LINKS BETWEEN COMMUNICATION & BEHAVIOUR

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Research tells us that there is a strong link between communication problems and Behavioural Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD). (Heneker – 55%–100% coexistence)

- As many as 75% of young people who have BESD also have communication problems.
- As many as 40% of children with BESD may have undetected communication problems.
The way in which one acts or conducts oneself, especially towards others

Behaviour difficulties—usually mean that a child’s behaviour is a problem to someone else. We all have different sets of ideas about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

Behaviour should not be seen in isolation as it is situation dependent—may be influenced by other people, the task, expectations, the environment......
What do behaviour difficulties look like?

- Aggressive or anti-social behaviour
- Inattentiveness, distractibility, impulsiveness
- Impaired social interaction
- A general inability to cope with daily routines and tasks
- Obsessive and/or repetitive behaviours
- Attention seeking behaviour
- Depressed behaviour, such as withdrawal

Underpinning these behaviours may be weak social skills & COMMUNICATION difficulties, a lack of self confidence & poor emotional maturity.
Why do children exhibit these behaviours?

- Language is one way to let others know about ourselves—our feelings, our ideas, our experiences.
- Difficulties with language and expression can mean difficulties expressing these feelings.
- The child may use behaviour as a form of communication.
- The child’s behaviour is telling us something about them. They are expressing themselves in other ways.

“I am feeling anxious”
Early difficulties with communication can affect parent/child attachment and bonding → behaviour difficulties

Don’t play or interact with others → reduced chances to practice social interaction → reduced self esteem and confidence

Not able to understand or express self in same ways as others → affects self esteem

Don’t have language to ask for things or express needs → use behaviours instead (7–11 years use language, especially abstract language in play with others)

Not developmentally ready to conform to social rules → unrealistic expectations → child distressed

Child doesn’t understand conversations regarding social training
Link—behaviour & communication

- No internal language/dialogue—“if I do this then this will happen” →impulsive
- When a child has difficulty using gestures and expressions to signal engagement we are more likely to bring the conversation to a quick end. Children will talk less to a child with poor non-verbal communication and a downward spiral is then set up. The child with SLCN has decreasing chances to practice social interaction; this affects their self esteem and confidence.
- Difficulties understanding or expressing self can be seen as “naughty” or “lazy”—child takes on this role
- Certain communication disorders have behaviour components as part of the condition e.g. ASD, ADHD (Thorley ref)
How may communication difficulties look like behaviour problems?

- Failure to understand or pay attention to the rules of conversation. So they might interrupt.
- Difficulty using different language for different situations. So they might seem rude or inappropriate.
- Poor or limited vocabulary. So they might swear or always answer in the same way.
- Difficulty asking for clarification. So they might not be able to do the work or to ask how to.
- Difficulty organising information. So they forget homework and might be late.
- Problems understanding idiom, jokes, sarcasm and slang. So they may be confused or aggressive when these are used.
ICEBERG

BEHAVIOUR

COMMUNICATION BARRIER

UNDERLYING CAUSE

disruptive during class

can't explain that not understood

doesn't understand was instruction's too complicated and lengthy

SOLUTION

Teacher simplify language
Teach child to ask for clarification.
Think of a child you know

- BEHAVIOUR you can see
- UNDERLYING CAUSE
- COMMUNICATION BARRIER
- HOW TO HELP
Your school should have a clear policy for behaviour that has been discussed with parents and passed by the board of governors; this should include:

- Rules and routines that are clearly explained to the pupils.
- Systems of rewards and sanctions, such as the use of ‘time-out' that the children understand.
- A set of procedures that teaching staff follow to deal with solving persistent behaviour problems, e.g. giving choices, warnings, defusing the situation.
Strategies—School

- Assessment and implementation of any special programmes for individual children; e.g. a social skills group recommended by the speech and language therapist.
- Time during each day for the child to build a relationship with a key member of staff, involving mutual listening.
- Clear, but adaptable, boundaries that help all children feel safe.
- A broad curriculum that is differentiated to the child's ability, to ensure interest, motivation and a sense of success and achievement.
- Awareness of, and teaching to, the child's individual learning style, e.g. visual, auditory or practical.
- A balance between learning and socialisation goals in preparation for a fulfilling life.
- Good ability to work with outside agencies and the Local Authority.
- A belief that belonging to a school community and learning will be good for the child's development and wellbeing.
Strategies to use together:

- Teach the child how to explain their side of a story; help them develop narrative skills so that they can give a sequenced account.
- Teach them the perspective of others in social situations using social stories.
- Provide visual, concrete aids to help with self organisation; such as photo checklists to help them pack their school bag.
- Start a social communication group.
Be Consistent:

- All adults and older siblings in the family need to agree to take the same approach to dealing with communication and behaviour.
- Home and school need to achieve a joint understanding of the child and agree on the approaches used in each setting.
- Have clear, consistent expectations for acceptable behaviour.
- Any strategy or programme is given enough time to work.
CONCLUSION

- Strong Link
- Identify 1 person who can discuss these issues with
When return to school:–
- Who has “behaviour” difficulties in your class?
- Do they have communication difficulties?
- How can you find out?
- How can you best support them? (iceberg)

QUESTIONS?

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REFERENCES

- Heneker S (2005) Speech and language therapy support for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) a pilot project. British Journal of Special Education Vol 32 no 2: In her study of 11 pupils in a pupil referral unit for BESD (between ages 5 and 11) she found that 10 had some degree of communication difficulty on formal assessment. Sarah also reviews the available evidence on the association and summarises it as demonstrating between 55% and 100% co-existence (depending how strictly communication difficulty is defined).

- Thorley G (2000) Behavioural difficulties in Law J (eds) Communication difficulties in childhood Oxford: Radcliffe Medical Press: He found that behavioural difficulties with a medical component (such as ADHD) frequently co-occurred with communication difficulty in young children.


- talkingpoint.org.uk (I CAN)