

Website Content Good Practice Template

AREA TITLE: Parents

AREA TITLE	BEHAVIOUR
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About...	Introduction
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People on the autism spectrum of any age or level of ability can experience behavioural difficulties. This can cause particular problems at school if all of the school staff don't have a background knowledge of the challenges that being on the autism spectrum can create. A child's behaviour can be misinterpreted and their needs will not be met in the most appropriate way. Another difficulty for parents can be that children use up all of their energies fitting in at school and 'being good' and may then melt down when they get home. This can make it difficult for parents who are trying to talk to their child's school about the impact that a particular situation is having on their child when that impact is delayed until the child gets home and the school is completely unaware of it.

Adults who do not know a child or understand about autism may misunderstand the child's behaviour and view him or her 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.

What is behind the behaviour?

Because people on the autism spectrum don't always show the facial expressions and body language that you'd expect when someone's feeling a certain way you may miss out on all of the early cues that they are unhappy that you might get with other children. So a reaction that may seem sudden to you or your child's teacher may have been brewing for some time. Most of the time a child will be trying to tell you something through their behaviour.

Because of this, it can be useful to use a behaviour diary, in the format of an [ABC chart](#), to try and find out what triggers the behaviour. This chart asks you to record the Antecedent (what was happening before the behaviour occurred, commenting on both the child and the environment, and on who was around at the time), the Behaviour itself and the Consequence (how did the behaviour finish, any changes in the environment and how did the child feel at the end).

By identifying potential triggers for the behaviour, it can then be easier to come up with strategies to prevent the behaviour from occurring again in the future. The NAS have produced a very useful leaflet on behaviour which includes an [ABC chart](#) and also a [questionnaire](#) to help you establish what the purpose of a behaviour may be. When trying to tackle behavioural difficulties, it's important to select at the most two behaviours to focus on at a time.

Obviously it may be difficult for you to do this second hand to try and work out what may be causing your child problems at school but if you are using this kind of approach at home successfully it may help you to persuade the school that it is something they would find it helpful to do.

Strategies

Whatever strategies you use to help your child need to be used by everyone involved with him. An inconsistent reaction to behaviour by different people causes confusion, stress and frustration for someone on the autism spectrum, and can result in behaviour becoming more difficult to address. It is therefore really important that you explain to the school any strategies you use and any particular trigger points which may cause problems for your child. Some parents find it useful to produce a [passport](#) for their child which sets out things

it might be useful for their teachers to know such as any hypersensitivities.

It's important to remember that people on the autism spectrum can find it difficult to transfer or generalise new skills they've learnt from one situation to another. It's important, therefore, that whatever new skills or coping strategies your child learns, he's encouraged to use them in as many different environments as possible.

Where parents are confident enough and schools keen to work in partnership some parents have been invited in to run training for teachers either general awareness raising about autism or perhaps about their child. In the end you are the expert on your child and their behaviour, more and more schools now recognise this.

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, any 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 autism spectrum which may help to avoid difficulties between staff and students and may be a reasonable adjustment that schools might be expected to make.

Bullying

Unfortunately, children on the autism spectrum can be at more risk of being bullied than other children and if you notice a sudden change, distress or frustration, then it may be worth investigating to see if there's been bullying or repeated teasing at school. Remember, this may be something that your child finds difficult to communicate to you. If you are worried about bullying have a look at the bullying section on this website.

Is your child's school doing everything it should?

The Teachernet website has produced a [list of pointers](#) for schools and local authorities so that they can see whether they're following good practice in terms of children with autism and behaviour. If you feel your child is struggling with their behaviour at school then you may find it helpful to look at the list and see whether there is anything additional that you could encourage them to put in place.

Get
help
from...

Behavioural concerns and autistic spectrum disorders: explanations and strategies for change. Clements, J. and Zarkowska, E. (2000). London: Jessica Kingsley
<http://www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=427&a=5021>

Behaviour Guidelines – National Autistic Society information leaflet on behaviour aimed at parents.

Challenging behaviour and autism: making sense making progress. A guide to preventing and managing challenging behaviour for parents and teachers. Whitaker, P. (2001). London: The National Autistic Society
<http://www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=421&a=4886>

It can get better: dealing with common behaviour problems in young children. a guide for parents and carers. Dickinson, P and Hannah, L. (1998). London: The National Autistic Society
<http://www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=421&a=4885>

People with autism behaving badly: helping people with ASD move on from behavioural and emotional challenges. Clements, J. (2005). London: Jessica Kingsley
<http://www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=421&a=6822>

The incredible 5-point scale: assisting children with autism spectrum disorders in understanding social interactions and controlling their emotional responses. Dunn Baron, K. and Curtis, M. (2003). Shawnee Mission, Kansas: Autism Asperger Publishing Company
<http://www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=424&a=5131>

Understanding behaviour. May, F (2005). London: The National Autistic Society
<http://www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=421&a=6829>

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

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

Case Studies

Analysing problem behaviours

The Complex Learning Difficulties team in **Blackpool's** Pupil Support Division. Good practice example on Teachernet
(<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/sen/asds/asdgoodpractice/Behaviour/Examples/>)

Derbyshire file for Autism Friendly Schools

A file which gives advice to teachers and classroom assistants on how to support and teach pupils on the autism spectrum 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

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