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Component 1

Exploring behaviours and interventions in the learning environment

This essay will explore a variety of factors that shape children's behaviour (both positively and negatively), within a learning environment. It will show an understanding of the factors that affect children's behaviour in educational settings, as well as the personal characteristics that contribute to how children respond and behave in these surroundings.

Behaviour is a form of communication that consists of wanted and unwanted behaviours. According to NHS (2023), a child or young person's behaviour is often a reflection of how they are feeling. Children's emotions strongly influence the way they behave. There are many factors that contribute towards children's behaviours and the way they communicate them, this includes their home environment, age of the child, their understanding, and any past experiences they may have faced, good or bad. Other possible reasons may include the child being tired, hungry, frustrated or have some form of pain.

Positive behaviours are needed for effective learning in the classroom. Children with positive emotional behaviour will be able to express themselves with good vocabulary and show pride in their work. They will show confidence and have a good understanding of the rules of the classroom (Tes, 2021).

Social Positive behaviour in the learning environment is when a child works well with their peers in lessons, listening to others and taking turns to speak. They also understand what is expected of them in the learning environment (Tes, 2021).

Skinner's operant conditioning theory proposes that behaviour is shaped by a person's experiences of the world. Children do not act through free choice, instead they continually respond to the consequences of their actions in daily life, adjusting their behaviour based on whether those actions lead to positive, rewarding outcomes or negative, unrewarding experiences. When a behaviour leads to a rewarding or positive experience, it is more likely to be repeated. In contrast, behaviours that do not result in reward tend to decrease or stop altogether. Through repeated experiences of these consequences, children gradually adjust their behaviour to obtain desired outcomes or avoid undesired ones. A consistent approach from every adult in the classroom is essential for helping children understand expectations and develop positive behaviour patterns. When all staff reward good behaviour and apply fair sanctions for inappropriate behaviour, learners experience a clear understanding of what is expected of them. If even one member of staff responds differently, by overlooking poor behaviour or failing to reinforce agreed expectations. the child may become confused or

quickly learn that certain adults can be tested without consequence. This inconsistency weakens the impact of behaviour strategies because, without ongoing reinforcement, learned behaviours fade and children are more likely to revert to what gains them attention or advantage. Consistency is essential, without ongoing reinforcement or punishment, the learned behaviour may weaken over time (Cullen, 2011).

Children's cognitive behaviour and social wellbeing can stem from the environment in which children are raised. It can impact their future relationships and experiences. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are another factor that affect children's cognitive social and emotional growth (NSPCC, 2001).

During childhood, the brain is growing rapidly and creating new connections between neurons, the cells responsible for transmitting information. (ACEs) can interfere with this development, leading to changes in how the brain is structured and how it functions. As a result, a child's behaviour, emotional regulation, learning, and overall ability to navigate the world can be negatively affected (Mezzosolutions, 2001).

Children with ADHD often face challenges in cognitive development. Through observation of the world, children learn to interact, gather information and childrens behaviour is impacted on the way they process and interpret this information. Cognitive development reguires not only the act of learning something new, but how to apply that knowledge in various situations (Psychology Town, 2024).

School X Relationships and Behaviour Policy (2025) recognise effective behaviour through rewards and consequences which are positive. Examples of these rewards are, House points and celebration assemblies, a visit to the head teacher or a phone call home. For unacceptable behaviour, the policy uses restorative consequences. Examples of strategies that are used are, a brief restorative conversation, a restorative circle, a phone call home to parents or joining a social club at break or lunchtime. School X is trauma informed and its Relationships and behaviour Policy states it is committed to gaining a deep understanding of each learner's past experiences, the triggers that influence their daily lives, and the emotional situations they may find difficult to regulate. The policy states their role is to support children through these challenges with care and consistency. Guided by their specialist Trauma and Mental Health Informed Practitioners, School X implements targeted strategies for learners who require additional support. A Trauma Informed Approach is grounded in evidence from health and neuroscience, which highlights the strong link between childhood adversity and later physical, emotional, and social outcomes. The development and implementation of this policy are underpinned by Skinner's Operant Conditioning Theory (Ferguson and O'Donohue, 2001).

“Jean Piaget (1896-1980) was a Swiss psychologist whose curiosity about children’s thinking began in his early career” (Brodie, 2024). Piaget’s theory of cognitive development proposes that children move through 4 stages in life. Stage 1 is the sensorimotor stage which happens between age 0-2where children learn through actions and senses by feeling, tasting and looking. Proportional is stage 2, between 2-7 years old. This is when children begin to talk and use symbols. Logic and conservation thinking can be difficult to understand at this stage. The concrete operational, stage 3 is approximately 7-11 years, and this is when a child begins to think logically about real events and is able to comprehend a discussion. 12 years through to adulthood is the last stage of development when abstract and hypothetical thinking takes place, whereby children and adolescents start to think of their future. (Brodie, 2024). Piaget believed young children’s thinking is based on what they see and experience in the environment they were born into (Cullen, 2011).

Childhood adverse experiences can disrupt the process of Jean Piaget’s stages of development. Instead of being able to deal with situations in a rational and calm manner, they may react in a defensive way. This is because trauma can keep the brain in a constant state of survival prioritizing the amygdala part of the brain over the prefrontal cortex (Alrekabi,2024). The cortex is responsible for impulse control and rational thought. Its healthy development is essential for a child to deal with life challenges calmly and rationally. If the cortex is less developed due to childhood trauma the brains alarm system becomes hypersensitive, causing the child not to be able to think logically and go into fight or flight mode. Without a fully engaged cortex a child cannot regulate their emotions, and this can mean minor events may seem like major threats to their safety (Alrekabi,2024).

School X’s Relationships and Behaviour Policy (2025) reflect this understanding by incorporating positive reinforcement, restorative practices, and trauma-informed principles. By recognising each learner’s unique background, triggers, and emotional needs, the school aims to create a safe, consistent and supportive environment where all children can thrive. Ultimately, behaviour is not simply something to be managed, it is a meaningful expression of a child’s inner world, and responding to it with empathy, structure, and evidence-based strategies is key to promoting children’s wellbeing and long-term development.

In conclusion, understanding behaviour as a form of communication is essential for supporting children and young people in educational settings. Behaviour is a form of communication that consists of wanted and unwanted behaviours. Children’s behaviours, whether positive or challenging, commonly stem from emotional experiences, developmental stage, past experiences, and immediate needs such as, tiredness, hunger, or frustration. Positive behaviour enables effective learning, social interaction, and emotional expression, while unwanted behaviour often signals unmet needs or difficulties in regulation. Theories such as Skinner’s Operant Conditioning highlight the importance of consistent reinforcement in shaping behaviour, demonstrating how children learn from the consequences of their actions over time. Children’s thinking develops in stages, as Piaget

described, but this progression can be disrupted when a child grows up with stress or trauma. When the brain is kept in survival mode, the amygdala becomes overactive and the prefrontal cortex struggles to develop the skills needed for calm, rational thinking. This means some children react defensively not because they choose to, but because their brains are protecting them. Understanding this helps adults respond with empathy and create the safe, supportive environments children need for healthy cognitive and emotional development.

Environmental influences, including Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), can significantly affect a child's cognitive, social, and emotional development, altering how they process information and respond to the world around them. Conditions such as ADHD impact children's interpretation of experiences and their ability to apply knowledge across different settings. These complexities emphasise the need for schools to adopt informed, compassionate approaches to behaviour.

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