

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

Children's behaviour in a learning environment is influenced by a wide range of internal and external factors. Behaviour should not be viewed simply as positive or negative, but as a form of communication that reflects a child's emotional state, experiences, and individual needs. Within inclusive education, understanding behaviour is essential to support all learners, particularly those with additional learning needs or social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties. Behaviour can be shaped positively through supportive relationships, clear routines, and inclusive teaching approaches. However, negative influences such as trauma, unmet needs, learning difficulties, or emotional dysregulation can lead to challenging behaviour in school. This assignment discusses a range of factors that influence children's behaviour in learning environments, including home life, emotional development, additional learning needs, peer relationships, classroom environment, and adult responses. It will also explore how inclusive practice can support positive behaviour and reduce barriers to learning.

One of the factors that influence a child's behaviour is their family and home environment. The family and home environment plays a significant role in shaping children's behaviour in school. Early experiences with caregivers influence emotional development, attachment, and a child's sense of security. Children who experience stable routines, positive relationships, and emotional support at home are more likely to feel safe and confident, which often results in positive behaviour within the classroom (Geddes, 2006). These children are generally better able to manage emotions, follow expectations, and engage with learning.

In contrast, children who experience instability at home may display behaviour that is perceived as challenging in school. Factors such as family conflict, poverty, inconsistent parenting, neglect, or exposure to trauma can significantly affect emotional regulation and behaviour (DfE, 2017). Children may present as withdrawn, anxious, aggressive, or easily frustrated. In inclusive education, it is essential to recognise that these behaviours are often responses to stress or unmet emotional needs rather than intentional misbehaviour. Understanding the influence of home life allows educators to respond with empathy and appropriate support rather than relying solely on sanctions.

Emotional development is a key factor influencing children's behaviour in learning environments. Emotional regulation refers to a child's ability to recognise, manage, and express emotions in an appropriate way. Children with well-developed emotional regulation skills are more likely to cope with challenges, manage frustration, and communicate their needs effectively, which supports positive behaviour and engagement in learning (Cooper and Tikhaz, 2007).

However, not all children develop emotional regulation skills at the same pace. Children with SEMH needs or those who have experienced trauma may struggle to manage strong emotions, leading to behaviours such as emotional outbursts, refusal to engage in tasks, or withdrawal. In practice, these behaviours often occur when a child feels overwhelmed or

unsafe. Inclusive approaches such as emotional coaching, predictable routines, calm adult responses, and access to safe spaces can help children develop emotional awareness and self-regulation over time, leading to improved behaviour and wellbeing.

Additional learning needs and disabilities can have a significant impact on children's behaviour in school. Conditions such as ADHD, autism spectrum condition (ASC), dyslexia, and speech and language difficulties can affect how children process information, interact socially, and respond to classroom expectations. For example, a child with ADHD may struggle with attention, impulse control, and organisation, which may result in behaviour that appears disruptive or non-compliant (DuPaul and Stoner, 2014).

Similarly, children with autism may find changes in routine, sensory stimuli, or social interaction overwhelming, which can lead to anxiety or distress. (National Autistic Society, 2026) Without appropriate support, these experiences may result in negative behaviour. Inclusive education emphasises the importance of reasonable adjustments, such as visual timetables, clear instructions, sensory breaks, and differentiated tasks (SEND Code of Practice, 2015). When barriers to learning are reduced and individual needs are supported, children are more likely to display positive behaviour.

Peer relationships play an important role in influencing children's behaviour within learning environments. Positive friendships can increase confidence, motivation, and a sense of belonging, all of which support positive behaviour and engagement with learning (Wentzel, 2010). Children who feel accepted by their peers are more likely to cooperate, participate in lessons, and develop positive social skills.

Negative peer experiences, such as bullying, exclusion, or conflict, can have a damaging effect on behaviour. Children who are bullied may become withdrawn, anxious, or aggressive, while others may display challenging behaviour in an attempt to gain peer approval. (Peterson, 2018) Inclusive learning environments actively promote respect, empathy, and positive relationships through clear anti-bullying policies, social skills teaching, and opportunities for cooperative learning. Supporting positive peer interactions is essential in reducing behaviour difficulties and promoting emotional wellbeing.

The classroom environment, both physical and emotional, has a strong influence on children's behaviour. Physical factors such as noise levels, lighting, seating arrangements, and classroom organisation can affect children's ability to concentrate and regulate behaviour. Calm, well-organised classrooms with clear routines and expectations can reduce anxiety and promote positive behaviour (Bennett, 2017).

The emotional environment is equally important. Children are more likely to behave positively when they feel safe, respected, and valued by adults. In contrast, environments that rely heavily on punishment or lack consistency may increase stress and lead to behavioural difficulties. Inclusive practice focuses on creating predictable, supportive environments that

meet diverse needs and promote emotional security for all learners.

Relationships with teachers and support staff are central to children's behaviour in learning environments. Positive adult-child relationships built on trust, respect, and understanding can significantly improve behaviour and engagement with learning (Rogers, 2015). When children feel understood and supported, they are more likely to follow expectations and seek help when needed.

Teaching approaches also influence behaviour. Inclusive teaching that is engaging, structured, and appropriately differentiated helps prevent frustration and disengagement. Behaviour management strategies that focus on positive reinforcement, restorative approaches, and clear communication are more effective than punitive methods. For example, calm adult responses and consistent boundaries can help children feel secure and supported, particularly those who struggle with emotional regulation. (Restorative Approaches in Schools in the UK, n.d.)

Reflecting on the factors that influence children's behaviour highlights the importance of viewing behaviour through an inclusive and compassionate lens. In practice, behaviour often reflects unmet needs, emotional distress, or barriers to learning rather than deliberate disruption. Understanding this encourages educators to respond with empathy, consistency, and appropriate support. For example, children who struggle with emotional regulation often benefit from calm adult support, clear routines, and reassurance rather than sanctions. This reflective approach supports inclusive practice and promotes positive behaviour, emotional wellbeing, and improved learning outcomes for all children.

Children's behaviour in learning environments is shaped by a complex interaction of factors, including home experiences, emotional development, additional learning needs, peer relationships, classroom environment, and adult responses. Behaviour should be understood as a form of communication rather than simply an issue of discipline. Inclusive education requires a holistic and compassionate approach that recognises individual differences and responds with appropriate support. By creating inclusive, supportive environments and building strong relationships, educators can promote positive behaviour, emotional wellbeing, and successful learning outcomes for all children.

From a coaching perspective, my experiences in football have significantly strengthened my understanding of how adult behaviour directly influences young people's responses. Through my own coaching approach, I prioritise encouragement, clear expectations, and consistent communication. I focus on praising effort, reinforcing teamwork, and correcting mistakes calmly rather than criticising publicly. As a result, I have witnessed players grow in confidence, demonstrate greater self-control, and show resilience when facing setbacks during matches. When young people feel supported rather than judged, they are more willing to take responsibility for their behaviour and contribute positively to the team environment. I have seen players who initially struggled with frustration begin to regulate their emotions

simply because the tone around them was calm and constructive.

In contrast, I have also observed the impact of negative coaching styles from others. Excessive shouting, visible frustration, sarcasm, or singling out players in front of peers often leads to immediate changes in body language and behaviour. Some players become withdrawn and hesitant, afraid to make mistakes, while others react defensively or aggressively. Rather than improving performance, this approach frequently increases anxiety and damages team cohesion. I have seen how inconsistency in rules or favouritism can also create resentment and conflict within a squad.

These experiences in football closely mirror what I observe within educational settings. They reinforce my belief that behaviour is shaped by the emotional climate created by the adult. Positive leadership promotes trust, respect, and self-regulation, whereas negative approaches can unintentionally escalate challenging behaviour. Ultimately, both in sport and education, the adult's modelling, consistency, and relational approach are powerful factors in influencing young people's behaviour, either positively or negatively. (The author)

In conclusion, there can be many factors that affect children's behaviour. Many of these factors can be avoided through proper communication and correct guidance. We as adults must demonstrate positive reinforcement to help shape how children react to situations that they face in everyday life. We must provide the correct tools for the children to succeed.

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