

Understanding & Managing Social, Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD)



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Introduction

"It is axiomatic that all pupils... remain entitled to a broad and balanced curriculum...pupils with discipline and behaviour problems will be dealt with in their normal classroom setting, through the application of intervention measures including the provision of school based support for schools and pupils".

(DENI, 1998b, p.18).

The Department of Education (DE) continues to be committed to the inclusion of all pupils including those with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) and this chapter aims to provide support for school staff.

This section outlines the principles of effective behaviour management and should contribute to teachers' understanding of children's behaviour and the challenges it can present. Causes of inappropriate behaviour are considered and core values and a range of positive behaviour management strategies are suggested to support the development of whole school positive ethos and policy. Schools should find the content useful in promoting effective inclusive practice for pupils with SEBD and improving the learning and teaching for all.

According to Elton (1989) the majority of inappropriate behaviours within schools were "high frequency and low intensity", such as "talking out of turn", "calculated idleness", and "work avoidance". (Elton, 1989, p.60). Behaviour, however, is on a continuum and pupils with SEBD can present with high frequency, low intensity behaviours or a range of more inappropriate and anti-social behaviours. These make up a significant proportion of the 25% of pupils who have been identified by DE (2010) as having "barriers to learning" (DE, 2010b, p.11). According to Fogell and Long (1997, p.7) the continuum

includes "acting out" behaviours such as aggressive and attention seeking behaviours or "acting in" behaviours such as anxiety and withdrawal.

These challenges present difficulties for schools in creating or maintaining orderly environments, in ensuring effective learning and teaching, and in promoting and sustaining good behaviour.

In relation to effective behaviour management, research has continually shown that successful schools have:

- good leadership;
- positive working relationships;
- whole school policies;
- procedures for managing pupil behaviour;
- a welcoming environment;
- pleasant working conditions;
- effective classroom management strategies which focus on the acknowledgement of the positive;
- effective whole school systems which give flexible support to all members of the school community; and
- systems for monitoring all of the above.

(Elton, 1989; Harris, 2000; DE, 2001; Logan and Rickinson 2005; Steer, 2009).

The Department of Education school census of 2009-2010 gives 6,316 pupils identified with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Resource File for Special Educational Needs
**UNDERSTANDING & MANAGING SOCIAL,
EMOTIONAL & BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES**

Schools should create an ethos whereby there are opportunities for all staff to gain understanding of the causes of inappropriate behaviour and research has shown that these causes have changed over time.

Causes of Inappropriate Behaviour

Lehman, Hawkins and Catalan (1994) identified some of the "in school factors" and "out of school factors" which can lead to inappropriate behaviour and these are presented in the tables below.

Table 1 In school factors which influence pupil behaviour

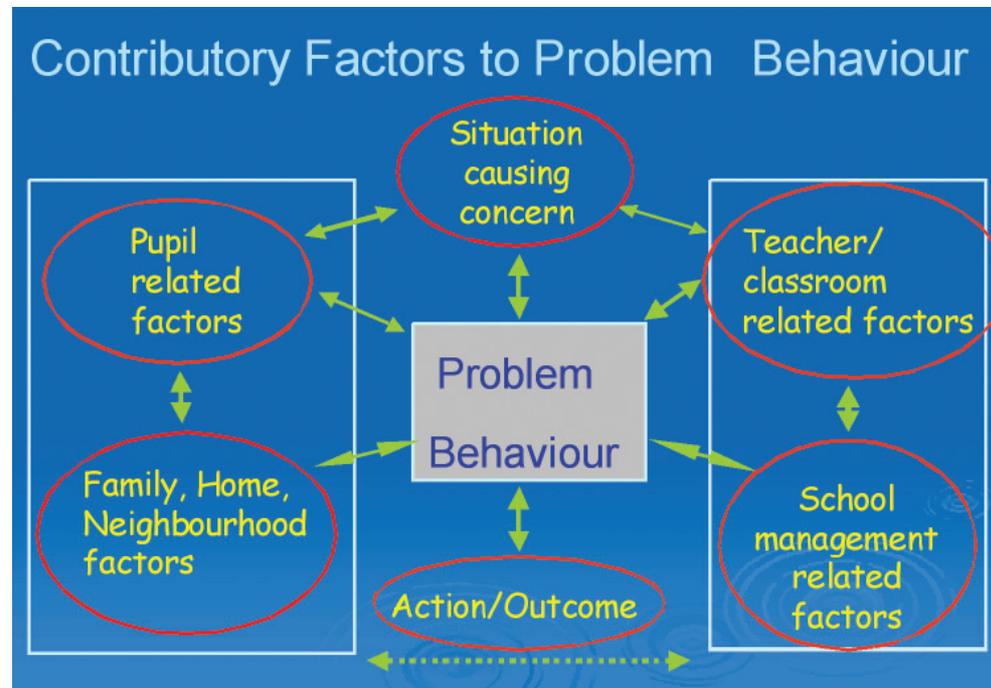
In school factors
<p><u>The Environment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Lack of proper ventilation ▶ Physical problems of limited space ▶ Special occasions which cause excitement, e.g. Christmas, a windy day, fire drills
<p><u>The Child</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Tired due to lack of proper rest ▶ Hungry due to insufficient or inappropriate food ▶ Poor or inappropriate social skills ▶ Need for attention from teacher or parent
<p><u>The Teacher</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Offering poorly differentiated curriculum leading to either frustration or boredom ▶ Lack of knowledge of pupils ▶ Poor management skills such as being inconsistent, laissez-faire, over-reliance on domination or lack of reinforcement of appropriate behaviour ▶ Poor diction ▶ Lack of clarity in explaining expectations for behaviour or subject ▶ Lack of or confusing instruction in subject matter ▶ Meeting the expectations of exam results and league tables ▶ Lack of professional development on sebd ▶ Teacher stress

Table 2 Out of school factors which influence pupil behaviour

Out of school factors
<p><u>Family Circumstances</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Child's position in the family▶ Child's relationship with parent/siblings/grandparents etc▶ Divorce/bereavement▶ Mental health problems▶ Family trauma▶ Alcohol or drug addiction
<p><u>The Neighbourhood</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Child's popularity▶ Peer relationships▶ Bullying▶ Social problems▶ Civic disturbance
<p><u>The Child Him/Herself</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Medical/health problems▶ Biological factors which may influence behaviour▶ Events in the child's past: traumatic events, abuse, changes in family circumstances etc

McNamara (1999) also identified contributory factors which can cause concern. These are presented in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 – Contributory Factors to Problem Behaviour



(McNamara, 1999).

More recent research has shown that the nature of childhood has changed. Over a 25 year period (1974 -1999), behaviour problems have doubled and emotional problems have increased by 70% (Hagell, 2004). Furthermore, Moss (2010) identified that there is now more "adulteration of Childhood", "Infantilisation of Adults" and an "overprogramming of family life" which have led to some children and young people not knowing how to manage social behaviour and not seeing the point of responsible behaviour.

Research also shows that children and young people are influenced by home and community (70%) and by school (30%); (data presented by John West-Burnham at a joint Regional Training Unit (RTU) / Queen's University Belfast (QUB) conference in QUB, 2008). He emphasised the importance of schools working hard to "get their 30% right".

In order to understand and manage pupils with SEBD, Moss (2010) suggests that teachers need to use 'Social Mediation' – the conscious identification, negotiation and transmission of social values to address inappropriate behaviours. In other words teachers need to define and then teach the behaviours they need to promote and sustain good behaviour.

Promoting and Sustaining Good Behaviour

This section provides an understanding of the core values which underpin good practice in the management of SEBD. The content also provides a structure and a range of strategies to promote and sustain good behaviour.

1. Core Values to Underpin Ethos, Policy and Practice
2. The Reflective/Assertive Practitioner
3. Effective Planning and Classroom Management
4. Positive Behaviour Management
5. Dealing with Difficult Situations

Teachers should use the strategies suggested here to complement the Regional Good Practice Guidelines (Education and Library Boards, 2009) as part of their positive behaviour management. In addition to this, schools need to develop a whole school approach to promoting positive behaviour through the development and implementation of an effective Positive Behaviour Policy.

Even when all of this is in place, it is still possible for some SEBD to become a significant barrier to learning and social development and there may be a need for further support from external agencies. It is therefore necessary that schools "have regard" to the Code of Practice (DENI, 1998a) and follow the staged approach to ensure appropriate identification, assessment and provision for more specific types of SEBD.

The remainder of this section provides some advice in relation to understanding and managing pupils who have been diagnosed or present with more challenging behaviours.

In summary, inclusive practice and employing a proactive approach with early intervention may result in pupils' SEBD being addressed more effectively in schools. Subsequently this may lead to a reduction in the number of pupils being referred for external support or being suspended or expelled.

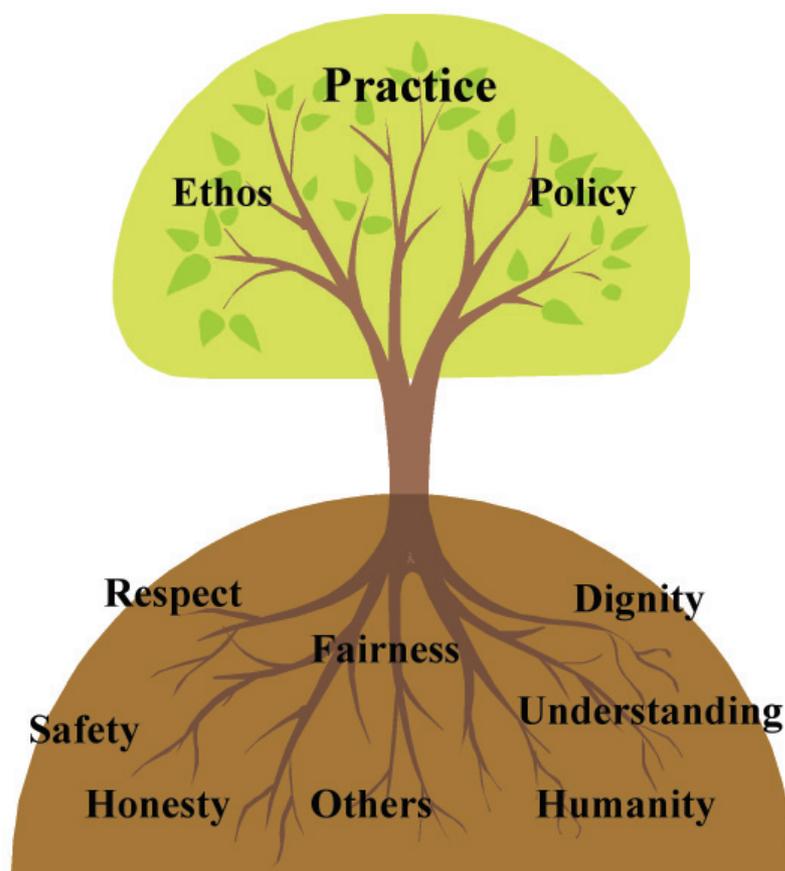
Understanding and Managing SEBD

1. CORE VALUES

Core values should be generated by all members of the school community and should be the basis of school ethos, policy and practice. These values should underpin and promote the development of attitudes, skills and knowledge necessary in the understanding and management of pupils with SEBD.

- Values that underpin ethos, policy and practice should focus on the best interests of the pupil. These are presented in Figure 2 below:

Figure 2 – Values that underpin Ethos, Policy and Practice



- Values need to take cognisance of the Six Outcomes for Children and Young People of Northern Ireland 10-Year Strategy (2006):
 - (i) to be healthy;
 - (ii) to stay safe;
 - (iii) to enjoy and achieve;
 - (iv) to make a positive contribution;
 - (v) to achieve economic well-being; and
 - (vi) to live in a society which respects their rights.
- Behaviour generally has a purpose.
- Many behaviour problems are the result of a lack of self-regulation within the person, or a lack of knowledge of the acceptable way to do things.
- All human behaviour results from an individual's response to complicated webs of influence e.g. their environment and the individual's temperament.
- Behavioural interventions which seek only to control behaviour, rather than to understand its meaning, are unlikely to support individuals in reaching their potential.
- As behaviour is learned, appropriate behaviour needs to be taught.
- Pupils need to feel secure and have a sense of belonging and acceptance in order to behave appropriately.

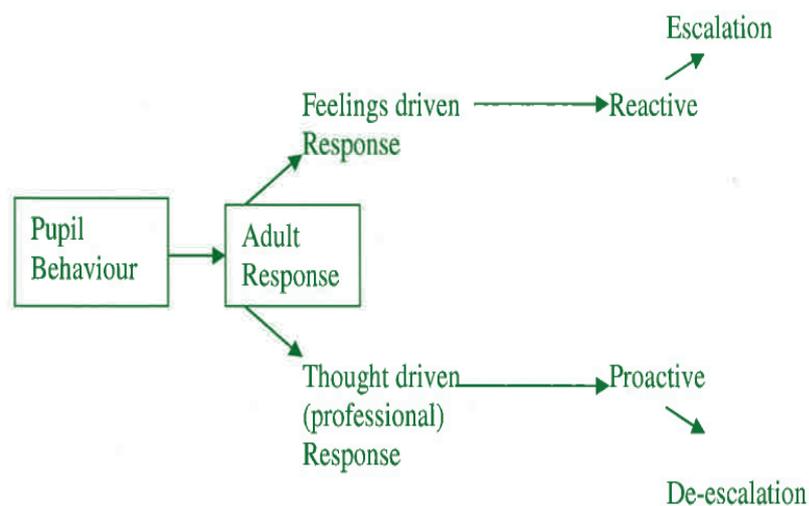
- "Good behaviour keeps pupils safe, reduces stress for teachers and contributes to a welcoming and caring environment in which pupils can develop as people and both pupils and teachers can do their best work". (DE, 2001, p1).
- Pupils with SEBD are defined as having learning difficulties. "They may fail to meet expectations in school and in some, but by no means all, cases may disrupt the education of others". (Code of Practice, DENI, 1998a, p.74).
- Schools can and do make a difference. (West-Burnham, 2008).

2. THE REFLECTIVE/ASSERTIVE PRACTITIONER

The Reflective Practitioner

- The reflective practitioner should continually reflect on and examine his/her own behaviour and be aware of the consequences of proactive and reactive responses when managing pupils with SEBD. This is presented in Figure 3 below:

Figure 3 – Adult Response to Pupil Behaviour



- The reflective practitioner should continually reflect on and examine his/her own practice in relation to managing pupils with SEBD, asking the question 'is there a better way?'

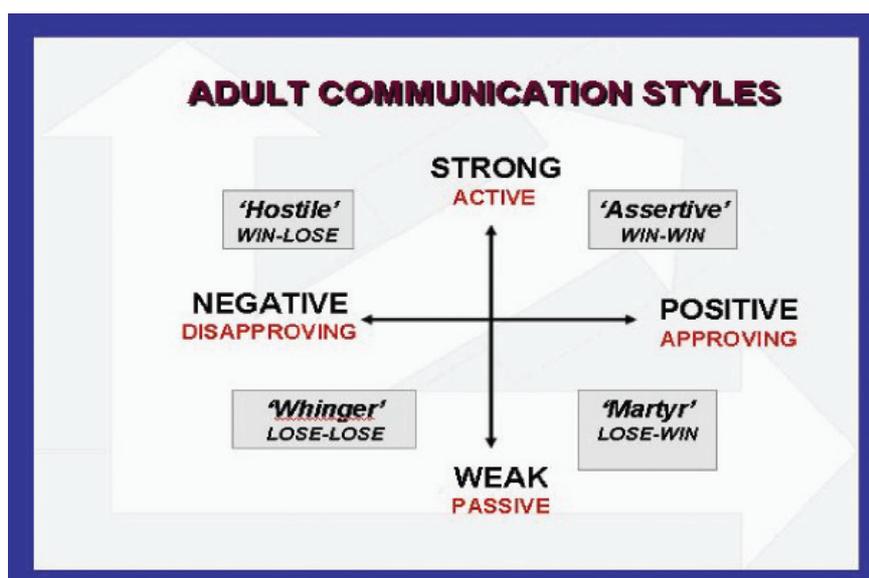
The Assertive Practitioner

Assertive adults in the classroom must:

- Know what they want and use clear verbal communication.
- Have a plan and follow it through.
- Develop a positive proactive approach to behaviour management.
- Be committed to teaching appropriate behaviour in the classroom.
- Create a positive classroom environment in which teachers can teach and pupils can learn.
- Communicate clearly and positively providing support to pupils.
- Teach behaviour emphasising the aspect of pupil choice when appropriate.
- Be consistent.
- Be sensitive to the needs of others.
- Be able to use an extensive repertoire of appropriate responses such as firm, gentle, humorous.
- Positively acknowledge people who meet their expectations.

- Remain calm in difficult situations – remember that the only person you can make calm is yourself.
- Let others know in a respectful manner when they are not happy with their actions.
- Be aware that communication styles are important and should be used accordingly to achieve the appropriate outcome. This is presented in Figure 4 below:

Figure 4 – Adult Communication Styles



3. EFFECTIVE PLANNING AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

When managing pupils with SEBD, it is essential to establish an organised, orderly classroom and to have clear plans as to how appropriate and inappropriate behaviour will be managed in a positive way.

Listed below are a range of strategies which are proven to have been effective in contributing to an orderly learning environment.

- Have realistic expectations for behaviour and learning.

- Arrive at class on time. It is good practice to 'receive' your pupils.
- Have an aesthetically pleasing and functional classroom.
- Plan appropriate seating arrangements and be prepared to change the arrangements to suit the activity.
- Have well-prepared differentiated lessons but be flexible enough to change if needed.
- Create a positive climate at the beginning of each day / lesson.
- Give work in small manageable steps.
- Use multisensory methods where possible.
- Consider learning styles – visual, auditory and kinesthetic.
- Remind pupils of past success – highlight the positives.
- Teach a maximum of five positively-worded rules such as 'Follow adult directions promptly' or 'We always try our best'. Display them prominently in the classroom.
- Use positive feedback e.g. "Well done, John, I liked the way you settled and completed your work this morning."
- Use positive acknowledgement – keep tangible rewards to a minimum.
- Apply appropriate consequences: have a hierarchy of how behaviour will be managed if the pupils break the rules - from least intrusive to most intrusive.

- Teach and rehearse clear routines until they become habituated. This needs to be done for non-academic and academic activities such as lining up, completing work.
- Have a cue for gaining attention such as '321', 'eyes on me' (EOM).
- Ensure clarity of instruction e.g. PRINT

Purpose of the activity

Resources needed (includes clear desks)

In or out of seat (address behaviour needed)

Noise levels – teach and rehearse noise levels including silence, partner talk, playground talk

Time for activity and transition; and always give time reminders throughout the activity and remind them a few minutes before the end.

- Use positive scanning - if you are working with one pupil or a small group of pupils continue to scan the room and frequently acknowledge positive, on-task behaviour.
- Circulate the room and acknowledge positive on-task behaviour.

4. POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

The aim of positive behaviour management is to promote and sustain good behaviour through a continual focus on the positive:

- Highlight what is going well in the classroom.

- Give attention to pupils displaying 'on-task' behaviour as opposed to highlighting inappropriate behaviours.
- Try to manage inappropriate behaviours in a positive way.

Listed below are a range of strategies which are proven to have been effective in positive behaviour management.

- **Positive Feedback – Acknowledge / Approve / Affirm:**
Acknowledge (notice and describe the behaviour), approve it (say why it is good) and affirm (apply a positive label to the pupil) e.g. *"Thank you for tidying up so quickly - now we can have a break - you are a great helper"*. Use very, very frequently.
- **Positive Correction** – tell the pupils what you want them to do, i.e. not what you don't want them to do e.g. *"walk"* instead of *"stop running"*, *"hands up"* instead of *"stop shouting"*. Avoid saying *"don't"* or *"stop"*.
- **Positive Repetition** – when you give a direction ask someone who knows what to do to repeat it rather than focusing on the one who doesn't know.
- **Non-verbal Cues** – hands up, finger on lips, the "look".
- **Casual questions** – *"Got your pencil, John? Know what to do?"*
- **Direction** – tell them what to do, say *"Thank you"* in advance, walk off.
- **Give take-up time** – give a clear specific direction in a non-confrontational way and move away from the pupil with a clear expectation that a pupil will comply.

- **Re-direction** – repeat direction without being sidetracked. Use thanks and take-up time – give them time – don't stand over them in a confrontational way.
- **Tactically ignore** – ignore secondary behaviour if the pupil is compliant with the primary behaviour requested e.g. if the pupil begins the task (primary behaviour) when asked, ignore any annoying secondary behaviours such as huffing or muttering.
- **Physical Proximity** – move closer to a disruptive pupil.
- **Proximity Praise** – praise to pupils complying may give a private message to those not complying. When a non-compliant pupil complies, notice and comment positively.
- **Distraction / Diversion** – give an alternative task or activity to a disruptive pupil without highlighting the inappropriate behaviour.
- **When / Then and First / Then** – first we do this, then we do that – avoids "no".
- **Rule Reminder** – refer to rule, use thank you and give take-up time.
- **Hand Up Rule** – e.g. *"I'm looking for a quiet hand"* or *"Remember what it is we do when we want to speak"*.
- **Where / What?** – *"Where should you be?"* (in my seat) *"What should you be doing?"* (my work)
- **Choices** – *"Put your (e.g. magazine/comic) on my desk or in your bag – which are you going to do?"* The last choice you give is more likely to be taken up therefore you need to think about the order in which you give them to pupils (always give preferred

outcome as the last choice). Give take up time. Remind of consequences if necessary.

- **Broken Record** – calmly repeat request or rule or consequence; avoid confrontation or being drawn into argument. Stay neutral.
- **Partial Agreement** – in response to excuses, say *"That may be so (he was talking to me) but I need you to get on with the work"*.
- **Private Reprimand** – a quiet word rather than a public confrontation.
- **Repair and Rebuild** – as soon as possible after a reprimand, find an opportunity to say something positive about the pupil – *"Catch them being good"*.
- **Follow up – follow through** – it is the certainty rather than the severity of consequences which is important.
- **Consider using a Think Sheet** as a consequence to help pupils choose a more appropriate behaviour in future. e.g.
 - ▶ what rule did you break?
 - ▶ what was the effect?
 - ▶ what are you going to do to put things right?
 - ▶ what will you do next time?
- Other helpful interventions for younger children include -
 - ▶ use of visual timetable - whole class or individual

- ▶ choice boards – limit the choice to two or three things to help pupils who find it difficult to choose activities
- ▶ use of social stories (Gray – in press)
- ▶ buddy system at playtime to encourage good friendships
- ▶ use an "I am working for" board
- ▶ use a "noiseometer" – visual scale of noise level expected
- ▶ Golden Time – a time when pupils can choose a preferred activity
- ▶ positive news notes maintain positive relationships with parents/guardians
- ▶ stickers / certificates
- ▶ circle time sessions (Mosley, 1998)
- ▶ short withdrawal time e.g. thinking chair with support until ready to rejoin group

5. STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

A difficult situation may arise unexpectedly, or may be a frequent occurrence for a minority of pupils. In the latter case, there may be an agreed behaviour management plan to deal with the pupil's behaviour.

In dealing with difficult situations, adults will need to make professional judgements based on their experiences and the knowledge of the individual pupil.

Listed below are some points to remember and some strategies which may be effective in managing difficult situations. It may also be appropriate to seek further help in line with the Code of Practice (DENI, 1998a).

Points to remember when dealing with difficult situations

- stay calm
- use a quiet voice
- use neutral language and keep it to a minimum
- avoid invading personal space unless necessary
- avoid prolonged eye contact
- stand still
- state expectations clearly – remember to tell pupil what you want him/her to do
- remind pupil of consequences (use cautiously)
- state what will happen next
- it may be necessary to remove the audience
- withdrawal – move pupil away from the group for a short period. This models a non-violent response, gives 'cooling off' time and time for reflection. It also teaches that inappropriate behaviours will not be tolerated and protects the rights of all.
- exiting – refer to Safe Handling Policy. (DE, 2004).
- recognise and understand that all individuals may become angry/aggressive and be aware of the conflict spiral. This is presented in Figure 5 overleaf:

Figure 5: Understanding Aggression: Conflict Spiral



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- Reflect the feelings of the pupil - *"I can see you are upset."*
- Always remember to give a thought-driven professional response to a pupil's behaviour with a view to de-escalating the situation.
- All behaviour is a means of communication. Habitual behaviour serves a purpose but more appropriate behaviour can be learned. How we respond is very important in teaching and achieving the desired behaviour.
- Use the W5 approach as an assessment tool:
 - ▶ What?
 - ▶ Where?
 - ▶ When?
 - ▶ Who?
 - ▶ Why?

e.g.	what?	-	John is shouting out
	where?	-	in Mrs X's class
	when?	-	continually (every day)
	who?	-	(at whom) teacher
	why?	-	appears to need attention

Set realistic targets e.g. *'John will put his hand up when he wants to speak.'*

Teacher strategies to help John achieve his targets:

- rehearsal and reminders at beginning of lesson.
- positive acknowledgement when John puts his hand up.
- consequence for continual shouting out.

Renew targets and strategies as necessary:

- if something doesn't work, stop doing it.
- notice what does work and do more of it.
- ensure consistency of approach from all adults.
- give the following messages to the pupil:

"I want you to succeed in my class."

"I won't give up on you."

"You are responsible for your own behaviour."

Summary

The principles of effective behaviour management outlined here should contribute to teachers' understanding and management of behaviour.

Core values have been identified and a range of positive behaviour management strategies for developing whole school ethos, policy and effective practice have been presented.

Teachers should find the information useful in promoting and sustaining good behaviour, developing behaviour management plans for the classroom and in developing individual plans for pupils with SEBD.

Schools should also find the content of this chapter useful in promoting inclusive practice for pupils with SEBD and improving learning and teaching for all.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Schools may find the following guides, developed and produced by the Education and Library Boards, useful for addressing the specific needs of pupils with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). A Practical Guide for Schools. (ELB, 2004)

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Your Child with ADHD: A Practical Guide for Parents and Carers. (ELB, 2004)

Both guides can be accessed on-line at:

http://www.deni.gov.uk/adhd_-_a_practical_guide_for_schools.pdf

http://www.deni.gov.uk/adhd-a_practical_guide_for_parents_and_carers.pdf

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Mr Barry Fettes	Acting Principal, Ardmore House, SEELB
Mrs Orla Hendron	AAO, Behaviour Support Team, SEELB
Mr Walter Lambe	Rathmore Educational Guidance Centre, NEELB
Ms Eithne McGinley	AAO, Behaviour Support Team, BELB
Mrs Norma Perceval-Price	SEN Consultant, C2K
Dr Noel Purdy	Principal Lecturer, Stranmillis University College

