

November 2005

Some children just don't seem to 'fit in'

The children who don't "fit in" may not have a diagnosis and may get by most of the time. The way we recognise and respond to these children makes a huge difference to the way they see themselves and a great deal of difference to how successful they will be at school.

Behaviour

The child may show some of these in any combination:

- ✿ Won't sit still
- ✿ Invades other's space
- ✿ Very emotional
- ✿ Won't follow routine, and/or distressed if routine alters
- ✿ Upset by stories
- ✿ Doesn't listen
- ✿ Shouts
- ✿ Poor social skills
- ✿ Low self-esteem
- ✿ Poor sense of danger
- ✿ Over-reacts
- ✿ Immature behaviours

Social/ behavioural theories

These are the theories that get thrown about between staff:

- ✿ The child feels insecure and therefore produces these behaviours.
- ✿ The child has failed to learn the appropriate behaviours.

Motor/ perceptual theories

These are the theories that you might want to add in when you do your thinking:

- ✿ The child gets insufficient or unreliable feedback from physical actions or sensations and has difficulty understanding what is expected of him in different situations.

Teacher actions/reactions

Every teacher or supporter has a range of actions and reactions at their command. Making a conscious decision to use a certain reaction can affect the outcome for the child and rest of the class.

- ✿ Don't take it personally.
- ✿ Don't blame parents.
- ✿ Don't change the reward and punishments regularly.
- ✿ Don't ridicule the child.
- ✿ Don't invoke peer pressure to force conformity.
- ✿ Do use praise and rewards.
- ✿ Do set achievable targets.
- ✿ Do press for a full investigation.

Physical

The child may show some of these in any combination:

- ✿ Clumsiness/messiness
- ✿ Runs but can't stand still
- ✿ Fidgets
- ✿ Avoids physical games
- ✿ Poor dressing skills
- ✿ Comes into physical contact with others regularly
- ✿ May not feel pain or may over-react to pain
- ✿ Fatigue
- ✿ Poor posture – sitting/ walking/ running
- ✿ Awkward pen grip
- ✿ Changes hands in tasks
- ✿ Poor at PE
- ✿ Doesn't have the correct equipment
- ✿ Easily led
- ✿ Needs more space
- ✿ Loud
- ✿ Pushes in

Social/ behavioural

These are the theories that get thrown about between staff

- ✿ Tiredness – stayed up too late last night
- ✿ Lazy
- ✿ Difficult
- ✿ Disobedient

Motor/ perceptual

These are the theories that you might want to add in when you do your thinking:

- ✿ The child has to expend a great deal of thought and energy just staying upright or coping with the crowd.
- ✿ He is unable to control fine movements.
- ✿ Staying still requires more tiny muscle adjustments than moving quickly.

Teacher actions/ reactions

- ✿ Don't draw attention to the difficulty.
- ✿ Don't insist the child completes tasks at home as well as homework.
- ✿ Do have realistic expectations of performance and pace.
- ✿ Do provide an alternative form of recording.
- ✿ Do provide more appropriate seating.
- ✿ Do praise effort not outcome.

Language and comprehension

The child may show some of these in any combination:

- ✿ Poor listening
- ✿ Does not follow instructions
- ✿ Takes everything literally
- ✿ Can't take teasing
- ✿ Becomes hysterical
- ✿ Blurts out information
- ✿ Poor understanding of time and space
- ✿ Poor memory and retrieval
- ✿ Problems with spelling/word order

- ✿ Problems with word finding
- ✿ Poor copying skills
- ✿ Poor at dictation
- ✿ Can't tell a joke
- ✿ Immature speech
- ✿ Can't follow the timetable
- ✿ Panics
- ✿ Gets on in some lessons but is rude/difficult in others
- ✿ Has difficulty predicting the consequences of actions
- ✿ Acts out distress rather than talks about it
- ✿ May seem ok in school but have terrible tantrums at home

Social/ behavioural

These are the theories that get thrown about between staff

- ✿ Is not made to listen at home
- ✿ Immature/ spoilt
- ✿ Wilfully disobedient
- ✿ Attention-seeking

Motor/ perceptual

These are the theories that you might want to add in when you do your thinking:

- ✿ Can hear, but does not always discriminate sounds appropriately.
- ✿ Is unable to relate meaning to abstract concepts such as time, distance and space.
- ✿ Cannot keep pace with dictation because of poor fine motor and poor organisational skills.

Teacher action/ reaction

- ✿ Don't speak firmly to the child telling him to 'buck his ideas up'.
- ✿ Don't expect the child to get his instructions second hand from the child next to him.
- ✿ Don't point out his failings to the class hoping to shame him into working harder.
- ✿ Do support meaning with objects and pictures.
- ✿ Do check that he understands instructions.

- ✿ Do give instructions singly and more than once.
- ✿ Do provide lots of opportunities for success and to recognise this success as contributing to the class.
- ✿ Do consider access to ICT at an early stage.

Visual/auditory difficulties

The child may show some of these in any combination:

- ✿ Easily distracted by sights and sounds
- ✿ Startles easily or fidgets a lot
- ✿ Aggressive to anyone entering his visual field
- ✿ Forgets the question
- ✿ Interrupted responses
- ✿ Goes off at a tangent
- ✿ Leaves his seat
- ✿ Makes a noise
- ✿ Asks for repeat instructions

Emotional/behavioural

These are the theories that get thrown about between staff

- ✿ Not disciplined
- ✿ Didn't understand the question
- ✿ Attention-seeking

Motor/perceptual

These are the theories that you might want to add in when you do your thinking:

- ✿ Cannot integrate stimuli
- ✿ Cannot screen out unnecessary stimuli
- ✿ Thrown off balance by this sight or that sound.
- ✿ Needs help to get back on track
- ✿ Needs to have distractions lowered
- ✿ Needs a screened environment

Teacher action/ reaction

- ✿ Don't expect him to catch on as the lesson progresses.
- ✿ Don't criticise him or blame others in his class or group.
- ✿ Do offer more time to absorb information.
- ✿ Do support new or difficult information with clear aids such as objects or pictures.
- ✿ Do expect to have to repeat instructions or recall him to task, as part of your contribution to overcoming his difficult.

Children may start off having difficulties purely because of a motor or perceptual problem but some of their responses which are not helpful may become habituated to certain staff or to certain lessons or situations. Simply understanding the underlying cause will not, of itself, make any difference to the behaviours but it will allow a re-think of how the service is going to deal with the situation.

This document is for information purposes only.

For more information about cerebral palsy and Scope's services

Contact Scope's Cerebral Palsy Helpline for information, advice and support. Copies of all Scope's information sheets can be downloaded from the website or obtained from the Helpline. Referrals to Scope's Community Teams and services can be made through the Helpline.

The Helpline hours are:

Monday - Friday 9 am to 9 pm. Weekends 2 pm to 6 pm

Cerebral Palsy Helpline

PO Box 833

Milton Keynes

MK12 5NY

Tel: **0808 800 3333**

Fax: **01908 321051**

Email: cphelpline@scope.org.uk

Scope's website address is www.scope.org.uk

Scope acknowledges the help and support of everyone who has been involved in the production of this information.

This information can be made available in other formats if required, eg. large print or tape. We also have information about Scope and cerebral palsy available in 13 languages on audiotape and can offer a telephone interpreting service to people whose preferred language is not English.

Please contact Scope's Cerebral Palsy Helpline on telephone number 01908 321049 for more details of these services.

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