

Exploring Behaviours and Interventions in the Learning Environment

This Essay will discuss a range of factors that can play a part in a child's behaviour in a learning environment, both in a positive and a negative way. It will discuss a range of interventions to help support children. The definition of behaviour According to Psychology tips [psychology.tips], (2020), is how a person acts and reacts to a situation. It is what we do to make something happen, change, or to keep the same. It is also a response to things that are happening internally, for example it is a person's thoughts and feelings, as well as externally including other people and the environment at the time. It is how a person communicates, for example body language and facial expression. Its function is to meet a need, to attract attention or to gain an internal or sensory sensation [health.nsw.gov], (2020), *"The key to understanding behaviour is to understand why it is occurring, what is being communicated or what is needed"* [health.nsw.gov], (2020). When exploring behaviours in an educational setting there is a tendency to discuss negative behaviour and attention is more likely to be drawn to challenging and disruptive behaviour.

It can be considered that all behaviour is communication. Behaviour is observable actions and language of an individual. Practitioners need to consider the underlying cause for the behaviour. (Smith, 2007, p. 3). In a learning environment, behaviours can range from positive, engaged behaviour to disruptive or challenging. To effectively manage these behaviours in a supportive environment, interventions should be tailored to the individual child and their circumstances, meaning that no child is the same and what works for one may not work for another.

There are many factors to consider when dealing with a child's behaviour within a learning environment, for example emotional and psychological factors can include Physiological, learning difficulty, previous trauma, mental health condition along with medical needs. This links to Maslow's 'Hierarchy of needs', as he argued that if a child's basic needs are not being met (Physical needs) they are unable to progress to the next level (Bates, 2023, p. 66). These factors are also known as ACE's. ACE stands for Adverse Childhood Experiences and relate to traumas that affect a person under the age of 18 years, that can have a lasting effect on them throughout their lives (Wisner, 2024). Trauma experienced during childhood can significantly impact the development of the brain which can influence numerous physical and mental health problems throughout childhood and later in life. (Ireton, R 2024). Children who have suffered trauma are more likely to display heightened responses to stress and challenging behaviour to cope (Miller, C. No date). When considering behaviour within the educational setting we need to consider the underlying effects these can have on children's behaviour and put in appropriate measures to support them.

Rewards and sanctions are one method that can be used to support both positive and negative behaviour, within and education setting. Within Setting A this method is used daily with all. This is an online tool called Class Charts', *'The aim of Class Charts is to provide teachers with a simple tool to allow them to generate seating plans and monitor behaviour of students overtime as well as being able to allow the parents of the students to view these behaviour reports'* (static. edukey). The aim within setting A is to allow teaching staff to both reward or sanction students within their lesson, making students aware that their behaviour is being monitored, and appropriate actions will be taken given the behaviour displayed. If a student receives more than three negative points within said lesson, a sanction is given in the form of losing their social time. Whereby they are asked to attend a setting called Ready to Learn. The recognition of positive behaviour is central to setting A's ethos and positive credits issued through class charts allows students to access the 'Class Charts reward store' where a variety of products can be exchanged for their positive points. All of this is in

accordance with Setting A's rewards and Sanction Policy (ysgolgreenhill.co.uk 2023). This method lends itself to Skinner's Operant Conditioning theory whereby he believed that behaviour within learning is influenced by consequences. Behaviour that is reinforced by rewarding them with these points is more likely to be repeated, as the points give the students positive encouragement. Whereas negative behaviour that is sanctioned could occur less, due to the fact children are losing their social and play time (McLeod, S. 2024). In an educational setting this would mean that a teacher that rewards positive behaviour is likely to see those behaviours become more frequent, while sanctioning disruptive behaviour can reduce the likelihood of said behaviour.

As already stated, there are many factors that can influence a child's behaviour in a positive or negative way in an educational setting. Positive factors that create positive behaviour, such as a healthy student teacher relationship, a supportive teacher or allowing children to feel respected, valued and heard, can enforce positive and productive learning environments as the teacher leads with empathy which in turn leads to better behaviour and engagement. *'The heart of effective behaviour management is building positive relationships with children. This allows the teacher to connect to the children forming a strong foundation from which behavioural change can take place.'* (gov. Wales, 2012). Whereas when there is a negative student teacher relationship, disengagement is more likely to be found. If a child feels they are misunderstood, undervalued or as if they are not being heard, they are more likely to act out and display negative behaviours. When a teacher sets clear expectations and structures within lessons, positive behaviour is more likely to occur. As opposed to when these are unclear and inconsistent, negative behaviour will be more likely as children may struggle to understand what is expected of them as a result of this. This often leads to confusion and frustration which in turn leads to negative behaviour. Clear guidelines and rules of the classroom allows students to understand what is expected of them, helping them maintain focus leading to more appropriate behaviour. Understanding what motivates students can help us to understand what they are trying to achieve, which can help to understand why they behave the way they do (Ranch, C. 2021).

When exploring behaviours and interventions in the learning environment one thing that should be considered is how overwhelming academic pressure can also lead to negative behaviour. A child that doesn't understand what has been asked of them is going to struggle, a child who suffers from anxiety or learning difficulties are less likely to ask for support within the classroom setting, this in turn can lead to acting out or displaying negative behaviour leading to lack of or no engagement within the school setting. One form of supporting students who feel such emotions would be to have them in a smaller group setting for tasks. This support is currently being offered in Setting A where students with a lower attendance, negative behaviours, suffer from extreme anxiety or medical conditions are being supported in smaller educational settings within the mainstream school. These students remain in the mainstream schooling system, but their needs are being met in a more inclusive environment. The main goal is that they can enter back into mainstream when the time is right for them and if their individual needs can still be met within that setting. This is all done in accordance with Setting A's Wellbeing Policy (ysgolgreenhill.co.uk 2024). Within a smaller educational setting teaching staff can focus more on each child's individual needs. By giving a more personalised centre approach it helps the teacher to understand the root causes of the student's behaviour and address them more effectively which lends itself to Carls Rogers Person centred approach *'providing an environment conducive to effective learning'* (Bates, 2023, p. 64).

When exploring how to change negative behaviour into a positive one, the feelings and wants of both students and their parents, should be considered. The additional learning needs code for Wales 2021 states that *'Person Centred practice puts the child, child's parents or young person at the centre*

of decision making' (Welsh Government, 2015). One strategy to consider when trying to support a student and their negative behaviour would be to draw up a behaviour agreement with the student. A behaviour agreement is a formal agreement with a pupil to help them achieve a changed way of behaving. This agreement takes many forms but usually includes a clear statement of the changed behaviour that the pupil is striving for, the way the new behaviour will be reinforced and rewarded and the way in which support will be provided to support this change. By setting out this agreement with the pupil and parents the teacher has the opportunity to clearly set out expectations on all sides *(Welsh Government, 2012).*

In Conclusion, understanding the factors that influence behaviour is critical in providing appropriate interventions in the learning environment. By using a combination of strategies for example positive reinforcement, individualised support teachers and support staff can create a classroom that is both supportive and conducive to learning. Interventions should be flexible and adaptable, responding to each pupil's individual needs. Most importantly, an approach that considers the child's background, emotional state, and developmental level is essential for promoting positive behaviour and effective learning outcomes.

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