

Discuss a range of factors that influence children's behaviour (both positively and negatively) in a learning environment.

As a child grows and develop there are several influences that will affect children and their behaviour. As a child spends on average one hundred and eighty days in school every year then the behaviours that a child shows at home will in some way begin to show in the school environment. There are unlimited reasons why children display either positive or negative behaviours, these can range from influences at home, their peers, insecurities, attachment issues physical or mental health issues, additional learning needs or even down to if the child received enough sleep the night before or if they have been upset by something that happened that morning. When working with children and young people it is important not to jump to disciplining when they show challenging behaviours and instead to talk to the child and question where this behaviour is coming from, they may need support more than discipline. This paper will be looking at what influences children's behaviour in the classroom and what steps can be taken to support these children.

The biggest influences on children from birth will be the child's family unit at home. It is commonly known that not all children come from nuclear families, the structure of families can vary greatly and many children in the class will come from single-parent families, have step families or extended families where grandparents and other family members play a part in the daily upbringing of children. Ellis et al (2013) believes that up to half of children under 16 do not live with their two biological parents but instead in a single parent or extended family. This can have both a positive and negative impact on a child's behaviour. Pronzato, Aassve (2019) suggest "parental break-up may indeed have a general negative effect on children's behaviour and mental well-being", but this is not always the case, whereas in the past coming from a single parent household would come with a stigma and lower expected outcomes for children, Pronzato, Aassve (2019) go on to say that the effects of the separation of the parents on children may be limited if family circumstances after the separation are favourable. Although a child going through the stress of a parental breakup may show some concerning behaviours, the separation may have a positive impact on the child, especially if in the home there was domestic abuse for example. Some children whose parents are going through a separation may appear withdrawn while others may be angry or act out showing aggression. For a child

in the school environment these emotions may be shown towards their peers or staff, especially if the staff in the school are not aware of the ongoing situations at home and how they may be affecting the children, so therefore are unable to provide the child the nurture and support that they need. Many schools offer support programs for these children, either from trained staff in schools or from outside agencies who come to the schools to support the pupils.

The mental health of pupils can also have a massive impact on a child's behaviour both inside and outside the school environment. This is a topic that is very much in the forefront of all schools' staff's thoughts at the moment with so many children being affected by mental health issues. The NSPCC states that the warning signs to look for in children with mental health difficulties can include a change in behaviour, withdrawal, sudden poor academic performance, or self-harming. Again, if the school is not aware of what the pupil is feeling then it can be difficult to know how to best support the pupils in their care. Many schools take the approach of talking to a child before imposing behavioural sanctions on them, with many schools taking the approach of restorative practice to look at the reasons for their behaviour. This gives the opportunity for children to disclose how they are feeling and allow the school to put support in place for them. Marsh (2016) found that that "teachers had difficulty identifying the internalizing behaviours of students" meaning that students who were struggling with their mental health but not acting out were not noticed by school staff which leads to the possibility of children's behaviour deteriorating later on when they do not get the support that they may need.

A pupil's behaviour in the classroom can also be impacted if the child has an additional learning need, especially if that learning need has been undiagnosed or the correct support for the pupil is not in place. Sarginson (2019) believes that "Children may also find ways to successfully mask or detract away from their difficulties and avoid work in the classroom by exhibiting poor behaviour", meaning that children with an undiagnosed learning need may display challenging behaviours in the classroom to divert the attention away from their difficulties. This behaviour may also display itself as becoming withdrawn from their peers as the pupil may have low self-esteem, this would also impact their behaviour in the school environment with the pupil potentially struggling with social interactions and the effect that that itself would have on the child. Additional learning needs such as ADHD add an extra layer of difficulty in the classroom environment, as due to the nature of the condition itself, it presents potential behavioural difficulties for the children, that without the correct

support, could have a substantial impact on the pupils behaviour. Information that was taken from the COMRES Primary and Secondary Teacher Survey (2017) shows that many of the teachers asked had very little knowledge of the learning need of pupils with ADHD and how it can present itself in the classroom environment and many more still had very little knowledge of how best to support these children in their class to ensure that they are given the best possible opportunities. If a child with an additional learning need such as ADHD is left unsupported then the negative impact on the child's behaviour can be life-long.

Those working in schools will know that children do not display the same behaviours for all the teachers that they come into contact with, this is most evident when cover teachers come into the setting to work in the school. Often in this circumstance the behaviour of the children in the class deteriorates greatly. This can be put down to the fact that the children do not have a relationship with the cover teacher that is working in the classroom, unlike their class teacher who they would have built a good relationship with. This theory is supported by Brewer (2017) who suggested that "weak teacher-child bonds result in adolescent disobedience". In contrast to this if a child has a good relationship with the staff in the school then it could have a positive impact on their behaviour in the school environment. This is found when children move between staff within the school environment, especially in a secondary school where pupils move between multiple teachers and classrooms in a day, it is only natural that pupils have a greater bond with some staff over others. Pupils who have staff members that they are comfortable with will feel more willing to talk to these staff about their feelings and any concerns that they may have, allowing for the staff member to assist the child before the pupil gets to the point of acting out displaying negative behaviours. These staff members will also be the people that the children turn to when they have a success to celebrate, for example a good mark in school or a celebration outside of the school environment.

In conclusion when working in the school environment it is imperative that practitioners look at the child holistically when reacting to behavioural issues as on many occasions, they are not aware of the outside influences that are impacting that child. With such a vast spectrum of influences that can affect the pupils on a day to day basis, then talking to the child is a necessity before any sanctions are given for displaying negative behaviours. It is also important to praise those pupils whose behaviour has a positive impact on the classroom

environment, as these children are often overlooked in the class. Lastly it is clear that when working with children a positive, respectful relationship with between the staff and the pupils is the best defence when managing behaviour as if a pupil feels comfortable and supported by school staff then they are more likely to open up and communicate with them before displaying potentially negative behaviours.

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