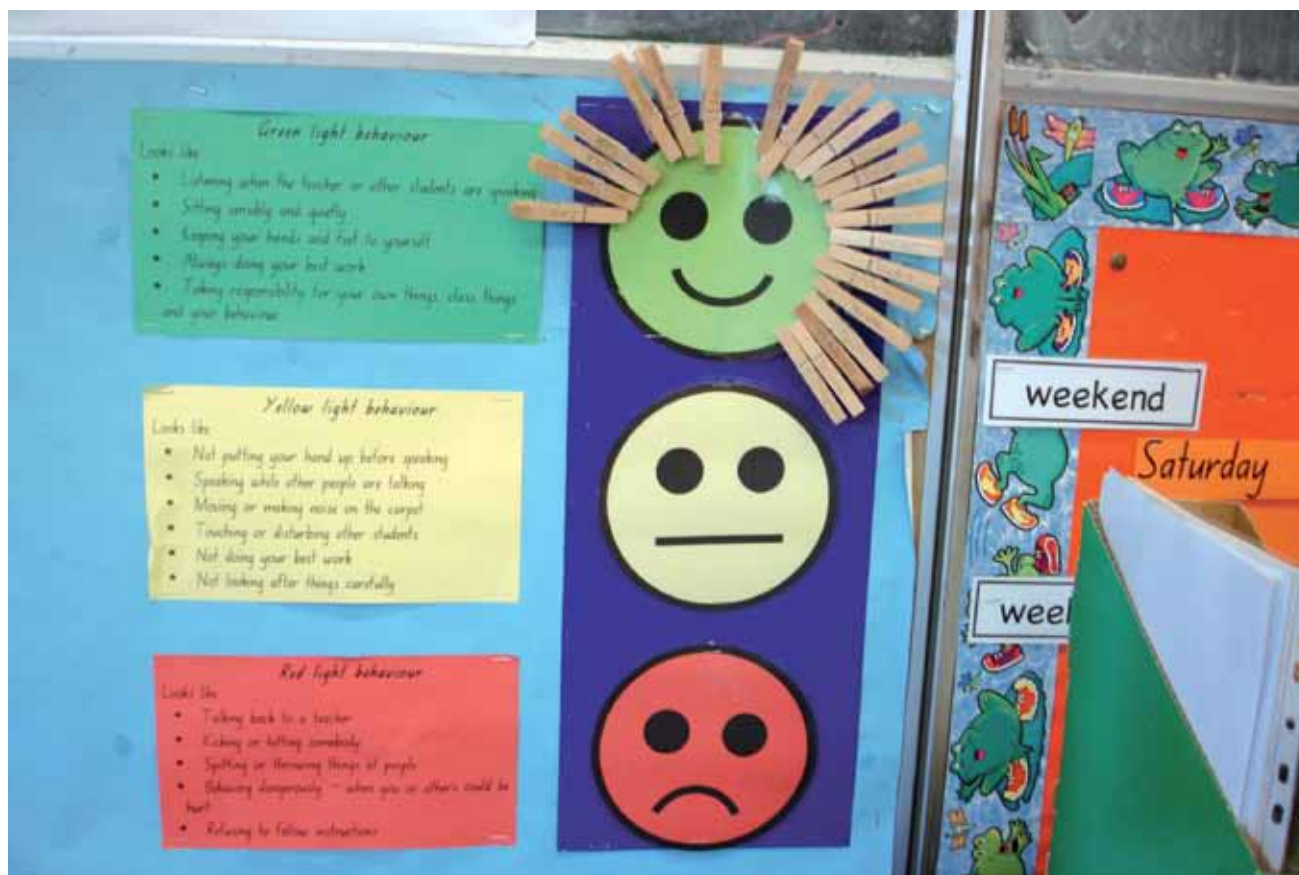
Figure 92 Traffic lights to remind students of appropriate behaviour.

Print that is referred to regularly may be on display all year, while print that is linked to particular topics will require to be changed regularly. Watching students' interaction with room print is a good way of monitoring its effectiveness. Equally, some students may need restricted print environments so that they can focus on what is essential for that day or task.