

Website Content Good Practice Template

AREA TITLE: CHILDREN'S WORKFORCE

AREA TITLE

BEHAVIOUR

About...

Introduction

Understanding the underlying reasons for behaviour is very important in helping professionals to devise strategies to help a child on the autism spectrum. Without at least a background knowledge of the challenges that having autism can create, a child's behaviour can be misinterpreted and their needs will not be met in the most appropriate way. A teacher or early years practitioner will therefore need a knowledge of autism and how to structure situations to promote learning as well as observational skills and the capacity to motivate and involve.

Other people's opinions may have little or no influence on the behaviour of children on the autism spectrum and the child may say and do exactly as they want. Adults who do not know the child or know about autism may misunderstand the child's behaviour and view it as naughty, difficult or lazy when in fact the child did not understand the situation or task, or did not read the adult's intentions or mood correctly.

Typical behaviour

The kind of behaviours professionals look for in diagnosing autism are:

- Delay or absence of spoken language including loss of early acquired language
- Unusual uses of language
- Difficulties in playing with other children
- Inappropriate eye contact with others
- Unusual play activities and interests and failure to share in the interests or play of others
- Communicating wants by taking an adult's hand and leading to the desired object or activity
- Failure to point out objects with the index finger
- Unusual response to certain sounds, sights and textures
- Resistance to changes in familiar routines
- Repetitive actions or questions
- A preference for following their own agenda.

There are a number of subgroups within the spectrum of autism but all children on the autistic spectrum share a triad of impairments some of which impact on their behaviour, for example difficulties with thinking and behaving flexibly may be evidenced by obsessional or repetitive activities. Some children on the autism spectrum may have unusual sleep patterns. Many will have difficulty in understanding the social behaviour of others and in behaving in socially appropriate ways.

Other factors besides autism can also affect a child's behaviour – personality, environment, family characteristics and the child's skills and interests. Children on the autism spectrum may have other conditions which can impact on behaviour – for example ADHD, dyspraxia and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Behavioural interventions

Effective programmes are characterised by an approach to managing behaviour which involves assessing the function of a behaviour and teaching an acceptable alternative to achieve the same result.

The following programmes are home-based interventions that aim to modify the behaviour of the child on the autism spectrum. These may be offered in schools – especially special schools. When a child starts formal schooling it can be helpful for teachers to understand the methods that have been used at home to maintain consistency of approach.

Milieu training (Research Autism)

Milieu training describes a form of teaching which makes use of the child's interest in the things around him, the 'milieu' to provide learning opportunities. A review of this intervention can be found on the Research Autism website.

Pivotal response training (PRT)

A type of training which focuses on key pivotal aspects of a child's development. These are motivation, self-management, self-initiation, and the ability to respond to multiple environmental cues. A review of this intervention can be found on the Research Autism website.

Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention (EIBI)

EIBI is a highly structured and intense form of therapy which aims to teach linguistic, cognitive, social and self-help skills by breaking them down into small tasks. **Discrete Trial Training (DTT)** is the main strategy used within this programme whereby the trainer instructs the child using a series of learning opportunities or 'trials'. Praise and rewards are used to reinforce good behaviour. (See the Home Based Provision section on this website for further information.)

Managing behaviour in a school setting

Most mainstream schools will have pupils on the autism spectrum and their policies and practice on behaviour need to take this into account. To be lawful, sanctions must be reasonable and proportionate to the circumstances and should not discriminate against pupils with disabilities. This means that behaviour policies should anticipate the difficulties of children with special educational needs and build in preventative practice to prevent problems escalating and leading to exclusion. Examples might be an automatic early review of a child's Individual Education Plan (IEP) if behaviour problems emerge or worsen and an automatic review of a statement or consideration of a request for statutory assessment if a child is facing exclusion.

The DCSF guidance on the *Education of Children with a Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulty as a Special Educational Need* (2008) says that a policy that provides an automatic sanction for a particular offence may need to be varied if its application to a disabled pupil might treat him less favourably than another pupil for a reason related to his disability. It also points out that schools need to be alert to the possibility that behavioural difficulties may mask an underlying disability and the ways in which incidents that might lead to an exclusion can be avoided. It gives the example of whole school training on the communication needs of pupils on the autistic spectrum which may help to avoid difficulties between staff and students and may be a reasonable adjustment that schools might be expected to make.

Schools' behaviour management systems need to be designed to take account of children's understanding of behaviour. Staff should discuss the implications of individuals' behaviours for planning and intervention, for example systematic planning to increase tolerance of specific environmental factors such as noise or proximity of other people. Consulting the child and parents over individual behaviour plans is important, as is sharing effective practice between home and school. Teaching strategies such as visual timetables may lessen anxiety at stressful times such as moving between classes or during group work. Children on the autism spectrum have difficulty with communication and their understanding of language may be very literal. Using visual techniques to prompt or prepare a child can help their understanding. Preventative strategies such as regular breaks may limit obsessive or repetitive behaviours. Use of social stories which provide information about typical situations a child may find themselves in may help teach social skills and appropriate behaviour while modelling of activities and behaviours may help a child acquire physical and social skills.

Get help from...

The [National Strategies](#) initiative is providing a four-year programme of continuing professional development (CPD) designed to increase the confidence and expertise of mainstream practitioners in meeting high incidence of SEN in mainstream settings and schools.

In 2008, the programme focussed on dyslexia and speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). In 2009, the focus is on supporting pupils on the autism spectrum. As well as communication being fundamental to learning and progression, frustration born of inability to communicate can contribute to erratic or unpredictable behaviour in class. It is envisaged that a future round will specifically address behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

Positive Behaviour Strategies to Support Children and Young People with Autism by Martin Hanbury; Paul Chapman Publishing

Teachers in mainstream schools are increasingly accommodating pupils on the autism spectrum in their classrooms, and this book offers advice on one of the most difficult aspects of teaching children and young adults with autism - understanding and managing their often challenging behaviour. This book explores issues surrounding behaviour support; supplies INSET materials for developing practice in behaviour and provides guidance on how to promote positive behaviour.

Links

[Improving Behaviour in Schools](#) Information from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) about policies to promote inclusion and learning through positive behaviour

[Revised guidance on the education of children and young people with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties \(BESD\)](#) Information about DCSF guidance for teachers and school staff

[The National Autistic Society](#) A range of resources about behaviours often displayed by children and young people on the autistic spectrum and how to tackle them

Research Autism

Behaviour4Learning Website for teachers and school staff providing access to research and evidence base to inform teacher education

Kids Behaviour Website for parents and those working with children dedicated to understanding and dealing with a wide range of behavioural problems

Autism - information for parents from Great Ormond Street Hospital

information about autism from Dr Hilary Cass, Consultant in Paediatric Disability, Great Ormond Street Hospital

Understanding and managing behaviour problems in children and young people with autistic spectrum disorders

Author: Social Communication Disorders Clinic, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service in collaboration with the Child and Family Information Group.

Published by: Great Ormond Street Hospital Trust, Institute of Child Health

Date: Last updated August 2007

Restrictive physical intervention: General guidance for schools

Guidance for LEAs special schools, health and social services related specifically to children and adults with extreme behaviour associated with learning difficulties including those on the autistic spectrum.

Promoting Children's Mental Health within Early Years and School Settings

Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL)

SEAL is a voluntary programme designed to develop the social and emotional skills of all pupils through:

- using a whole school approach to create a climate and conditions that promote the skills and allow these to be practiced and consolidated
- direct and focused learning opportunities for whole classes, across the curriculum and outside formal lessons and as part of small group work
- using learning and teaching approaches that support pupils to learn social and emotional skills and consolidate those already learned
- continuing professional development for the whole school staff.

The skills are in five groupings:

- self-awareness
- managing feelings
- empathy
- motivation
- social skills.

Analysing 'problem' behaviours - The Complex Learning Difficulties team in Blackpool's Pupil Support Division. [Teachernet good practice example](#)

Derbyshire file for Autism Friendly Schools

A file which gives advice to teachers and classroom assistants on how to support and teach autistic pupils has been given to all schools by Derbyshire County Council. The Derbyshire File for Autism Friendly Schools has been written by one of the authority's educational psychologist and a specialist outreach teacher, to assist with teaching in Derbyshire schools. It explains the difficulties that pupils on the autism spectrum meet at different stages of their school life; how to set up an autism friendly school environment and classroom; behavioural issues, trouble shooting and problem solving.

Tower Hamlets school's "person-centred" curriculum

London Regional Partnership report In Practice, issue 5 2006 describes the case of a small primary school in Tower Hamlets which designed a "person-centred" curriculum around the needs of one boy - whom they were waiting to get into a primary SEBD school. This proved so successful (in retaining and working positively with him within a mainstream setting for the rest of the year) that the school extended its use of the statutory curriculum flexibility to all pupils and developed a radical approach to curriculum planning and delivery that actively promotes mental health and emotional well-being. In addition, the school has been effectively 'commissioned' by the LA (through the use of SEN statutory processes) to design different "person-centred" packages around other pupils who find regular curriculum arrangements in other schools problematic. This has included those on the autism spectrum or with significant mental health needs.

The report from the school's recent Ofsted inspection speaks in glowing terms of the many 'outstanding' and 'excellent' features within the school – and of the high quality of outcomes for all pupils when matched against the five outcomes framework.

www.londonrp.org.uk/rpts_pubs/IP5.pdf