Supporting children's development

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Contents

Special needs — 67

Professional development plan — 88

Taking my learning further — 97

Introduction and guidance

Introduction and guidance

Supporting children's development is an introductory course for anyone who is interested in children's development, especially support staff in schools, such as teaching assistants. It builds on your knowledge and skills to develop a deeper understanding of children from the early years to school leavers. You will be introduced to some core ideas surrounding development and learning, behaviour, special needs and disabilities.

Each section of the course offers short, interactive quizzes to test your knowledge.

Successful completion of the course will enable you to achieve an online badge and a statement of participation. This course does not carry any formal academic credit. However, it does provide a way to help you progress from informal to formal learning.

Guidance for accessing alternative formats

You can download this section of the course to study offline. The alternative formats offered that will best support offline study include Word, PDF and ebook/Kindle versions of the materials. The other alternative formats (SCORM, RSS, IMS, HTML and XML) are useful to those who want to export the course to host on another learning management system.

Although you can use the alternative formats offline for your own convenience, you do need to work through the online version of the course for full functionality (such as accessing links, using the audio and video materials, and completing the quizzes). Please use the downloads as convenient tools for studying the materials when away from the internet and return to the online version to ensure that you can complete all activities that lead to earning the badge.

In order to access full functionality in the online course, we recommend that you use the latest internet browsers such as Internet Explorer 9 and above and Google Chrome version 49 and above.

If you have difficulties in streaming the audio-visual content, please make use of the available transcripts.

Structure of the course

This course has five sections, with each section focusing on a particular aspect of supporting children's development.

1. Developing and managing relationships looks at the stages of child development through the use of case studies and an introduction to child development theory. It considers the roles of family, as well as support workers, in relation to this development.
2. Encouraging reading considers how children learn to read and develop literacy skills from when they are babies to secondary school.
3. Behavioural management looks at possible causes of children and young people's behaviour and some common strategies for managing behaviour.
4. Special needs looks at what we mean by special educational needs and disability (SEND) and the role of teaching assistants in supporting children with SEND.
5. Professional development plan (PDP) looks at the importance of reflecting on your own practice and how drawing up a PDP can help you to think about your personal and career development.

Together they amount to approximately 15 hours of study time. Each section has a mixture of reading, video clips, activities and quizzes that will help you to engage with the course content.

A further section, Taking my learning further, will enable you to reflect upon what you have learned within this course. It also directs you to relevant websites and resources, which further relate to the development of your learning and career prospects.

Once you have studied a section, you will be asked to complete a short online quiz of no more than five questions per section. This helps to test and embed your learning.

Supporting children's development is designed to allow you to dip in and out of the resources, so that you can study in small chunks to fit around your work and life commitments. If you choose to complete all sections of *Supporting children's development* and collect the badge, you can download a statement of participation that recognises your achievement. You may find this useful to show your employer as evidence of your learning. For more information on how to obtain your badge, read What is a badge?

Navigating the website

To find your way around this course, you simply click on the links. The home page has links to all the sections, quizzes and relevant resources. When you are in a section, the left-hand menu has links to that section's topics and its associated quiz. The menu also has links to the other sections of *Supporting children's development* and to the resources section.

If you feel unsure, practise hovering your mouse over a link in the menu and clicking on it. This is the easiest way to move from page to page. You can also click on the 'Next: … ' link at the end of each page of text. Don't worry about breaking a link or damaging the web page – you won't. Have a go as soon as you can before you begin your study.

Why study this course?

Jennifer Colloby, one of the contributors to this course, will now give you a bit of background into why you might like to study this course.

> Video content is not available in this format.

If you are already a teaching assistant, you will find it helpful to consider how your role and experience match the topics covered in the course. The guided activities throughout this course will help you to learn and reflect on your own role. If you are in a paid teaching assistant role, completion of *Supporting children's development* will allow you to demonstrate to your employer your understanding of children's development. Your employer might also ask you to study this course as part of your induction into a new role, or for your professional development.

> Throughout the course you will find activities that ask you to write down your thoughts and feelings based on the issues being discussed. There will be a few simple questions that encourage you to focus your thinking. It would be helpful for you to spend some time thinking about what you have learned within each section, and how it relates to your current role.
>
> These activities are not there to test you, but designed to help you reflect in more detail upon what you have read. These activity spaces are entirely for your own use to help you recognise what you have learned, even if you haven't yet encountered it within your role. Nobody else will see what you write here. The aim is to help you become more reflective, by bringing together aspects of both your personal and professional experience so you can review and learn from them.

Learning outcomes

After completing this course you will:

- have gained an insight into the varying perspectives of children from early years through to secondary school
- be able to reflect on personal experience and practice, identify strengths and weaknesses, and apply this to your practice issues
- understand how some theories attempt to explain children's development
- be able to reflect on the value of the work of teaching assistants, the support skills involved, and think about your future role.

Before you begin

Spend a few moments thinking about your current learning needs and opportunities by doing Activity 1 below.

Activity 1

Allow about 15 minutes

Below is a link to a short questionnaire to get you thinking about:

- What are your current priorities for learning?
- How does studying a short online course fit into your everyday lifestyle?
- What goals are you hoping to achieve by studying this course?

Questionnaire about your learning (1)

Hopefully, by the end of the course you will be able to reflect on your answers.

We hope you enjoy the course!

Developing and managing relationships

1 The importance of the early years

You are going to start by exploring relationships in the early years through the lens of a case study family. The account pinpoints a number of possible factors impacting on the children's relationships. Make a mental note of these factors as you read the case study, but note that you may have other views due to your different interests, prior knowledge and experiences.

Case study: Forming early relationships
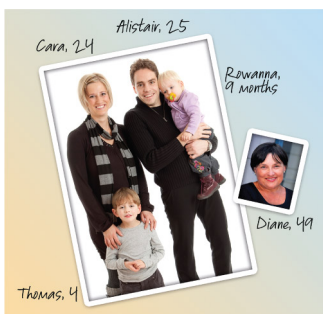
Figure 1 Forming early relationships

Tomos (4) and Mali (9 months) live with their parents, Siân and Dafydd, a young married couple in their twenties, and their grandmother, Ceri. Ceri is Dafydd's mother. Siân and Dafydd have known each other since they were at school together and married when Siân found out she was expecting Tomos. Although Ceri tries hard not to interfere with how Siân and Dafydd bring up their family there are inevitable tensions with the three adults sharing a house and Tomos, at four, is beginning to play his parents and grandparent off against each other.

Siân has decided to go back to work full time now that Tomos is moving on from preschool into mainstream schooling. Mali has been a very clingy baby and Siân is worried about how she will cope with being away from 'Mummy' and going into day care.

Tomos was a very easy baby – very placid and quiet. As a toddler he often seemed to be in his own world and did not interact with other children. Tomos's parents put his behaviour down to having a reserved personality, and were secretly very pleased with their well-behaved little boy. During a routine health check Tomos was diagnosed as

having a hearing impairment and over the past year has undergone various medical tests. He now sees a speech and language therapist on a regular basis.

Mali has been a more difficult and demanding baby, suffering from colic until she was 4 months old. Siân had difficulty bonding with her and wonders if there will be any long-term effects on her relationship with her daughter, or on Mali's social and emotional development.

Figure 2 Tomos and Mali's early relationships

As a baby, Tomos was happy to lie quietly in his cot, or amuse himself as he got older, and did not seem to want lots of attention. As a result, Siân was able to work part-time. Between them, Siân, Ceri and Dafydd were able to care for Tomos without him going into day care until he started preschool at the age of 3. Juggling work and family time, however, meant that taking Tomos out to meet other babies and toddlers was not easy. When Siân and Dafydd went to a parents' meeting with the preschool to discuss his transition to school, they were not surprised to hear that he has no special friend, and that he is quite happy playing on his own.

As Tomos has a hearing impairment he was referred to a speech and language therapist. This was a great shock to his parents and they found it hard to adjust. However, they were determined to do all they could to help him. They spend a lot of time carrying out exercises and activities suggested by the professionals they see. Tomos does not always want to do these, and Siân and Dafydd sometimes resort to cajoling and bribing him to do what they want. Tomos gets upset and, on occasions, Ceri steps in and lets Tomos have what he wants without doing what he has been asked to do. This has caused some friction between the adults in the house for a time.

When Mali was born a few months after Tomos's diagnosis, Siân, particularly, found it very difficult to cope with the differing demands of the two children. Mali has been the total opposite to Tomos as a baby. She suffered from colic and cried a lot, and woke frequently in the early months. Dafydd worked a lot of night shifts so that he could be about during the day to take Tomos to preschool and give Siân a break, but this left them both tired and exhausted. Although Ceri had tried to keep in the background when Tomos was a baby to allow Siân and Dafydd the freedom to develop their own parenting skills, she has become much more involved with baby Mali.

From a very tiny baby Mali hated being put down and would scream or cry unless she was being cuddled or sleeping. Her clingy behaviour was very wearing on the family. Ceri, who did a lot of the early caring, spent many hours cradling Mali in an attempt to calm her, while Siân was busy with Tomos. Mali now has a very close bond with her 'Nain'. She loves to cuddle up to Ceri for a story and will often choose to go to her when she is hurt. On a recent occasion, when she fell over playing in the garden, even though Siân was nearer to her, Mali chose to go to her grandmother for comfort rather than her mum. Siân found this small incident upsetting and it has made her realise that she needs to spend more time with Mali and work to build up their relationship.

Mali's relationship with Siân appears to be less secure than her relationship with Ceri. While she seems happy enough to be with Siân there are little hints that she feels more sure of her relationship with Ceri, such as settling more easily for Ceri when she is upset. Siân is grateful to Ceri for helping with Mali, but has begun to worry that she takes second place to Nain in her daughter's eyes. Tomos found it hard to adjust to sharing his parents with Mali when she was first born but he loves his little sister now, and likes to play with her, although he can get annoyed with her, too – particularly when Mali tries to grab his favourite dinosaur model!

Activity 1
Allow about 20 minutes

Reread the case study and make a note of:

1. What factors may have impacted on both Tomos and Mali's relationships with their parents and grandmother?

2. What possible reasons are there for why Mali may not have formed a close relationship with her mother?

Provide your answer...

Comment

The account highlights some possible factors that may affect the children's relationships. Below are some of the factors you may have identified, but you may have noted different ones. Your answers may reflect your different experiences, interests and prior knowledge.

1. Tomos's diagnosis of a hearing impairment came while Siân was expecting Mali. Siân had to spend a lot of time taking Tomos to appointments and carrying out activities with him to help him with his language development. This naturally will have impacted on Tomos's relationship with his parents and grandmother as everyone coped with the demands an early intervention approach placed on the family.

2. Tomos's behaviour and subsequent diagnosis, and the busy lives of his parents, may have affected how easy he found it to form relationships with other children, although he appears to be forming a healthy sibling relationship with his sister.

3. Mali has a very close, secure, relationship with her Nain as she did a lot of the early caring while Siân was busy with Tomos. Siân found it difficult to bond with Mali when she was born, possibly because her focus was on Tomos but also because Mali was a 'difficult' baby. There is a hint that Mali may not be sure that her mother loves her and may have a less secure relationship with her, evidenced by Mali going to her Nain when she was hurt.

1.1 Important relationships
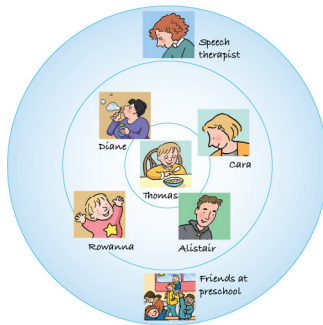
Figure 3 The concentric ring

Figure 3 shows one way of representing the range of different people that Tomos comes into contact with on a regular basis and how close they feel to him. Do you notice anything about the range of people mentioned? In this case study (but not in all families) family members are the closest. After that key workers in schools such as speech therapists might be the closest. As children develop, peers become of increasing importance.

Activity 2
Allow about 20 minutes

Think back to your early childhood and try to remember whom you were close to when you were Tomos's and Mali's ages. Have a look at photographs from your early childhood or talk to relatives. If you prefer, carry out this activity from the perspective of your own children, or children you know well.

Produce a diagram similar to Figure 3 to provide a visual representation of the information or jot down some notes about the following, giving reasons for your answers if you can:

1. Who were you close to?
2. Are you still close to them now?

> *Provide your answer...*

Comment
You may have been surprised by the range of people you identified as feeling close to, and forming a strong bond with. Maybe you identified aunts and uncles, grandparents, a step-parent, a foster carer or a non-relative who cared for you, such as a babysitter or a family friend.

For most young children, parents and immediate family are important. Other adults and children can be, too, but do not always get the credit they deserve for their parts in children's lives.

1.2 Some child development theories

Some people find theory a bit heavy going, although it is important in understanding child development. You do not have to spend long on the theory at this stage of your studies. The external links are optional and not included in the study time for this section.

Mali was less attached to Siân, her mother, than Siân would have liked because of Mali's close attachment to her grandmother. Attachments are emotional bonds made between a young child and the people most involved with them. The reliability and consistency of care a baby receives appropriate to their needs impacts on how secure they feel in their attachments; if they feel secure, a firm bond is likely to be established with the person giving that care. However, inconsistency and unpredictability in a relationship can make a child feel very insecure, and this will have a negative impact on how well a bond is formed.

By 6 to 12 months a baby is capable of making a firm emotional relationship (attachment) with others and once an attachment is formed the baby becomes wary of strangers and upset if separated from the person(s) they are attached to.

Attachment theory and the Strange Situation Test

The Strange Situation Test has been used by child psychologists in Western Europe and the USA for many years to assess the quality of attachment relationships in young children. This has usually been done with mothers as the main carers.

Activity 3
Allow about 15 minutes

Watch this video clip of the Strange Situation Test being carried out on baby Lisa by a psychologist. The video clip shows that baby Lisa is securely attached to her mother.

Video available on YouTube here

Comment

The Strange Situation Test has been criticised on several counts – for example, it cannot be easily repeated. The research has been mainly carried out on Western European and American children, so interpretations of what secure relationships should be like are very specific to European–American cultures.

There are societies and ethnic/cultural groups where babies are not encouraged to explore, play away from family or show curiosity, so would not behave in this way when young (Cole, 1998). In assessments of the security of their relationships, therefore, these babies may be wrongly assessed as being not secure.

Attachment theory

A psychologist called Mary Ainsworth (1913–1999) devised the Strange Situation Test but the test is closely linked to the theory of attachment. Attachment theory has become very well known in psychology and is closely associated with the work of John Bowlby (1907–1990), who carried out work on attachment in the 1940s and 50s.

Figure 4 John Bowlby

Recent research has shown that not only can babies form multiple attachments but that they are often better able to form relationships in the future if they form more than one primary attachment (David, 2004). These primary attachments do not have to be with the child's parents. Sometimes children form a primary attachment with a close relative, such as a grandparent, or a parent figure, such as a long-term foster carer. Remember in the case study family that baby Mali was closer to her grandmother Ceri who looked after her while her mother Siân was working.

Developmental theory

How children learn and develop is a huge area of developmental psychology and there are differing views underlying the experiences children are exposed to. Two theorists in particular have been influential in child development. They are Jean Piaget (1896–1980) and Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934).

Piaget's theory argued that development occurred mainly through factors internal to the child that are biologically generated and that all children go through stages of development at roughly the same time. Don't worry too much about the four different stages (although you may want to have a go at Question 1 of the quiz at this point).These stages (Figure 5) are:

1. Sensorimotor (0–2 years)
2. Preoperational (2–7 years)
3. Concrete operational (7–11 years)
4. Formal operational (11–15 years)
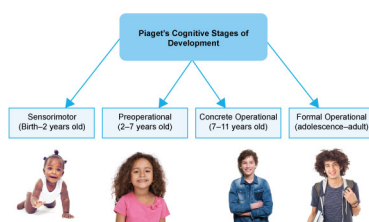
Figure 5 Piaget's cognitive stages of development

These are complex stages of cognitive development and if you choose to study child development in more depth, you will learn more about them. The following is a summary of the main features of each stage of development. Piaget argued that all children follow these stages sequentially.

> **Stage 1: Sensorimotor (0–2 years)**. The child learns by doing and this includes looking, touching and sucking. They have a basic understanding of

cause-and-effect relationships. Object permanence appears at around 9 months.

Stage 2: Preoperational (2–7 years). The child uses language and symbols, including letters and numbers. Egocentrism is evident. Conversation marks the end of the preoperational stage and the beginning of concrete operations.

Stage 3: Concrete operational (7–11 years). The child can demonstrate conversation, serial ordering and a more mature understanding of cause-and-effect relationships.

Stage 4: Formal operational (adolescence–adult). The individual can demonstrate abstract thinking including logic, deductive reasoning, comparison and classification.

(adapted from CliffsNotes, 2015)

In contrast to Piaget's biologically based stages of development, the Russian, Lev Vygotsky, considered environmental factors, such as the child's social development, to be more important in stimulating and supporting development. This is known as the theory of social constructivism or socio-cultural theory.

Dafydd and Siân have become aware through Siân's studies that Vygotsky's theory is behind what they are doing when they work at home with Tomos on the exercises set by the speech and language therapist.

To give one example, Tomos can make the sounds 'sss' and 'shh' but he muddles them up, so the speech therapist has asked them to model the sounds they want Tomos to make by saying a simple tongue twister: 'Smelly shoes and socks shock sisters' and then encouraging him to copy them.

In just a few days his pronunciation has improved and Tomos has found the activity – the learning experience – to be enjoyable, probably because he finds it funny, having a sister to shock with smelly shoes and socks.

Vygotsky, like Piaget, argued that children learn through play. However, he emphasised the importance of engaging with other children during play. Siân and Dafydd can see how much Mali has benefited from having Tomos there to watch and learn from.

Although they know there are other potential reasons for the differences between the two children, they have noticed that Mali has met milestones, such as crawling and trying to feed herself, much earlier than Tomos. They have also noticed Tomos trying to teach her things, such as how to stack the bricks from her brick trolley, now that she is much more in control of what she can do with her body.

2 Parents as partners

Parents play a crucial role in the development of their children and, in today's society, there are as many different styles of parenting as there are types of family. If you are a parent, you may have thought long and hard over decisions you have made and the impact they have had on your child. Within families, your style of parenting may differ from that of your partner, or your own parents. If practitioners are to become reflective, it is important that they think about their own style of parenting or interacting with children.

When reading about Tomos and Mali's early relationships in 'The importance of the early years' topic, you may remember that Ceri, the grandmother, had a more relaxed approach towards the children. As grandparents often do, Ceri took the 'soft' approach of 'if you don't feel like it you don't need to do it', whereas Siân and Dafydd tried to establish a more disciplined approach.

Developmental psychologists have long been interested in how parenting styles impact on a child's development. Finding actual cause-effect links between specific actions of parents and later behaviour of children is very difficult. Some children raised in dramatically different environments can later grow up to have very similar personalities. Alternatively, children who share a home and are raised in the same environment can grow up to have very different personalities. Despite these challenges, researchers have uncovered convincing links between parenting styles and the effects these styles have on children.

During the early 1960s, psychologist Diana Baumrind conducted a study on more than 100 preschool-age children. She identified four important dimensions of parenting:

- disciplinary strategies
- warmth and nurturance
- communication styles
- expectations of maturity and control.

(Baumrind, 1967)

Based on these dimensions, Baumrind suggested that the majority of parents display one of three parenting styles, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Parenting styles based on Baumrind's four dimensions of parenting

Parenting style	Parenting behaviour	Potential impact on child	Phrases a parent might use
Authoritarian	Strict discipline	Discontented	'No you can't …'
	Child expected to follow rules	Withdrawn	'Because I say so, that's why'
	No opportunity for child to negotiate	Mistrustful	'Do it – NOW!'
		Rebellious (as they get older)	
Permissive	Issue few commands and have few rules or boundaries	Impact can be both positive and negative	'It's up to you. If that's what you really want to do then …'

	May take time to explain their decisions to the child Leave child to regulate their own behaviour A friend rather than parent to their child	Insecure Demanding and self-centred Lacking in personal responsibility Better social skills Belief in themselves	'The reason for wanting you to … is …' 'Well, if you don't feel like it …'
Authoritative	Exercise control over their child's behaviour but also encourage them to be individuals Listen to what the child has to say Set clear standards and non-punitive punishments	High levels of self-esteem Achieve better at school Independent Socially competent	'This is my view … but what are your thoughts?' 'Sorry, but we agreed …'

Activity 4
Allow about 20 minutes

Look again at Baumrind's three parenting styles (Table 1) and then think about the parenting styles of Dafydd, Siân and grandmother Ceri. Which parenting style did each person use?

Provide your answer...

Comment

Grandmother Ceri has a more permissive parenting style, but Dafydd and Siân are authoritative rather than authoritarian. Neither parent is a strict disciplinarian, nor are they permissive – they do not allow their children to set their own boundaries or regulate their own behaviour.

In Baumrind's four dimensions of parenting styles, most parents today would prefer to be authoritative rather than authoritarian. In the discussion of attachment theory, you have seen how important a child's relationship with their parents is in the early years and how this can affect the future development of the child.

As a teaching assistant, or learning support worker, you need to recognise the importance of parents as partners. If you want to find out more, visit Parents as partners (an OpenLearn course). There you will discover that partnership can take many different forms. You will find that the relationship between parents and practitioners is not always straightforward and that some parents are tentative or professionals may be defensive when challenged.

Activity 5

Allow about 10 minutes

Read Section 1.2.3 of the *Parents as partners* course and try to find out why working together is so important.

> *Provide your answer...*

Comment

Working collaboratively with parents is important to children's identity, self-esteem and psychological well-being. This alone is a compelling reason for a close partnership.

Activity 5

3 Children's transitions

'Transition' means 'passing from one place, condition, form, stage or activity, to another' (YourDictionary, nd). We all experience different sorts of transition on a daily basis and throughout our lives. Vogler et al. (2008) distinguished between horizontal and vertical transitions by linking them to specific activities. Horizontal transitions occur on a daily or regular basis and usually refer to movement or a change in routine. Horizontal transitions describe activities such as children going from the classroom to the playground (a movement) or taking part in the annual sports day event (a change in routine).

In contrast, vertical transitions are much more significant and linked to specific events that do not happen on a regular basis. Starting school is described as a vertical transition and, interestingly, we often discuss children moving 'up' from nursery to primary school and moving 'up' from primary school to secondary school. The role of parents is particularly important in the vertical transitions children experience in moving 'up' from one school to another, but so is the role of teachers and teaching assistants (TAs).

> 'Again, it is often the TA that has to deal with a child's fears about this as they have more time to be able to sit and discuss their worries with them.'
>
> (Katie Harrison, Teaching Assistant, 2015)

Vogler et al. (2008) discuss a third type of transition called education-associated transition. This refers to those less formal changes in children's lives and routines that occur outside institutional settings. These changes may occur in everyday life away from school but can affect and shape children's lives and well-being; divorce would be an example of this sort of change as the child may have to move from one parent to another. For many children today, the make-up of their family life may change several times throughout their childhood and they may experience transitions of moving between homes when visiting parents and living with stepbrothers and sisters.

The timings of vertical transitions, such as starting school at 5 and moving up to secondary school at 11, are based on child development and were particularly influenced by the work of Jean Piaget. His belief that all children, at more or less the same time, went through the four cognitive stages of development, strongly influenced concepts of when children were, for example, 'ready for school' and hence informed the timings of vertical transitions within the English education system.

Transitions happen to all of us throughout our lives. Some are common to most of us, such as starting school or becoming a parent. Major transitions such as these are like milestones in our lives – we pass through them and look back at them. When we look back at them we remember how we felt at the time and this can affect how we feel about ourselves and our ability to cope with new situations, such as starting a new job or becoming a member of a local community group.

3.1 From home to school

We probably all vividly remember our first day at primary school. The case study below introduces you to Lowri and her memories of her first day at school.

Case study: Lowri's first day at primary school
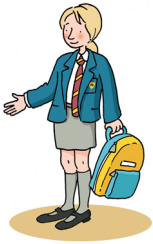
Figure 6 Lowri in her new school uniform

Lowri is 11. She looks back on her experiences of her first important transition from home to school. This was firstly a horizontal transition, as it involved a physical move literally from one place to another. But it was also a vertical transition, as it involved a change of experience, a moving 'up' into primary school.

In Figure 7, Lowri remembers her first day at school and the feelings she had about being left in a strange setting. Her teacher played an important role in making the transition easier for Lowri. The detail with which she remembers the day shows how memorable the experience was to a young child of 4.
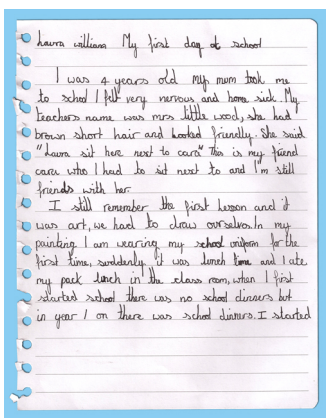
7 Lowri's story

For young children, the vertical transition from home to school will most likely also involve a change in carer, such as from mother to teacher. For older children, the move from primary to secondary school will also involve changes in routine, such as having to move around the school to different classrooms for all the different subjects being studied. For many children, moving to secondary school can mean a further change in friendship groups, as children are often allocated to different schools depending on catchment areas or by parental choice.

Activity 6 asks you to identify and reflect on transitions in your early life.

Activity 6

Allow about 20 minutes

Part 1

The three types of transition are:

- horizontal transitions
- vertical transitions
- education-associated transitions.

Bearing these in mind, think back to your childhood and identify times when you experienced these transitions. Make a note of the transitions that made the most impact on your life, making sure you include your age at the time of the transition.

Horizontal transitions

> *Provide your answer...*

Vertical transitions

> *Provide your answer...*

Education-associated transitions

> *Provide your answer...*

Comment

It is most likely that you will have identified the transition of starting school or leaving school. You may have identified when you moved house or moved to a different country as a horizontal transition. Starting Cubs or Brownies, or leaving them, may have left you with strong memories of vertical transition.

Part 2

Choose one vertical transition to reflect back on. Identify others such as adults, siblings or friends who supported you during this transition.

- How did you feel before and after the transition?
- What role (positive or negative) did other people play?
- How could the experience have been made better?

> *Provide your answer...*

Comment

What words have you used to describe how you felt: excited, nervous, fearful or a combination of these things? Children today are still experiencing these emotions as they approach and go through transitions in their lives.

Were you able to remember and make a note of the people who helped you through these changes? Sometimes this person may have been another child, an older sibling or a friend with a confident outlook on life.

Teaching assistants play a key role in helping children settle into a new setting, as they make the transition from one school to another.

3.2 From primary to secondary school

Lowri's story continues.

Case study: Lowri's transition from primary to secondary school

Now that Lowri is 11, she is about to make the transition from primary to secondary school. She is excited but also a little apprehensive. Laura and her mother Carys attended the information evening held at Lowri's school. As well as teachers and teaching assistants from the primary school, the head of pastoral care and the head of year 7 from the secondary school were also there.

It became clear that teaching assistants (TAs) at the primary school were significantly involved with supporting year 6 pupils and their parents/carers during the transition. Many children have less formal relationships with their TA than with their teacher and often find it easier to approach them rather than the class teacher with a worry or a question they may have.

Lowri discovered that the school recognises that the transition from primary to secondary school is a major milestone for pupils and their parents. So the school deploys TAs to work alongside teaching staff in a supportive role to ensure that the correct information is given regarding the transition and also to offer pupils individual support as necessary.

Lowri has a good relationship with the TA who assists in her class and was reassured by this. Carys was pleased to discover that the TAs would also offer support to parents/carers if approached but would, if necessary, pass on such concerns to the teacher.

Figure 8 Lowri and Carys at the information evening

Lowri found out that her new secondary school will hold an informative open evening for both pupils and their parents/carers before the transition, and staff from the

secondary school will come to visit pupils during the primary school day. The staff visiting would be the year 7 form teachers so that Lowri's first meeting with her new form teacher would be on familiar territory. Lowri felt that she would be able to ask any questions from the 'safety' of her own classroom with both her teacher and TA in attendance.

Pupils will also go to the secondary school for two visits during the school day and Lowri's TA will be on hand to offer help and support to any pupil but especially those who seem nervous or anxious. Primary school staff will communicate with their secondary school colleagues and with parents/carers as necessary to ensure that the transition is as smooth as possible.

Carys found it reassuring that pupils are invited to visit the secondary school for an extra day or so to help familiarise them and ease the transition – this gives the secondary school staff a little more time to get to know them and for the pupils to feel comfortable about the forthcoming changes.

3.3 The transition to secondary school

It is quite common for children to worry about the transition to secondary school. Some children undertake this transition 'alone' without the support of their friends or parents. Children can worry about what going to secondary school will mean. They wonder if the school work will be much harder and whether they will be able to cope with it. It is important for schools and teachers to recognise these worries and support children before and after the transition.

Many secondary schools include sports activities and social activities in the early weeks of new pupils joining and many children benefit from this. Once settled, year 7 children quite like being treated more as an adult and less like a child within the secondary school environment. Key factors for a successful transition appear to be parental/carer support, other pupils, teachers and a programme of targeted social activities.

The roles played by other adults and peers appear influential in making a successful transition. Earlier in this section you were introduced to the ideas of Lev Vygotsky who researched the significance of social interaction or support with parents or carers and went on to describe it within social constructivism or socio-cultural theory.

Social constructivism or socio-cultural theory places significant emphasis on how the culture that we live in and the people we interact with (our environment) influence how we learn, behave and adapt to new situations. Vygotsky's view was that children actively engage with their own environment and by doing so learn how to adapt to new situations.

Vogler et al. (2008) described how 'Transitions can be understood as key moments within the process of socio-cultural learning whereby children change their behaviour according to new insights gained through social interaction with their environment'. Of importance here is the key issue of children engaging or interacting with others. In doing so it implies a two-way process and the readiness of children to adapt to the new situation.

Preparing children for this readiness is an important role for schools as well as parents. The majority of children do go on and undertake this transitional process successfully. But what happens with very shy children, reluctant children and those for whom not only is the school new but so is the culture in which their education is taking place?

The move to secondary school means a number of changes for all children and without doubt this transition can be stressful both for children and their parents. From a child's point of view, moving from primary school can mean loss of friendship groups, finding their way round a much a larger school environment and no longer being at the top of their school.

For most children, after two to three weeks spent in their new environment, they become more settled and more confident about life within a secondary school. For some children, settling into life at secondary school can take two to three terms or longer!

So what is different about a secondary school and what difficulties may arise during the transition from primary to secondary school? Table 2 identifies some of the main differences between primary and secondary school and why some children might find this transition difficult.

Table 2 Differences and transition difficulties between primary and secondary school

Differences between primary and secondary school	Transition difficulties between primary and secondary school
Subject-specific teachers instead of class teachers	Learning lots of teachers' names, their expectations and styles of teaching
Pupils use a locker rather than having a desk	Less supervision of pupils at break time by teachers
Independent travel to school	Finding their way around a much larger school

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Activity 7
Allow about 20 minutes

Having looked at Table 2, now try to think of some more differences and difficulties. You could draw on your own experience of moving to secondary school or that of your son or daughter or other relative.

Make some notes before reading our comments.

> *Provide your answer...*

Comment

Not all children move at the same time to secondary schools. Some local authorities operate a middle school system that children attend from age 10, but the transition from primary school can be stressful for children regardless of how schools are managed within local authorities.

Children used to being thought of as the oldest in their primary school now become 'little fish in a big pond'. Having to remember to take books to lessons and to hand in homework, perhaps to shelves near the staffroom, are all things that newly arrived secondary children have to learn to deal with. They may find themselves in classes that are 'streamed' or 'set' and therefore not always with the same group of class friends. And meeting a tall, mature sixth former who may be their class prefect means negotiating their 'place' in their new environment.

Most transitions pass unnoticed but some can impact greatly on the lives of both children and adults. This section has defined three types of transition and considered vertical transition in particular. It has looked at how best to support children's transitions from home to school and between schools and identified key factors. It has located the move from primary to secondary school within a socio-cultural context by recognising the influence of parents, carers and significant others, such as teaching assistants, on children's ability to cope with change. The transition from childhood to adulthood is one we all pass through and the teenage years can be linked to other transitions to work, college or university.

What you have learned in this section

- Some important concepts and theories in the development of children. Starting from the early years, you looked at the importance of secure attachment. In the Strange Situation Test you found that some children may not be securely attached because they have experienced disruption in their lives. The Strange Situation Test was followed by a brief introduction to John Bowlby on attachment theory.

- The views of Jean Piaget. He believed that children go through four stages of development and this is biologically based. In contrast, the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky developed the theory of social constructivism or socio-cultural theory, which argued that social and environmental factors were more important than biology in children's development.

- The importance of parents as partners, as well as different styles of parenting, through the work of Diana Baumrind. Teaching assistants recognise the importance of working closely with parents and that this relationship can take different forms and be challenging as well as supportive.

- Transitions and how horizontal, vertical and education-related transitions can help us to understand the importance of these moves from one setting to another. You also looked at some of the issues faced by children experiencing these transitions.

Section 1 quiz

Well done; you have now reached the end of Section 1 of *Supporting children's development*, and it is time to attempt the assessment questions. This is designed to be a fun activity to help consolidate your learning.

There are only five questions, and if you get at least four correct answers you will be able to pass the quiz.

- I would like to try the Section 1 quiz.

If you are studying this course using one of the alternative formats, please note that you will need to go online to take this quiz.

I've finished this section. What next?

If you feel that you've now got what you need from the course and don't wish to attempt the quiz, please visit the Taking my learning further section. There you can reflect on what you have learned and find suggestions of further learning opportunities.

Encouraging reading

1 Babies and the early years

To understand literacy skills, we would like you to start by thinking about how babies learn to communicate.
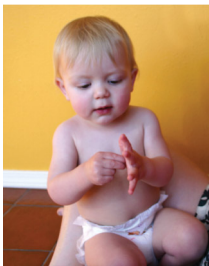
Figure 1 A baby using sign language

It is well known that babies want to communicate with other people and they move quickly from communicating through crying and making noises to saying recognisable words. The following extract taken from the Words for Life website shows how quickly babies move on from those initial communications to saying their first word, then on to speaking their first sentence.

Baby and toddler communication milestones

'Look at me copying you.'

From birth I will make eye contact and copy your expressions. This is one of the first ways in which I learn to communicate.

'My first smile.'

Around six weeks I may smile for the first time.

'My first laugh.'

Between three and six months I will probably start laughing. Hearing my infectious laughter will help us bond even more and make it more rewarding to talk and interact with me.

'Mummy, look at me!'

At around six months I will start using noises to get your attention; coos or gurgles.

'Ma ma ma, Da da da'

Around eight months I will probably start to babble. The repetitive noises I make are the beginnings of speech and give me the chance to exercise my mouth.

'Did you say my name?'

Around eight or nine months I will begin to recognise and respond to my name.

'My first word!'

At around 12 months I may say my first word. And by 13 months I may be using up to six words.

'I've reached 50 words!'

At around 18 months I will have increased my vocabulary to about 50 words. This is a time in my life where you may notice an explosion in my vocabulary; it's an exciting time for me as I quickly add more and more words.

'My first sentence!'

At some point between the ages of 18 and 24 months I will put together my first sentence. It may not be grammatically correct or easy to understand but it's a very important part of my language development. Remember to keep reading, talking and interacting with your child as this will help them continue to expand their vocabulary and their understanding of grammar, words and language.

(Adapted from Words for Life, nd)

Interaction with adults is an important stage in the development of a baby's communication skills.

Studies have identified five specific ways in which parents talked to children. These had the most positive impact on the children's development, and their long-term verbal ability:

- they just talked, generally using a wide vocabulary as part of daily life
- they tried to be nice, expressing praise and acceptance and few negative commands
- they told children about things, using language with a high information content
- they gave children choices, asking them their opinion rather than simply telling them what to do
- they listened, responding to them rather than ignoring what they said or making demands.

(Roberts, 2009)

The Welsh Government has emphasised that raising literacy standards is one of its main priorities. The 'Ready to Read' report highlighted that Wales' poorest children are already struggling with language skills when they start primary school.

2 Moving from the early years to primary

The Welsh Government has emphasised that raising literacy standards is one of its main priorities. The 'Ready to Read' report highlighted that Wales' poorest children are already struggling with language skills when they start primary school.

Activity 3
Allow about 20 minutes

Read the adapted extract below from the TES (Times Educational Supplement) online about the 'reading gap' in primary schools and then answer the questions that follow.

Campaign to end 'shameful' reading gap in primary schools

Figure 2 Child reading a book

Around 1.5 million children will leave primary school struggling to read by 2025 unless urgent action is taken, according to new research published today by a campaign group set up to eradicate illiteracy.

The research suggests the UK economy could be £32bn worse off without action being taken to ensure 11-year-olds leave primary school as more competent readers.

The UK economy could be £32bn worse off without action being taken to ensure that 11-year-olds leave primary school as more competent readers.

One in four children growing up in poverty leaves primary school unable to read well.

'In Britain, primary education for children has been compulsory for at least the last 150 years,' said Dame Julia Cleverdon, chair of the Read On Get On campaign.

'Yet to our shame, thousands of children leave primary school each year unable to read well enough to enjoy reading and to do it for pleasure, despite the best efforts of teachers around the country.'

(Ward, 2014)

- What do you think is meant by 'the reading gap'?
- Why do you think the UK is so far down the international league tables?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

From the TES extract you have just read, it appears that the 'reading gap' is linked to the inequalities in society. The reasons for this are complicated, but may include factors such as:

- limited access to books in the family

- parents not having the time or resources to read to children.

If we are aware that there is a problem, we can work together to tackle the challenge.

This means parents, teaching assistants, teachers and all other support staff working together and sharing their expertise – in other words, *you*.

Two examples of positive action together are:

- The Read On Get On campaign, which aims to ensure that every child born today will read well by the age of 11 in 2025 and in which teaching assistants have a key role to play.

- A blog set up by a mum living in the USA, who shares her interest and expertise as a parent of a young child.

New ways to encourage reading

We can encourage children's reading to reflect today's world of new information and communication technologies.

New digital technologies have brought exciting opportunities for children of all ages, and digital books can be downloaded from apps onto computers and tablets.

Exciting apps can stimulate parent and child interactivity in online reading and book sharing. However, not everyone recognises the benefits of these new technologies and some parents have concerns that their child is spending too much time on a computer rather than reading a traditional book.

There is evidence, however, that digital books provide alternative ways of interacting and engaging children, parents and teachers although this is mixed in relation to the role that digital books can play in literacy development.

Digital books don't always have the richness of vocabulary and grammar of print books, and parents don't use as many helpful reading strategies while sharing digital books but concentrate more on IT skills. Nevertheless, they provide an exciting alternative way of interacting and engaging readers, teachers and parents. See, for example:

- Nosy Crow

- The World of Mr Glue.

If you are interested in the debates about children and digital technologies and whether they are a good or a bad thing, you might like to enrol on Childhood in the Digital Age, a free Open University module on FutureLearn.

How did you learn to read?

Being able to make the links between your studies, your own experiences and what you do in the classroom is an important part of becoming a reflective practitioner and of developing your professional skills. The next activity asks you to think about what it is like to be a child learning to read.

More information can be found on the free OpenLearn course 'Learning to teach; becoming a reflective practitioner'.

http://www.open.edu/openlearn/education/learning-teach-becoming-reflective-practitioner/content-section-0?active-tab=description-tab

The next activity asks you to think about what it is like to be a child learning to read.

Activity 5
Allow about 20 minutes

Think back to when you were a child and how you learned to read.

- How were you encouraged to read?
- Did you enjoy reading or did you find it a struggle?
- What sorts of books did you like or dislike?
- Can you remember a favourite book?
- Were books the only things you read?
- Do you think girls read more than boys?
- Do boys read different books from girls?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Everyone will have their own answers to these questions. Your own experience of learning to read may affect how you encourage the children in your care to read.

Boys, girls and reading

In the following case study, Dewi and Harri are lively 8-year-old twins with an older sister, Lowri. She is 11 years old and an avid reader. Carys, their mother, is keen to foster a love of reading in the twins and is aware of how important it is to sit with them and read. This is easier said than done, not only because of lack of time, but also because the twins are very different.

Case study: Dewi and Harri learn to read

When he is in the mood, Harri loves to sit beside Carys and look at books. He is starting to read quite fluently and enjoys spelling out unknown words, as he has been taught in school. Harri's favourite book is *Captain Underpants* because it makes him laugh. This is a special time for both of them but Carys feels guilty about Dewi because he is not getting the same attention.

Dewi is a reluctant reader and appears to have little interest in books. He says about reading that 'it's boring' and he never wants to unpack his school reader.

The boys' teacher, Miss Evans, has reassured Carys that Dewi enjoys circle time, which often focuses on reading and literacy. Many primary schools use circle time where the focus is more on the children than the curriculum. The class sits with the teacher in a circle and 'games' are used to encourage cooperation, listening and speaking skills.

There are some general rules for circle time; for example:

- Everyone has the right to be heard and a duty to listen.
- There should be no 'put-downs'. In the first stages it may be that the rule should be that all statements made should be positive.
- Everyone has the right to pass.
- Everything said should be confidential unless otherwise agreed.

It is a good way of developing peer relationships within the class. Very often a teaching assistant will also take part in this activity and they will model active listening skills for the children. Teaching assistants often position themselves next to or close by children who may need some additional support to benefit from circle time.

Figure 3 Dewi and Harri looking at books

Figure 4 Circle time

Miss Evans has started to use this time to encourage the children to talk about books they have read. The children also listen to each other reading in class, which is known as peer reading. These activities have made reading more of a social activity and Dewi's peers are beginning to have an influence on his interest in reading. Miss Evans has also informed Carys that reading is not just about books and Dewi can develop his reading skills just as well on the computer, which he seems to enjoy more.

Dewi's teacher is confident that he will make progress in his reading because of the social interaction with his classmates and friends during circle time.

Carys is concerned about the difference in development and academic progress between Harri and Dewi. She does think that their happiness is the most important thing but the nagging concern over Dewi's progress or lack of it resurfaces in her thoughts quite often. She thinks that Dewi's current teacher Miss Evans is 'a bit special'.

Carys believes that it is through a deep understanding of Dewi's needs and interests that Miss Evans has been able to work some kind of magic. Since being in her class, Dewi's attitude and approach to being at school are now much better. This can also be attributed to the additional support Dewi receives in school to develop his reading skills and interests. The school involved carys in discussions about Dewi's ongoing progress and raised concerns that he might have special educational needs.

Special educational needs affect a child's ability to learn and this may include their reading and writing – for example, if they have dyslexia. If a child has special educational needs they may require an education and health care (EHC) plan. As a teaching assistant you will be in an ideal position to raise concerns and you will be able to request that the local authority carries out an EHC on behalf of a child in your care. You will work in conjunction with the parents, teacher and any other support workers in deciding whether to request an EHC. Visit the government website gov.uk for more information about children with special educational needs.

Section 4 of this course looks at special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). You may find it helpful to study that section.

The gender gap: fact or fiction

Look back at the notes you made about your own experience of reading.

One of the questions was 'Do you think girls read more than boys?'. Your own experiences are a good basis for understanding children, but it is important to avoid generalisations.

Much has been written about the 'gender gap' in primary education. Gender is the range of characteristics linked to the social differences between masculinity and femininity. There is evidence from research that supports the view that there is a difference between achievement in boys and girls.

Boys thought of as poor readers spent less time on or avoided reading in order to maintain credibility with their peers. Girls were happy to be seen reading easier books and to receive help from other experienced readers. By spending less time on reading, boys consequently fall further behind their peers so the problem becomes worse.

Some girls choose more challenging reading material for themselves. Contemporary books for girls in upper primary years include the Tracy Beaker series by Jacqueline Wilson. These and the plethora of vampire stories, such as the Twilight Saga by Stephanie Meyer, attract a pre-teen audience of able readers. Girls also share and discuss books much more readily, often forming reading groups similar to those that are popular with adults.

With growing awareness of the gender differences, efforts have been made to redress the balance. For example, a 2010 BBC TV series, *Extraordinary School for Boys*, explored different ways of engaging 11-year-old boys at primary school with learning, using concepts of risk and adventure.

By taking boys outside the classroom and involving them in learning through physical activities, the series attempted to harness that type of learning and channel it into learning within a classroom. It was led by Gareth Malone, who also challenged the stereotype that 'boys don't sing' (*The Choir: Boys Don't Sing*, broadcast in 2008). Gareth commented that 'If school feels like a place where boys can take risks and push themselves and really challenge themselves, then they'll be more engaged'.

Addressing the gender gap

Various strategies are suggested to try to reduce the gap in literacy between boys and girls, and in particular, to inspire boys to read and write.

- give boys a distinct sense of purpose in each lesson and encourage collaboration.

- ask pupils to read a book and then write a review of it to recommend the book to a younger child. This inspires them to choose appropriate books for other children, to read them carefully and to write careful reviews. They can also use their ICT and art skills to present their reviews well. This could also help to improve their own literacy skills

- use good quality, yet inspiring, reading material during guided reading sessions and literacy lessons. The quality of the texts is important in order to provide good examples of writing, yet the subject matter also needs to grab the boys' attention. e.g. spooky stories, or action stories, especially those with a boy protagonist.

- encourage boys initially to read anything that they are interested in, whether it be magazines, stories, comics or instructions for games. Gradually, they will choose books that interest them.

- present boys with inspirational stimulus, such as film clips, in order to provide the subject matter for a lesson. Use of role play and drama activities add to the interest and help to provide motivation for boys to want to read on, to find out what happens next in the story and to want to write their own versions of scenes from the story.

Reflect on your own practice and identify different strategies that work well for you. What are your experiences of the gender gap?

Literacy and reading in secondary school

If you are a teaching assistant in a secondary school, think about support materials that could be adapted for your own situation. For example:.

* Learn more about the Quick Reads initiatives. **Quick Reads** are a series of short books by bestselling authors and celebrities. With no more than 128 pages, they are designed to encourage young people and adults who do not read often, or find reading difficult, to discover the joy of books

  http://www.readingwales.org.uk/en/quick-reads/

  http://www.readingwales.org.uk/cy/stori-sydyn/

* The Welsh Books Council offers an excellent opportunity for teachers and learning support staff to keep up-to-date with the latest Welsh-language and Welsh-interest books and resources to support the National Curriculum.

  http://www.cllc.org.uk/gwasanaethau-services/plant-children/ysgolion-schools

If you are not working in a secondary school but know children at this stage, try to find out more about what they are reading in relation to a specific subject and how vocabulary or key words are different from everyday language. An example from geography could include the following words: globalisation, urban and rural, spit, glacier, soil erosion, deforestation.

* How does your school help with literacy in the secondary curriculum?
* What words are linked to a secondary school subject that are different from everyday use?

Your answer will be dependent on your setting, and on whether your school has a policy in place to encourage reading and literacy. Whatever the policy is, that shouldn't stop you from being creative and encouraging new ideas in children's literacy.

What you have learned in this section:

* Aspects of reading and literacy at three different stages of development. In the early years, how babies learn to interact with their parents or carers in early communication.
* Issues in reading and literacy in primary school.
* The challenges of reading and literacy that remain at secondary level.
* The 'reading gap' is linked to inequalities in society, and measures are being implemented to overcome it. The 'gender gap' is where there are differences between boys and girls in their approaches to reading and literacy.
* Think about how the topics in this section relate to your own practice: how making the links between your own experience, your studies and the setting in which you work helps you to become a reflective practitioner.

Section 2 quiz

Well done; you have now reached the end of Section 2 of *Supporting children's development*, and it is time to attempt the assessment questions. This is designed to be a fun activity to help consolidate your learning.

There are only five questions, and if you get at least four correct answers you will pass the quiz.

- **I would like to try the Section 2 quiz.**

If you are studying this course using one of the alternative formats, please note that you will need to go online to take this quiz.

I've finished this section. What next?

If you feel that you've now got what you need from the course and don't wish to attempt the quiz, please visit the Taking my learning further section. There you can reflect on what you have learned and find suggestions of further learning opportunities.

Behavioural management

1 Children's behaviour

Jon Richards, UNISON's head of education (cited in Bennett, 2015a), notes a few simple truths about children's behaviour:

- Everyone experiences difficult behaviour at school
- Children, like all people, can be selfish, cruel, kind and amazing
- It isn't your fault if they misbehave, but it is your responsibility to act if they do
- Most students will be happy to abide by rules that are fair, consistent and proportionate
- Almost all students prefer to be in a school where the adults take behaviour seriously.

(Bennett, 2015a)

Activity 1
Allow about 10 minutes

List five undesirable behaviours children engage in, in your setting.

> *Provide your answer...*

Comment

You may have noted some or all of the following behaviours:

- damaging property
- lying
- making silly noises or clowning around
- using abusive language
- talking back to staff
- not listening
- running indoors, rather than walking.

What one person considers to be undesirable, another person may consider acceptable. You might, therefore, have been surprised by some of the behaviours in our list. You might like to reflect on why these behaviours could be considered undesirable.


There are likely to be behaviours listed that are easy to view as undesirable because they put a child's safety at risk, or they are disruptive and affect children's ability to learn or interact with others.

As you work through this behavioural management section you may find it helpful to look back at the responses you have given and reflect on how these behaviours could be managed in a school setting.

1.1 Why might children behave in certain ways?

As a teaching assistant, understanding what makes children behave in the ways they do can help you to support the teacher in the classroom.

Figure 1 suggests that the root causes of behaviour are often complex and multifaceted. The child may not know himself why he is finding it difficult to do what he has been asked to do, and the adults in his life may not know either. Listening to children and helping them to both understand and talk about their feelings, as well as trying to see things from the child's point of view, are vital skills that many adults need to learn or relearn.
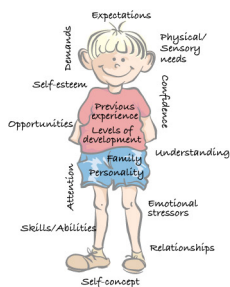
Figure 1 An interactive view of behaviour

The next activity describes a scenario to help you reflect on the reasons why a child may behave in an undesirable way.

Activity 2
Allow about 20 minutes

Part 1

Read the following case study about Kyle. Read it once all the way through to familiarise yourself with Kyle's situation.

Case study: Kyle's behaviour

Kyle knew that he wasn't supposed to use his mobile phone during lessons. Yet here he was at 3.30pm, the end of the school day, and he was trudging down the corridor to another detention. It wasn't his fault he had arrived late to the lesson, and he felt a smouldering anger towards the teacher who made a sarcastic comment about the time as Kyle sidled into the room, trying to remain unnoticed.

He would like to see how that teacher managed after a sleepless night with his baby sister screaming and his mum arguing with her latest boyfriend.

When the morning finally arrived, there was no sign of his school uniform in the chaos of the laundry pile and, glancing in at the barren fridge, Kyle knew that breakfast was simply not going to happen.

When he did get to school, the work for the lesson had already been handed out, and Kyle stared at the worksheet in front of him uncomprehendingly, silently asking himself why on earth he needed to know what 2n + 3y equals. He glanced over at the teacher, considering asking for help, but the teacher was with someone else at that moment.

Slumping down in his seat, Kyle pulled his mobile phone out of his pocket and started texting. The shout from the teacher interrupted this as he stormed over to Kyle and demanded that he put his phone away and get on with the work. Sullenly returning his phone to his pocket, Kyle turned back to the worksheet, understanding it no more than he had been before, and now with the prospect of yet another detention after school weighing him down.

(Oxley, 2015)

Part 2

Now read the case study a second time, and jot down:

- Your ideas about why Kyle might have been texting in class.
- What were the triggers for Kyle's behaviour?
- How could the situation have been handled differently?

> *Provide your answer...*

Comment

Maybe you felt Kyle's behaviour was justified and it was no wonder Kyle had resorted to texting. Perhaps texting at least gave him something to do in the lesson? Maybe you considered he was texting because the maths activity was something he felt was meaningless to him and it showed he had switched off from the lesson or the teacher.

The triggers for Kyle's behaviour could have been the lack of positive engagement by the teacher, or as a result of Kyle's home circumstances and his late arrival to the class.

Maybe both the teacher and Kyle could have handled things differently. The teacher or teaching assistant could have had a quiet word with Kyle to find out why he was late, rather than the teacher making a sarcastic comment. Or maybe you considered Kyle should have been more proactive about seeking help?

1.2 Goals of misbehaviour

Rudolph Dreikurs (1897–1972), a child psychiatrist and educator, believed that all humans, as social beings, want to belong and be accepted by others. He identified four goals for misbehaviour:

- attention
- power
- revenge
- display of inadequacy.

As a teaching assistant, developing an understanding of why children might behave in the ways they do can help you to be more objective and calm in your reactions to undesirable behaviour. Table 1 offers possible reasons for children's behaviour and how you may feel and react. It also suggests alternative ways in which you could deal with the situation.

Table 1 The goals of misbehaviour

Child's faulty belief	Child's goal	Adult's feeling and reaction	Child's response to adult's attempts at correction	Alternatives for adults
I belong only when I am being noticed or served.	Attention	Feeling: Annoyed. Reaction: Tendency to remind and coax.	Temporarily stops misbehaviour. Later resumes same behaviour or disturbs in another way.	Ignore misbehaviour when possible. Give attention for positive behaviour when the child is not making a bid for it. Avoid undue service. Realise that reminding, punishing, rewarding, coaxing and service provide undue attention.
I belong only when I am in control or am boss, or I am proving no one can boss me!	Power	Feeling: Angry; provoked; as if one's authority is threatened. Reaction: Tendency to fight or give in.	Active – or passive – aggressive misbehaviour is intensified, or child submits with 'defiant compliance'.	Withdraw from conflict. Help the child see how to use power constructively by appealing for the child's help and enlisting cooperation. Realise that fighting or giving in only increases the child's desire for power.
I belong only by hurting others as I feel hurt. I cannot be loved.	Revenge	Feeling: Deeply hurt. Reaction: Tendency to retaliate and get even.	Seeks further revenge by intensifying misbehaviour or choosing another weapon.	Avoid feeling hurt. Avoid punishment and retaliation. Build trusting relationship; convince child that he or she is loved.
I belong only by convincing others not to expect anything from me; I am unable; I am helpless.	Display of inadequacy	Feeling: Despair, hopelessness – 'I give up'.	Passively responds or fails to respond to whatever is done.	Stop all criticism. Encourage any positive attempt no matter how small; focus on assets. Above all, don't be

| | Reaction: Tendency to agree with the child that nothing can be done. | Shows no improvement. | hooked into pity, and don't give up. |

Activity 3
Allow about 10 minutes

Return to the account of Kyle's behaviour in Activity 2 and use the goals of misbehaviour given in Table 1 to consider why he might have behaved in the way he did. Jot down some ideas in the box.

> *Provide your answer...*

Comment

Maybe your immediate thought was that Kyle's behaviour was *attention-seeking*. It perhaps depends on what you thought about the act of 'slumping down in his seat'. Did you think that Kyle was trying to become invisible? Or did you view this as a defiant act linked to *power*, deliberately showing that Kyle didn't care what the teacher thought, or about what he was supposed to be doing?

Alternatively, maybe you identified Kyle's behaviour as a result of a *display of inadequacy*, and that he was passively responding to the demand that he put his phone away. However, if this is the case, Kyle's 'faulty belief' that he belongs only by convincing others not to expect anything from him and that he is helpless means that his schoolwork is unlikely to show any signs of improvement. Had the teacher responded differently, Kyle's beliefs might change and lead to more positive outcomes.

Deciding on the goals of misbehaviour is not an easy task as our own values, beliefs and views influence how we react to different behaviours, and to different children. As such there is not a right or a wrong answer. Even Kyle might not be conscious of why he behaved as he did, and intervention from support services might be necessary to support him to manage his behaviour.

2 Managing a class or a group

There have been many approaches to managing behaviour in the classroom. Depending on your cultural background, age, educational setting or even your choice of reading matter, you may have come across some or all of the techniques shown in Figure 2.
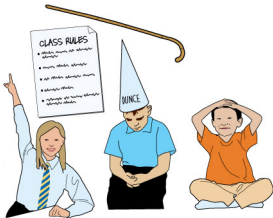
Figure 2 Examples of behaviour management techniques

Certainly not all of these would be sanctioned in today's climate of children's rights and our knowledge of child psychology. However, there is no single agreed method of managing behaviour and different techniques work with different children.

2.1 Behaviour management in the classroom

Behaviour management is important in the classroom, not least because it creates an appropriate environment for learning to take place. If there are clear boundaries then children are enabled to develop positive behaviour, such as respect, towards each other. Behaviour management also supports learning in a safe and calm environment.

Activity 4
Allow about 10 minutes

Take a few minutes to jot down the ways in which children's behaviour is managed in your school or setting.

> *Provide your answer...*

Comment
You may have noted an emphasis on reacting to children's behaviour once it has occurred, or you may have identified examples where negative behaviour was pre-empted and children directed towards more positive behaviour.


2.2 Managing behaviour through reward charts

One way in which positive behaviour is encouraged, particularly with younger children, is through the use of reward charts. Some kind of system of sanctions and rewards is commonly used in secondary schools, although they may not use reward charts that focus on the individual, instead focusing more on group reward.

The article in the box below is a brief overview of the reward system, which we'd like you to read before doing the next activity.

Reward charts and behaviourism

The use of reward charts or similar reward systems is common, particularly with young children, not only at home but also in schools and by social workers working with children who have particular emotional or behavioural needs. The theory behind such methods stems from a branch of psychology called 'behaviourism'.
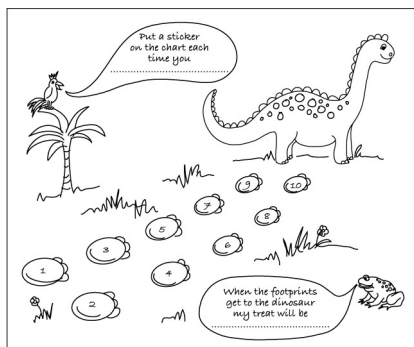
Figure 3 Example of a reward chart

During the past 30 years, behaviourism has had many forms but in simple terms it is based on the idea that children's (and adults') behaviour can be changed through learning and association. If a child associates certain behaviour with bad outcomes, they will avoid it. If they associate it with good outcomes, they will repeat it.

'Punishments' might include having adult attention temporarily withdrawn or being excluded from group activities for a short while, sometimes referred to as 'time out'. 'Rewards' are focused on more than 'punishments', particularly with younger children, and rewards are used to encourage desired behaviour and discourage undesirable behaviour.

There has been increasing criticism of behavioural strategies with children, primarily on the basis that, if they work at all, the benefits or changes in behaviour are short-lived. Criticism has also been made due to the fact that often one person (the adult) is manipulating or coercing the behaviour of another, the child.

However, where the child is involved in discussions about behaviour, this interaction between parent and child may in itself eventually bring about a positive change. A reduction in family tension can result when parents' focus is redirected towards encouraging positive achievements rather than getting cross.

Different forms of reward charts or reward systems

These can take different forms and have different names. They may be aimed at individuals, such as through a traffic light system, or at the whole class, such as through a pride point system that earns a whole class reward. However they are 'packaged', they all involve children having to 'earn' something they desire, such as 'golden time' or a sticker.

Figure 4 Pride point system

Although reward *charts* may not be used within secondary schools, it is common to have a system of sanctions and rewards (Department for Education (DfE), 2012). In some schools children earn merit points, which they then log online and save up to earn prizes that range from basic things like stationery to something bigger like cinema tickets.

Some secondary schools take the reward away from being a personal reward. Children may log points that they earn but each point is worth an amount – maybe 1p. At the end of the year or term, the points are converted to cash and the money goes to the school's charity of the year.

Losing a privilege or an opportunity can be used as a 'stick' to achieve desired behaviour by punishing unwanted behaviour.

Are reward charts and 'time out' the end of the story?

While professionals (and parents) sometimes find strategies such as reward charts and 'time out' effective in managing some behaviour with some children, the benefits are generally limited and short-lived and may do long-term damage to an individual's self-motivation (Kohn, 1999).

Very often it is difficult to enforce the chart, and children may need to be coaxed into doing whatever was agreed to gain the sticker, or another tangible item showing progress towards the goal. As time goes on the child may become bored and disappointed that they are not achieving the reward they were working towards.

Sometimes reward systems do not work because the child does not want to be singled out as different in some way from their peers. In addition, some older children may not log their points because the prizes are given out in assembly and some children think they are 'too cool' or are embarrassed by the attention, however positive.

Activity 5
Allow about 15 minutes

Having read the article on reward charts, now think about the following points:

- Do you think reward charts promote positive behaviour?
- What are the difficulties with using reward charts?
- If you use reward charts as a system for rewarding desired behaviour are there any changes you might suggest having read this article?
- If you don't use reward charts, could they have a place in your school or setting?

Make some notes before reading our comments.

Provide your answer...

> **Discussion**
>
> Your answers to the bullet points will be individual. Your personal experiences and your own views on how behaviour should be managed will impact on your reflections around the effectiveness of reward charts, and whether they could have a place in your setting.
>
> In thinking about the difficulties with using reward charts, you might want to refer back to Dreikurs's goals of misbehaviour in Table 1 and Kyle's behaviour (Activity 3). Consider whether – if Kyle is trying to gain attention by doing something that he knows is not allowed (i.e. using his phone in lessons) – he should be allowed to experience the logical consequences of his behaviour. One issue to think about is whether this is appropriate when the logical consequences of Kyle's behaviour may have a negative impact on his education and future employment opportunities. How might self-motivation be achieved?

2.3 SMART targets

For goals to be achievable, you need to have clear expectations of how you want the children to behave and a plan of how to implement the agreed goal. One way of doing this is to use SMART targets. SMART targets will help you to think through and clarify plans and setting goals, and make it easier to know what has been achieved over time.

Make it **SMART**:

- **S**pecific: What exactly is the issue?
- **M**easurable: What would be a good outcome?
- **A**chievable: Is that possible? Yes (depending on the age of the child and the issues leading to the behaviour).
- **R**ealistic: Is it realistic to expect this outcome given the classroom set up? Are there changes that could be made to the environment to make the desired behaviour more likely?
- **T**imely: When are you going to start?

And then add on an EA:

- **E**xplicit: Explain to the children what will happen from now on and what is expected.
- **A**greed: Get the children to agree. Does that sound OK to you? Are we going to do that?
- Agree the reward.

(Adapted from Netmums, 2011)

2.4 Minimising negative behaviour

To promote harmony in the classroom and create a suitable learning environment it is useful to think of ways to minimise opportunities for children to indulge in negative or disruptive behaviour. Activity 6 encourages you to think about ways of arranging the learning space to help children to concentrate on their learning rather than being disruptive.

Activity 6

Allow about 25 minutes

Watch the video clip, 'Boys will be boys' [Transcript], straight through to start with. Then note how the classroom environment you work in is set out before watching the clip a second time. If you don't currently work in a school, think about how the environment is set up in an education setting you do know.

Take notes on the following before reading our comments:

- How does the way the learning environment is set out in the clip minimise negative behaviour opportunities?
- How does the learning environment you work in help with behaviour management?
- Are there any improvements that could be made in your setting?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

You may or may not agree with everything that is stated as fact in the video clip, such as 'girls typically hear 2–4 times better than boys' or that 'boys have a unique sense of humour'. While a child's gender may affect how they engage with the learning environment, children are individuals and do not always behave in 'typical' or stereotypical ways. Maturity, life experience, personality and many other factors also affect how a child responds in a particular situation.

Nevertheless, it is important to consider how adults can use their knowledge and understanding of behaviour triggers to create an environment that supports all children to behave 'appropriately'.

Some of the examples you may have picked up from the video clip to minimise negative behaviour opportunities could include:

- providing a large enough space for play
- taking activities outside
- using headphones to lessen distractions
- giving warnings of a change of activity.

2.5 Maintaining classroom discipline

Tom Bennett, the author of *Managing Difficult Behaviour in Schools* (2015a), believes there are ten things every teacher should be doing to ensure order in the classroom.

1. Don't assume pupils know how you want them to behave.
2. Have a seating plan.
3. Be fair, consistent and proportionate.
4. Know pupils' names.
5. Follow up.

6.   Don't walk alone – use the line management if necessary.
7.   Don't freak out.
8.   Get the parents involved.
9.   Be prepared and organised for lessons.
10. Be the teacher, not their chum.

(Adapted from Bennett, 2015b)

Activity 7
Allow about 15 minutes

Reread the list of Tom Bennett's (2015b) top ten tips for maintaining classroom discipline. These are the things that all staff should be doing to ensure order in the classroom.

Then watch a video clip on managing low-level disruption. Watch it straight through once without pausing or taking notes.

Video content is not available in this format.

Now watch the clip a second time with the following questions in mind:

- How could you, as a teaching assistant, support the teacher to manage low-level disruption?
- How confident do you feel in supporting the teacher with this?
- What would help you to increase your level of confidence?

If you are not currently working as a teaching assistant, imagine a situation in which low-level disruption is occurring and apply the questions to this.

Make your notes before reading our comments.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Tom Bennett talks about the corrosive effect of children engaging in 'little' misbehaviours, such as chatting or passing notes, or being distracted. As a teaching assistant you are well placed to support the teacher in managing this type of behaviour. Perhaps you identified how you could gently remind children to listen, or praise a child for behaving appropriately. Focusing your comments on appropriate behaviour often has the effect of correcting the inappropriate behaviour of others, without the need to say anything to those children.

Tom Bennett noted that managing low-level disruption is something that takes time, and there is no 'quick fix'. Equally, gaining the skills and knowledge – and confidence – to manage children's behaviour effectively is something that takes time. Talking to the class teacher or to your mentor, or to the member of staff responsible for behaviour management in the school, will help you to develop your knowledge and skills in managing behaviour.

2.6 Involving children in behaviour management

The majority of children respond reasonably well to a system of rewards and punishments. However, such systems use extrinsic motivators, specifically aimed at controlling behaviour and ensuring compliance with what the teacher or school wants. Statistics show approaches using extrinsic motivation are not effective for all students (DfE, 2013).

Ideally children should be intrinsically motivated to learn, so that they do something, such as reading, for its own sake and because they want to, not just for reward (Kohn, 1999).

Activity 8
Allow about 20 minutes

Read the edited extract below on alternatives to the behaviourist principles of sanctions and rewards and the use of restorative practice.

New voices: Do schools need lessons on motivation?

There are alternatives to the behaviourist principles of sanctions and rewards. One of these is restorative practice.

Originating in the criminal justice system, where it has been shown to be both more effective and less costly than traditional punitive approaches (Flanagan, 2014), restorative practice is based on building and maintaining relationships, repairing any harm caused, and working collaboratively on a way forward (Thorsborne and Blood, 2013). This approach takes commitment and support from all school staff and would initially be more time-consuming than continuing with a system of punishments and rewards. But in the long term, this approach would be far more beneficial to the young people involved as they are given the opportunity to learn the skills they need to respond adaptively to life's challenges and to develop emotional awareness and empathy. Schools that have implemented this approach have seen improvements on both social and academic measures, such as a decrease in school exclusions, a reduction in persistent absence, and increased achievement in both English and maths (Flanagan, 2014; Thorsborne and Blood, 2013).

The basic principle of the approach is that school staff are working with the young people to solve challenging behaviour issues, rather than imposing solutions on them. Research shows that choice and autonomy are key elements in building intrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Enabling young people to participate in decision making about what happens to them in school is an effective way to engage students and teach valuable decision-making skills.

References

Flanagan, H. (2014, July). Restorative approaches. Presentation at training event for Cambridgeshire County Council, Over, Cambridgeshire, UK.

Ryan, R. and Deci, E. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25(1), 54–67.

Thorsborne, M. and Blood, P. (2013). *Implementing restorative practices in schools*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

(Adapted from Oxley, 2015)

Now answer the following questions:

- What are your initial reactions to this approach?
- In your role as a teaching assistant, how could you support the implementation of this approach?

Make some notes before reading our comments.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

A key element of restorative practice is the building of relationships. By working closely with children – often on a one-to-one basis – maybe you feel you already build relationships with children and that they already have the opportunity to talk to you and be listened to. As a result, perhaps you had a positive reaction to this approach.

Alternatively, you may have thought that it is a 'nice idea', but would take too much time to implement in practice. Also, depending on your views, you may or may not feel comfortable with the idea of working collaboratively with the children to resolve issues.

2.7 Optional readings and resources

If you have time and would like to explore this topic further, take a look at the resources below.

Reward systems do not work!

The following articles take the view that reward systems do not work. As you read them think about how convincing their arguments sound, and reflect on your own views on reward systems.

Mann, S. (2013) 'Why "100% attendance awards" at school don't work', *Huffington Post*, 10 June [online]. Available at http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/sandi-mann/why-100-attendance-awards_b_3414693.html (accessed 17 December 2015).

Paton, G. (2009) 'Classroom rewards "do not work"', *The Telegraph*, 13 November 2009. Available at http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/6563040/Classroom-rewards-do-not-work-work.html (accessed 17 December 2015).

One school's approach to managing pupil behaviour

If you want to explore how one particular school manages pupil behaviour, have a look at the information on their website.

TES behaviour management videos

The whole suite of behaviour management videos by Tom Bennett can be viewed on the TES website. Although aimed at teachers, the suggestions given by Tom Bennett may help you to understand the techniques a teacher may employ and enable you to be an effective support in managing behaviour in the classroom.

TES behaviour management videos

3 Recognising behavioural issues

There are many reasons for behavioural issues in children. In this topic we have chosen to focus on mental health issues as a cause of behaviour that might raise concerns.

One in ten children and young people aged 5 to 16 have a clinically diagnosed mental health disorder and around one in seven has less severe problems (DoH, 2013). Reports by organisations and charities working with children suggest these statistics have not changed significantly in the past 10 years. However, the importance of well-being and mental health is becoming much more recognised. So much so that the UK government appointed the first ever mental health champion for schools in 2015 to help raise awareness and reduce the stigma around young people's mental health (DfE, 2015).

This focus on the well-being of children has produced a plethora of government reports on the topic. One of which, the Allen Report, *Early Intervention: The Next Steps*, quotes the Royal College of Psychiatrists as saying that:

> Tackling mental health problems early in life will improve educational attainment, employment opportunities and physical health, and reduce the levels of substance misuse, self-harm and suicide, as well as family conflict and social deprivation. Overall, it will increase life expectancy, economic productivity, social functioning and quality of life. It will also have benefits across the generations.

> (Allen, 2011)

3.1 What do we mean by mental health?

It is useful at this point to consider what we mean by the term 'mental health'. In 2014, the World Health Organization (WHO) defined mental health as 'a state of wellbeing in which an individual realises his or her own abilities [and] can cope with the normal stresses of life'. Poor mental health can be associated with change, stressful situations or lifestyle, as well as encompassing psychological or biological factors. The term 'emotional well-being' is synonymous with mental well-being (DoH, 2011) and is the term most often used within childcare provision by practitioners and within childcare policy documents.

The Children Act 2004 sets out the responsibilities on local authorities and their partners to cooperate to promote the well-being of children (this specifically includes their mental health and emotional well-being).

3.2 What triggers mental ill-health?

Mental ill-health can occur for all sorts of reasons. Sometimes a traumatic or stressful event – a death of a close family member, for example – may trigger mental ill-health. However, often poor mental health occurs as a result of a combination of factors, or mental health declines over a period of time, perhaps due to prolonged bullying.

Activity 9
Allow about 10 minutes

Note down the events or situations that could trigger mental health or emotional well-being issues in children. We have made a start in the box below.

When you've finished your list read our comments.

> *Provide your answer...*

Discussion

Young Minds is a UK charity committed to improving the emotional well-being and mental health of children and young people. Young Minds (2014) found that school-age children were most concerned about issues such as:

- fear of failure
- bullying
- body image
- the online environment
- sexual pressures
- employment prospects.

However, there is not always a clear cause or trigger for issues; and it is important to remember that children react in different ways to challenges in their lives, such as family relationship difficulties, exam pressures, or transitions.

Some children won't be obviously affected by what is going on in their lives, while others may exhibit symptoms or behaviours that are worrying to parents and other adults they come into contact with. These symptoms or behaviours may be short-term and nothing to worry about or they may denote a mental health issue.

3.3 Symptoms potentially indicating mental health issues

Schools are increasingly adding emotional health to policies and providing staff training around this issue. It can be fairly easy to tell when a child is physically ill – they may have a temperature above the norm or spots, for example. However, it can be much harder to determine mental illness, or lack of emotional well-being. This is not only because of the focus on feelings and the ability to cope with stress and life's 'happenings', but the symptoms are much less obvious, particularly in the early stages.

One common mental disorder is anxiety. Anxiety can be triggered by a variety of things and as a teaching assistant you should have an understanding of how to support children when they are feeling anxious.

Anxiety and panic – signs and symptoms

Anxiety can cause both physical and emotional symptoms. This means it can affect how a person feels in their body and also their health. Some of the symptoms are:

- feeling fearful or panicky
- feeling breathless, sweaty, or complaining of 'butterflies' or pains in the chest or stomach
- feeling tense, fidgety, using the toilet often.

These symptoms may come and go. Young children can't tell you that they are anxious. They become irritable, tearful and clingy, have difficulty sleeping, and can wake in the night or have bad dreams. Anxiety can even cause a child to develop a headache, a stomach-ache or to feel sick.

Case study: Anxiety

'I don't know about you, but I have always been a worrier, like my grandmother. Every year, we would plan our family trip to India and it would start … worrying about the plane journey … worrying about falling ill, … and just before take-off I would get those horrible "butterflies", sweaty hands and the feeling that I couldn't breathe. Sometimes I would feel my heart beating and I thought I was dying or going "crazy".

Last year, before my exams, my worrying got really bad. The pressure in secondary school has been high and everyone in my family has always done well and gone on to university, so I knew I had to study extra hard. It got so bad that I couldn't concentrate. I felt shaky and nervous at school and even started to cry most days. I wasn't sleeping well because I was so nervous and was too embarrassed to tell Mum and Dad.

I ended up pouring my heart out to the school nurse which was the best thing I ever did. She got in touch with my mum, and after seeing the GP, I went to see a team of specialists at the hospital.

Don't worry … I didn't want to be the "girl who sees the shrink" either but it's not like that. The team can have all sorts of people like doctors, nurses, psychologists and social workers. They reassured me and helped me and my family to see that my symptoms were real (just like when you have asthma). I went on to have a talking therapy called CBT. This involves a number of weekly sessions with the therapist. I didn't even need to take medication. Although I will always be a worrier I feel so much better, and I'm even looking forward to this year's India trip.'

(Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2015)

Activity 10
Allow about 15 minutes

Having read the description above of the typical symptoms displayed by children with anxiety, now think about how as a teaching assistant you could support a child with anxiety. Make some notes and then read our comments.

> *Provide your answer...*

Discussion

When thinking about a child's behaviour, you need to build up a picture rather than just focusing on a particular behaviour. In addition, think about the frequency or intensity of the behaviour and whether there are any obvious reasons for the behaviour.

You may have considered whether the child's well-being was affected by the behaviour. For example, a child who is abnormally clingy and is reluctant to let their parent or carer leave them may find it difficult to form relationships or friendships with others. Or they may find it difficult to participate in normal social situations, which would affect their social and emotional development.

Some behaviours are appropriate at certain ages or stages of development but could mean a problem in an older child.

3.4 Listening to children

Listening to children is a key theme within services for young children. It is also an important element in any intervention to support children with mental health issues as it provides the opportunity for children to feel that their feelings matter and, thereby, raises their self-esteem. It also enables the adults involved to gain an understanding of the issues for the child.

Sometimes children may not be able to express themselves clearly, or they may find it difficult to talk about how they are feeling. They may benefit from accessing professional therapy sessions to help them explore their feelings and work through the challenges to their emotional well-being.

There are various types of therapy that may be offered, from conventional talking therapies, such as cognitive behaviour therapy, to therapies that enable children to express their feelings through play or art.

One way to get children to open up and discuss their worries and to find out how they are feeling is to share books with them that deal with 'issues'.

Activity 11
Allow about 45 minutes

Have a look through the books on the Royal College of Psychiatrists website and the Little Parachutes website.

Then look through the books in your school library or local library and identify two books that could be used to support children with difficulties, fears or worries they might have. Write a few lines to say how your chosen books could be used. We have given some examples below:

Everyone Has Feelings series by Picture Window Books

These books include titles such as *Everyone Feels Angry Sometimes* by Carl Mercer and *Everyone Feels Sad Sometimes* by Marcie Aboff. Each book focuses on one feeling and a situation associated with the feeling. The books help children to see that there is a solution and that they can combat how they are feeling.

Michael Rosen's Sad Book by Michael Rosen, illustrated by Quentin Blake. ISBN: 0744598982, Walker Books

Michael Rosen shares his sad feelings about his son, who died, and writes about how he tries to cope with this sad event in his life.

Misery Moo by Jeanne Willis, illustrated by Tony Ross. ISBN: 1842705261, Anderson

This story is about a cow who is so miserable that Lamb finds her impossible to cheer up. In the end, though, Cow realises how important it is to have friends and to look for the best, not the worst, in things.

Voices in the Park by Anthony Browne. ISBN: 0552545643, Corgi

The illustrations can be used to discuss feelings with children and young people as a trip to the park is explored through the eyes of four different characters.

Beegu by Alexis Deacon. ISBN: 0099417448, Red Fox

Beegu is from outer space and this story explores what it feels like to be ignored and rejected by adults. There are few words but the illustrations convey its message and give plenty to talk about.

[Reading Lights]() Comic books for 4–7 year olds and their teachers and parents. Available from Comic Company or the Royal College of Psychiatrists. Four colour books that address what it is like to be different, and provide a framework for parents, social workers and teachers to support children.

Books for older children to read themselves

There are a number of children's authors who have written fiction books on real-life issues for children. Reading these stories can help children to work through and cope with their own life issues.

Authors include:

- Jacqueline Wilson
- Morris Gleitzman
- Lemony Snicket

> *Provide your answer...*

Discussion

There are lots of books for children that could be used as a basis for a discussion about feelings and to help a child understand the challenges in their life.

The [Little Parachutes]() website has a range of relevant books for younger children and information related to fear and worries, some of which are downloadable. You may also have found that national support websites, such as [Mind]() and the [National Autistic Society](), also provide useful reading lists and booklets.

Building up your own resource list and keeping it updated will help you to offer timely suggestions to older children and provide reading opportunities for younger children.

3.5 Optional readings and resources

If you have time and would like to explore this topic further, take a look at the resources below.

CAMHS Inside Out: A Young Person's Guide to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

This is a booklet for any young person who wants to know more about what to expect from Community Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

DfE (2015)
Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools: Departmental Advice for School Staff

This resource has information on promoting positive mental health, identification, interventions, facts about mental health problems in children and young people, types of mental health needs and sources of support and information.

Listening tips for practitioners: Literacy Trust and Participation Works

MindEd is a free educational resource on children and young people's mental health. It offers a wide range of free e-learning sessions, one of which is 'the aggressive/difficult child'. This particular session gives you the opportunity to recognise the signs and symptoms, and possible causes of aggressive and antisocial behaviour and to consider how such behaviour could be handled.

PSHE Association (supported by DfE) (2015)
Preparing to Teach about Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing.

Although this resource is primarily aimed at teachers planning a programme of lessons, there is some very useful information on a range of mental health issues such as eating disorders, anxiety and self-harm. It includes book lists and online sources of support towards the end of this document.

The Challenging Behaviour Foundation

Provides free downloadable information sheets focusing on challenging behaviour and children and adults with SEN.

The Mental Health Foundation website has descriptions of the typical symptoms displayed by children with different mental health disorders. If you visit their Mental Health A-Z you are able to search for mental health problems, topical issues and treatment options.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists website contains a wealth of readable, evidence-based information about mental health problems. The Parents and Youth Info Index is a good starting point for finding out information relevant to your role as a teaching assistant.

What you have learned in this section

- To think about some of the undesirable behaviours that children and young people might display in the classroom, and possible reasons for this behaviour. You started by identifying your own examples of undesirable behaviours, before thinking about what makes a behaviour undesirable. You then went on to consider Rudolph Dreikurs' four goals of misbehaviour and used case studies to challenge your thinking about how you might deal with real-life scenarios.

- Approaches to behaviour management in the classroom. A key role of the teaching assistant is to support the teacher and to enable children to engage with learning. Two very different approaches to promoting positive behaviour in the classroom were introduced: reward charts and SMART targets, and restorative practice.

- That there are many reasons for behavioural issues in children, one of which is mental health issues. A case study focused on anxiety stimulated your thinking around behavioural symptoms that may be a cause for concern and introduced the importance of listening to children.

- Where to find additional resources. Behaviour management is a vast topic and so this section signposted to websites and resources that you can use as and when you have the need.

We hope you have enjoyed the variety of activities in this section and that it has raised your awareness of the complexity of managing children and young people's behaviour. We also hope it has introduced you to some ideas and practices that may be new to you.

Section 3 quiz

Well done; you have now reached the end of Section 3 of *Supporting children's development*, and it is time to attempt the assessment questions. This is designed to be a fun activity to help consolidate your learning.

There are only five questions, and if you get at least four correct answers you will pass the quiz.

- **I would like to try the Section 3 quiz.**

If you are studying this course using one of the alternative formats, please note that you will need to go online to take this quiz.

I've finished this section. What next?

If you feel that you've now got what you need from the course and don't wish to attempt the quiz, please visit the Taking my learning further section. There you can reflect on what you have learned and find suggestions of further learning opportunities.

Special needs

1 What does SEND mean?

Terms such as dyslexia, autism, dyspraxia, Asperger syndrome, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and English as an additional language (EAL) are in common use. However, what do we mean by them? How can we define a child with – for example – autism, or EAL? What can these children do, and what do they find difficult? What support will the children need in order to access the curriculum or other aspects of school provision?

Figure 2 Which of these children has a special educational need or disability?

1.1 Defining terms

The first activity gives you the opportunity to test your understanding of some of the terminology used when describing a child's disability or condition. All the definitions are taken from The National Autistic Society (NAS) or the British Council websites.

Activity 1
Allow about 10 minutes

Match the following terms with their correct definition.

Dyslexia

ADHD

Dyspraxia

Autism

EAL learner

Asperger syndrome

Match each of the items above to an item below.

A specific learning difficulty which mainly affects the development of literacy and language-related skills (NAS)

A condition that makes a person inattentive, impulsive and hyperactive (NAS)

An immaturity in the way the brain processes information resulting in problems of perception, language and thought (NAS)

An overarching term used to refer to all conditions on the autism spectrum (NAS)

Anyone who has been exposed to a language other than English during early childhood (British Council)

A person with this condition has difficulties with social communication, social interaction and social imagination (NAS)

Children have special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

The SEN Code of Practice for Wales provides practical advice to Local Education Authorities, maintained schools, early years settings and others on carrying out their statutory duties to identify, assess and make provision for children's special educational needs.

The code of practice provides practical advice to local authorities (LAs), maintained schools and early years settings.

It helps them to carry out their statutory duties, identify, assess and make provision for children's special educational needs (SEN). It became effective on 1 April 2002 and can be found on the Welsh Government website:

http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/131016-sen-code-of-practice-for-wales-en.pdf

This next part explains the four areas of special educational needs and the legal definition of 'disability'.

Special educational needs (SEN)

Children and young people with SEN all have learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most children and young people of the same age. These children and young people may need extra or different help from that given to others.

If your child's first language is not English, does that mean they have a learning difficulty? The law says that children and young people do not have learning difficulties *just* because their first language is not English, although, of course, some of these children and young people may have learning difficulties as well.

Many children and young people will have SEN of some kind at some time during their education. Early years providers (for example, nurseries or childminders), mainstream schools, colleges and other organisations can help most children and young people succeed with some changes to their practice or additional support. But some children and young people will need extra help for some or all of their time in education and training.

Children and young people with SEN may need extra help because of a range of needs. Paragraphs 6.27 – 6.35 of the 0-25 SEND Code of Practice set out four areas of SEN:

Communicating and interacting – for example, where children and young people have speech, language and communication difficulties which make it difficult for them to make sense of language or to understand how to communicate effectively and appropriately with others

Cognition and learning – for example, where children and young people learn at a slower pace than others their age, have difficulty in understanding parts of the curriculum, have difficulties with organisation and memory skills, or have a specific difficulty affecting one particular part of their learning performance such as in literacy or numeracy

Social, emotional and mental health difficulties – for example, where children and young people have difficulty in managing their relationships with other people, are withdrawn, or if they behave in ways that may hinder their and other children's learning, or that have an impact on their health and wellbeing

Sensory and/or physical needs – for example, children and young people with visual and/or hearing impairments, or a physical need that means they must have additional ongoing support and equipment

Some children and young people may have SEN that covers more than one of these areas.

Disabilities

Many children and young people who have SEN may also have a disability. A disability is described in law (the Equality Act 2010) as 'a physical or mental impairment which has a long-term (a year or more) and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.' This includes, for example, sensory impairments such as those that affect sight and hearing, and long-term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes or epilepsy.

The Equality Act requires that early years providers, schools, colleges, other educational settings and local authorities:

- **must not** directly or indirectly discriminate against, harass or victimise disabled children and young people
- **must** make reasonable adjustments, including the provision of auxiliary aid services (for example, tactile signage or induction loops), so that disabled children and young people are not disadvantaged compared with other children and young people. This duty is what is known as 'anticipatory' – people also need to think in advance about what disabled children and young people might need.

(DfE, 2014b)

1.2 The SEN Information Report

Figure 3 Consultation with children

The SEND Code of Practice: 0 – 25 (DfE, 2014a) requires every school to publish a SEN Information Report on their website, and to keep the report up to date. This report provides an account of how that school implements the special educational needs policy – they have to explain what they actually do, not what they may aspire to.

You can find further information about the information required in the SEN report in the statutory guidance Section 6, paragraph 6.79 (DfE, 2015).

Activity 2

Allow about 30 minutes

Locate the SEN Information Report for your school. If your school does not have a SEN Information Report because you are working outside England, locate your school's policy for children with SEND. If you are not currently working as a teaching assistant, locate the SEN Information Report of a school in your neighbourhood.

Answer the following questions as you go through the report or policy:

1. What SEN support does the school provide?
2. What is the school's approach to teaching and supporting children and young people with SEN?
3. How are children and parents consulted about the child's needs?

Provide your answer...

Comment

If you were not aware of some or all of the information before looking at this document, you might want to have a discussion with other support workers, or other staff members, to develop your knowledge and understanding of the SEN support offered across your school.

If you are not currently working as a teaching assistant, reflect on whether you would feel reassured by the support on offer if you were a parent of a child with SEND attending the school in your neighbourhood.

1.3 Inclusive practices

In line with Section 19 of the Children and Families Act 2014, children's services, such as schools, must have regard to:

- the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person, and the child's parents
- the importance of the child or young person, and the child's parents, participating as fully as possible in decisions, and being provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decisions
- the need to support the child or young person, and the child's parents, in order to facilitate the development of the child or young person and to help them achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes, preparing them effectively for adulthood.

Putting these principles into practice for *all* children (and their parents) can be challenging. However, inclusion in relation to education is about increasing participation for all children and adults, and supporting schools to be responsive to diversity (Booth and Ainscow, 2011).

The Index for Inclusion (Booth and Ainscow, 2011) is a practical resource for self-evaluation and improvement, focusing on all aspects of inclusion. It is aimed at helping those working within a range of children's services to find their own 'next steps' to increase the participation in play and learning of the children and young people they work with.

Activity 3
Allow about 10 minutes

Part 1

We'd now like you to think about how inclusive your practice is. The links below are to questionnaires to help you do this. You can choose to do this activity either from the perspective of your own practice (Option 1) or from the perspective of your school's practice (Option 2).

Option 1: Your own practice

Option 2: Your school's practice

Part 2

Having completed the questionnaire, now reflect on your answers.

- How inclusive do you consider your practice or setting to be?
- Are there any aspects of your practice or setting that could be improved upon? If so, what could be done instead, and how could you go about making this change?
- Who would you need to speak to?
- Is there any further information you need in order to make the change?

Provide your answer...

Comment

If you answered 'sometimes' or 'no' to any of the statements in the questionnaire, you may find it helpful to discuss your responses with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) in your setting and think about how your or your school's practice could be made more inclusive.

2 Victimisation and bullying

All children can come across issues that affect their social and emotional development, or academic development, at some point in their school career. This can be for all sorts of reasons. For example, very young children may find it hard to separate from their parent(s) and settle into school life, or a child's personality may impact on how easy (or not) they find it to make friends.

Children who are on the autistic spectrum may find it difficult to respond to social and verbal cues, and they may not understand what is appropriate in terms of social behaviour. Both these issues can influence how other children respond to a child with SEND, and vice versa.

In this topic we focus on bullying and victimisation as an issue that is often of particular relevance for children with SEND. Although children with SEND vary enormously, there are some common themes that may affect how well the child copes in school, and how likely it is they will become a victim of bullying.

Activity 4
Allow about 10 minutes

List three challenges children with SEND might face in school and how these may impact on the child and affect their development, leading to bullying or victimisation. We have given one challenge to start you off.

Use the free response box to list the three challenges you identify and how each challenge might impact on the child and affect their development, leading to bullying or victimisation.

Table 1 Challenges children with SEND might face in school

Challenge or issue	How it might impact on the child and affect development, leading to bullying or victimisation
Does not display age-appropriate behaviour	Relationships. Other children may find it difficult to relate to the child with SEND. Child may have to be removed from the situation if their behaviour is disruptive. Child may be seen as immature by the other children and teased or ridiculed as a result.

Provide your answer...

Comment

Evidence shows that children and young people with SEND are significantly more likely to be bullied or victimised than those who don't have SEND (Anti-bullying Alliance, 2015a). Many children with SEND have difficulties communicating effectively with other children in their class; this in turn can impact on the formation of peer friendships, or working in small groups on a task. In addition, communication difficulties may mean the child struggles to understand what is being asked of them, or

what the task is about, and this can frustrate other children and make them more likely to be negative towards the child with SEND.

For more information on issues that may result in bullying or victimisation have a look at the document Preventing bullying by the Anti-bullying Alliance, which can also be found in the further reading list at the end of this topic.

2.1 Dealing with difficult relationships

Friends become more important the older a child gets and play an important part in a child's personal, social and emotional development. Friends can be used as sounding boards for young people to evaluate their likes and dislikes and test who they want to be. However, children with SEND tend to be less accepted by their peers. This rejection can become a source of stress for children and young people, particularly when it escalates into bullying or victimisation.

Bullying

What is bullying? The following definition is from the Department for Education (2011):

> Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally.

The key words and phrases to note in this definition are:

1. behaviour by an individual or group
2. repeated
3. intentionally hurts another individual or group
4. physically
5. emotionally.

Research suggests that children with SEND are particularly vulnerable to name-calling, ridicule and being ostracised or excluded. This can have a profound effect on a child's self-esteem.

Activity 5
Allow about 20 minutes

Using the five key words and phrases above, make notes on how Jax's story fits the definition of bullying.

Case study: Jax, aged 14

'I don't know whether it has ever happened to you? It started when Justine came into our class. Justine said she wanted to be my friend. It was OK at first but then she and some of the other children in the class began laughing about things and I didn't know what was funny. They had secrets they wouldn't tell me. They started nicking my things and pretending I had lost them. I tried really hard to join in with them and do as they said, but then they'd go off without me.

They'd pretend to help me with my work, but then they'd scribble on it or laugh when I got it back with loads of corrections. They started sending me horrible text messages. They got everyone against me. I didn't want to tell her – but my mum found out when I told her because she found me crying in my room.

I wouldn't go to school. Mum went to school and spoke to Miss Ratcliffe but she said they, the teachers, hadn't seen anything and they couldn't do anything about it. I got really down. My mum went to school and got angry because I was missing so much school. They got everyone together and changed my form. They also gave me a mentor. Things are better now but I still don't speak to Justine – she wasn't really my friend.'

(Adapted from Bond et al., 2001)

Provide your answer...

Comment

- Behaviour by an individual or group – the bully in Jax's story was Justine.
- Repeated – the behaviours occurred on more than one occasion. Justine and others laughed at Jax, stole her things, spread rumours about her, sent nasty text messages and turned other people against her.
- Intentionally hurts another individual or group – Justine and the other children carried on with their actions even though they must have known they were hurtful.
- Physically – Justine and the other children stole things, which is a physical action. Jax refusing to go to school was a physical outcome that was caused by an emotion.
- Emotionally – Jax was very upset. She describes how her mum found her crying and how she didn't want to tell her mum about what was happening at school.

It is clear that bullying can cause children and young people, including children and young people with SEN, a lot of stress and worry. For Jax, there was a successful outcome. The school supported her by moving her to another class and by giving her a mentor to talk to.

Being bullied can lead to depression and suicidal thoughts or attempts in young people. Jax's story is an example of bullying that many of us would see as typical; children and young people might refer to it as 'ganging up' against one another and often do not realise that there can be a serious outcome to such activity.

Cyberbullying

The growth in social networking sites and technologies such as mobile phones has led to a type of bullying known as 'cyberbullying'. The use of the internet as a vehicle for bullying is now widely acknowledged and schools often include cyberbullying within their policies on bullying.

Activity 6

Allow about 20 minutes

Watch this YouTube video, *Let's fight it together*, in which a young person describes what it is like to be subjected to cyberbullying.

Video available on YouTube here

As you watch, think about the following two questions and make a note of your responses:

1. What incident triggered the bullying of Joe?

2. What methods did Joe's peers use to bully him?

Provide your answer...

Comment

1.   What seemed to trigger the bullying was Joe answering a question in class. Some of his friends/peers may have not understood the question and perhaps became jealous of him or the praise he received from the teacher.

2.   The bullies sent messages by text, phone and email. They also used a networking site to post unfavourable images.

Cyberbullying in its extreme has been linked to a number of suicides in young people. The UK is not exempt from this and the government has produced short films like the video above to generate awareness and understanding of the nature and outcomes of cyberbullying.

The Childline website is a resource for young people who are worried about themselves or someone else who is being bullied. It is also a useful resource for parents/carers and other adults working with children and young people. You might find it useful to make a note of this link for future reference.

If you are interested in exploring the issue of children with SEN who are bullied, the Anti-Bullying Alliance run free online training that you can work through at your own pace. Each topic will take you about half an hour to complete and you can select the topics you are interested in.

Further details for the free online training for professionals can be found on the Anti-Bullying Alliance website. You will need to sign up to access the training, but this is free to do. You can register/sign in for the training via the sign-in link: https://antibullyingalliance.learnupon.com/users/sign_in.

2.2 Optional readings and resources

If you have time and would like to explore this topic further, take a look at the resources below.

Anti-Bullying Alliance (2015b) *Preventing Bullying: A Guide for Teaching Assistants. SEN and Disability: Developing Effective Anti-Bullying Practice*. Available at https://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachment/Preventing-bullying-a-guide-for-teaching-assistants-FINAL.pdf.

This guide is based on the views of children and young people, who receive support from teaching assistants, about bullying. It is designed to give teaching assistants advice on preventing the bullying of disabled children and young people and those with special educational needs (SEN).

Anti-Bullying Alliance (2014) *Tackling Disablist Language-based Bullying in School: A Teacher's Guide*. Available at https://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachment/tackling-disablist-language-based-bullying-in-school-final.pdf.

This guide addresses name-calling and derogatory language which is disablist, examines disablism, its origins and how this is represented in the language, and discusses successful strategies, useful activities, case studies and resources. This document is useful for all teaching staff, including teaching assistants.

Contact a Family (2014) *Dealing with Bullying*. Available at https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLWq2B0oT01K2HjIiEKy9ArDb-2ohF5CXY.

A series of podcasts with practical advice and information for parents or carers of children with SEND who are experiencing bullying at school.

Thinking Positively: Emotional Health and Well-being in Schools and Early Years Settings, Welsh Government

http://learning.gov.wales/resources/browse-all/thinkingpositively/?lang=en

3 Supporting a child with SEND

In the previous topic you looked at relationships, with a specific focus on bullying. The primary role of a teaching assistant is to support children to access the curriculum, inside or outside the classroom. In order to do this effectively, a teaching assistant will engage holistically with a child. In order to support a child's learning and development, it is important to support their social and emotional development. In addition, it is essential to help the child to develop their social skills and competencies, and communicate effectively using appropriate language.

It can be very easy to support a child in the 'wrong' way – a less than helpful way – without realising it. It is important, therefore, to know when to give support and when to stand back.

The following activity focuses on common ways of responding to children with SEND, and strategies that are often put in place to support a child with SEND.

Activity 7
Allow about 15 minutes

Consider the potential positive or negative outcomes for the child of adopting a particular support strategy, or expectation. Then complete Table 2, which has been provided as a partially completed Word document.

Table 2

Strategies and/or expectations on behaviours	Positive outcomes	Negative outcomes
Compliance – expecting children to be passive and do what the adult tells them to do	No need to negotiate with others in order to complete a task; learn expected norms of behaviour	Do not develop interpersonal skills relating to negotiation; no engagement with others' viewpoints
Overprotection		Shyness and a lack of social competence can be made worse if not exposed to social situations
Withdrawal from the classroom for additional support sessions		
One-to-one support within the classroom	No need to actively seek help, which can alert peers to a child's inabilities	
Differing expectations on behaviour for child with SEND and other children in the class		
Any other strategy/ expectation used in your setting		

Comment

Table 3 suggests some positive and negative outcomes for each strategy or expectation on behaviour. These are not the only possible outcomes though.

Table 3

Strategies and/or expectations on behaviours	Positive outcomes	Negative outcomes
Compliance – expecting children to be passive and do what the adult tells them to do	No need to negotiate with others in order to complete a task; learn expected norms of behaviour	Do not develop interpersonal skills relating to negotiation; no engagement with others' viewpoints
Overprotection	Not exposed to situations they are unable to cope with or do not yet have the skills for	Shyness and a lack of social competence can be made worse if not exposed to social situations
Withdrawal from the classroom for additional support sessions	Gives the opportunity for the child to build their confidence	Do not develop interpersonal skills or engage with others' viewpoints
One-to-one support within the classroom	No need to actively seek help, which can alert peers to a child's inabilities	Potential to develop an over-reliance on support
Differing expectations on behaviour for child with SEND and other children in the class	Child is not put into a situation they are unable to cope with, such as sitting still for the same length of time as others for a story	Other children can become resentful
Any other strategy/ expectation used in your setting		

Social support from friendships and peer relationships are very important, yet there are many factors that impact on this for disabled children and young people. These include:

- spending a lot of time with staff
- being isolated by being taught away from their peer group or having Learning Support Assistant support in class
- a lack of social opportunities (or support to access social opportunities) to promote and sustain friendships.

(McLaughlin et al., 2012)

Other issues to think about are:

- Positive or negative outcomes can also depend on the child's individual circumstances, their personality and so on.
- Factors, such as those identified by McLaughlin et al. (2012) can isolate disabled young people and make it more difficult for them to develop friendships and relationships with their peers (Anti-bullying Alliance, 2015b).

- Depending on the child's disability or condition, they may find it difficult to know how to behave in social situations. One way children can be supported is to teach them how to behave.
- Social expectations or the proper way to respond when interacting with others are typically learned by example, but children with communication difficulties and/or behaviour problems sometimes need more explicit instructions.

3.1 Social stories

Social stories are used to support children on the autistic spectrum to develop appropriate knowledge and understanding to cope with daily social situations, such as break times or taking turns. They allow the child to rehearse activities, understand social cues and gain an awareness of the social rules that exist in different situations.

A social story is a short, descriptive story, using simple language and – very often – illustrations. It aims to provide accurate information relating to social situations.

'Social story tips and sample' gives more information, which may inspire you to have a go at creating a story to share with the children you work with.

SOCIAL STORY TIPS AND SAMPLE

The following is an example of a social story explaining when it's appropriate to run.

Running

I like to run. It is fun to go fast.

It's OK to run when I am playing outside.

I can run when I am on the playground.

Sometimes I feel like running, but it is dangerous to run when I am inside.

Running inside could hurt me or other people.

When people are inside, they walk.

Walking inside is safe.

I will try to walk inside and only run when I am outside on the playground.

My teachers and parents like it when I remember to walk inside.

Writing a Social Story

Begin by observing the child in the situation you are addressing. Try to take on the child's perspective and include aspects of his or her feelings or views in the story. Also, include usual occurrences in the social situation and the perspective of others along with considering possible variations.

There are three types of sentences used in writing social stories:

1. **Descriptive sentences**: objectively define anticipated events where a situation occurs, who is involved, what they are doing and why. (e.g. When people are inside, they walk.)

2. **Perspective sentences**: describe the internal status of the person or persons involved, their thoughts, feelings or moods. (e.g. Running inside could hurt me or other people.)

3. **Directive sentences**: are individualised statements of desired responses stated in a positive manner. They may begin 'I can try…' or 'I will work on…' Try to avoid sentences starting with 'do not' or definitive statements. (e.g. I will try to walk inside.)

A social story should have 3 to 5 descriptive and perspective sentences for each directive sentence. Avoid using too many directive sentences. They will be lost without adequate contextualisation. Write in the first person and on the child's developmental skill level. Also remember to use pictures that fit within the child's developmental skill level to supplement text.

Reference:

Broek, E., Cain, S.L., Dutkiewicz, M., Fleck, L., Grey, B., Grey, C., et al. (1994). The Original Social Story Book. Arlington, TX: Future Education. www.thegraycenter.org

(Source: Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children, 2012)

3.2 Supporting children's social and emotional development

The strategies teaching assistants use to support children with SEND can have a profound effect on the child's social and emotional development. Therefore, it is important that teaching assistants have an understanding of the potential impact of their actions. Reflecting on your own practice and then discussing your thoughts and ideas with other colleagues is a good way to develop your awareness of what you do.

Activity 8
Allow about 20 minutes

The link below will take you to a few questions that will help you reflect on the strategies you use when working directly with children with SEND in the classroom.

-

You may also be able to ask a colleague to observe you for a short while and give you some feedback on your performance. This may alert you to things you do unconsciously.

Comment

Giving a child with SEND a voice and getting their opinions on issues can help with not making assumptions about what the child likes or doesn't like, and what they want.

Also helping the child to build friendships and peer relationships, and providing them with social opportunities will help them develop independence for the future and a positive self-image.

The following 'top tips' from disabled young people illustrate what they see as important:

- 'Dip in and out': give us support when we need it but move away when we don't.

- Encourage our independence. Make sure we have time with our peers wherever possible.

- Work with children and young people in small groups, rather than one-to-one, where possible.

- Let us signal when we need or want support, rather than being with us all of the time.

(Anti-bullying Alliance, 2015b)

3.3 Being an advocate

The 'top tips' given in the feedback to the previous activity show how important it is for children to have a voice and be as independent as possible. However, some children with SEND need support. A teaching assistant can offer this support by acting as an advocate for the child.

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is a process of supporting and enabling people to:

- express their views
- access information and services
- find out about options and make decisions
- secure their rights.

As a teaching assistant you may act as an advocate for a child by representing the child's interest and speaking out on their behalf. This can be at the level of letting the class teacher know how a child is feeling about a particular teaching strategy if the child is not able to tell the teacher themselves: 'Elisha is finding it difficult to… / is unhappy about…'

With the greater focus on children's rights, children can be encouraged to self-advocate and speak up for themselves and state their own needs.

3.4 Effective support – how can you help?

A key role for a teaching assistant working with children with SEND is to make the curriculum accessible for the child. This can include thinking about how you can:

- make the abstract curriculum more real to the child by linking it to their everyday experiences
- use a range of teaching styles, and consider a child's learning style
- provide opportunities to talk about the task
- scaffold the child's learning by providing a challenge that is just beyond what the child can easily do by themselves, and then giving prompts, asking questions or modelling the steps involved in the task
- use visuals
- use other strategies.

In addition, it may take a child some time to understand a particular topic, or a particular child may not understand the way the teacher is explaining something due to the child's particular learning disability. This can create challenges for you as the teaching assistant in finding different ways to explain or support a child.

As a teaching assistant it can be helpful to build up a bank of ideas that you can draw on to support different children, on a range of learning tasks. Many of the strategies used to support children are universal in that they relate to general principles of support.

The following activity introduces you to one website with a range of ideas to adapt.

Activity 9
Allow about 20 minutes

Visit the British Council EAL Nexus: Effective Teaching of EAL Learners web page.

Read the summary list of some of the key features of EAL pedagogy. Choose one feature – for example, 'make the abstract curriculum more concrete' – and click on the link to the Great Ideas page.

When you have read the ideas, jot down how, in a teaching assistant role, you could use one or more of these ideas with children with SEND.

Provide your answer...

Comment
Hopefully you learned some new strategies to support you in your role.

3.5 Support services and other professionals

As a teaching assistant you are not alone in supporting children with SEND. There is a wide range of services and professionals also involved in this process. You may, or may not, have a direct working relationship, or contact with these, but it is useful to know who they are.

Activity 10
Allow about 10 minutes

Jot down your answers to the following questions:

- What services or professionals come into schools to work with SEND children?

- What do you know about the service or the professional's role?

- How could you find out more information?

> *Provide your answer...*

Comment

The SENCo (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) in your setting is a good starting place if you are unsure of what is on offer in your setting. The internet is also a useful source of information, although you need to take care that you are accessing a reliable source, such as a national organisation website, or government site.

If you'd like to find out more, we suggest reading the resource document, Some of the services and professionals involved in supporting children with SEND.

3.6 Optional readings and resources

Welsh Government

Welsh Government is changing the system of support for children and young people with Additional Learning Needs. You can read more about this here:

http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/additional-learning-special-educational-needs/transformation-programme/?lang=en

SNAP Cymru

SNAP Cymru provides information, advice and support for parents, children and young people who have, or may have, special educational needs or disabilities.

http://www.snapcymru.org/

Families and Childcare Trust

The Families and Childcare Trust is an organisation focused on campaigning, carrying out research and giving out information to governments, employers and parents. It contains a wealth of information on its website.

Some of the services and professionals involved in supporting children with SEND

The National Autistic Society (NAS)

A UK charity providing information and support. It also campaigns for people on the autistic spectrum.

Young Minds

A UK charity focused on improving the emotional well-being and mental health of children and young people. Their website provides a wide range of information and resources for children and young people, parents and professionals.

What you have learned in this section

- Terminology in common use in schools and services for children and young people for describing a child's disability or condition. You considered what defines children with SEND, what policy says about how children with SEND should be supported, and reflected on the inclusivity of your practice.

- To identify some of the issues for children with SEND in respect of their social and emotional development and how they manage relationships. Through Jax's and Joe's stories you were challenged to think about victimisation and bullying in the real (non-digital) world, and in the online environment.

- Some of the helpful and potentially unhelpful ways to support children with SEND. You were introduced to strategies such as social stories and being an advocate. Reflection on common support strategies used in the classroom was encouraged.

- Where to find additional resources. Special needs is a vast topic and so this section signposted to websites and resources that you can use as and when you have the need.

All children are individuals and this section has only scratched the surface in relation to supporting children with SEND. However, we hope that it has raised your awareness of issues, and introduced you to some ideas and practices that may be new to you. The further reading and resources are there for you to use to further your knowledge, so do dip into them when you have the time or the need to do so.

Section 4 quiz

Well done; you have now reached the end of Section 4 of *Supporting children's development*, and it is time to attempt the assessment questions. This is designed to be a fun activity to help consolidate your learning.

There are only five questions, and if you get at least four correct answers you will be able to download your badge for the 'Special needs' section (plus you get more than one try!).

- I would like to try the Section 4 quiz.

If you are studying this course using one of the alternative formats, please note that you will need to go online to take this quiz.

I've finished this section. What next?

If you feel that you've now got what you need from the course and don't wish to attempt the quiz, please visit the Taking my learning further section. There you can reflect on what you have learned and find suggestions of further learning opportunities.

Professional development plan

1 Panel discussion

Activity 1
Allow about 15 minutes

Watch and listen to the group's discussion with Katie Harrison about her motivations, aspirations and experiences as a Higher Level Teaching Assistant.

Video content is not available in this format.

Provide your answer...

2 Course summary

This course was designed to be an exploration of some broad areas of interest for those who are currently working with children or would like to work with them. The course does not qualify you as a teaching assistant: there are no nationally specified requirements for becoming a teaching assistant – each local authority or school outlines their specific requirements (TES, 2015). However, the badge (and statement of participation) will be useful for your CV and as a basis for discussion at an interview.

Developing and managing relationships

Section 1 used case studies to look at the development of relationships from early years to secondary school and how teaching assistants can play an important role in managing these relationships, especially when children make the transition from one setting to another. You were introduced to some well-known theorists on attachment, such as John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth, before learning about Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, whose ideas are still important in child development. These are not the only theorists who have contributed to child development theory, but they provide a useful starting point. In this section, you also looked at how important it is to develop relationships with parents and having 'parents as partners'.

Encouraging reading

In Section 2 you looked at reading, literacy, how children learn to read, and how reading can be developed at different stages of education. You were introduced to some key concepts, such as the 'reading gap' and the 'gender gap'. The 'reading gap' is about inequalities in attainment in reading, and the 'gender gap' raises questions about why some boys are more reluctant readers and progress more slowly than some girls. You may recall the case study of how one teacher, Miss Fuller, tried to encourage reading through a film club, and by asking the children to write book reviews for their peers.

Behavioural management

Section 3 focused on behaviour management, especially how to manage classroom behaviour in a positive way. The emphasis of this section was on the involvement of children in promoting good behaviour and on rewards rather than sanctions. You considered the work of Rudolph Dreikurs on the 'goals of misbehaviour' and alternative ways to deal with a challenging situation. You looked at the use of reward charts as an example of behaviourism and some of the criticism of this method of behaviour control.

Special needs

Section 4 was about supporting children with special educational needs and disability (SEND). This section examined some of the terminology used for describing a child's disability or condition. It looked at the government's SEND report and what is meant by

inclusive practice. You were given an opportunity to reflect on the extent to which your own practice is inclusive.

Learning outcomes

The overall learning outcomes for *Supporting children's development* underpinned these four sections. We hope that you:

- have gained an insight into the varying perspectives of children from early years through to secondary school
- are able to reflect on personal experience and practice, identify strengths and weaknesses, and apply this to your practice issues
- understand how some theories attempt to explain children's development
- are reflecting on the value of the work of teaching assistants, the support skills involved, and thinking about your future role.

3 The importance of reflection

You may have noted that two of the learning outcomes refer to 'reflection'. To make the most of your studies, you need to reflect on your learning and plan your development to achieve your career, personal or study goals.

Referring back to the video clip, you saw how Katie has reflected on her role as a teaching assistant. She was able to identify the rewards and challenges of the job and has clearly spent some time thinking about her career development. Katie wants to work with children with special educational needs and disabilities, so Section 4 of the course was of particular interest, but she also referred to other aspects of the course that are relevant to her practice.

Katie found the section, 'Encouraging reading', of interest, as she is familiar with teaching by phonics in her primary school. In the video, there was also some discussion about the importance of transition as children move from one school to another, and how teaching assistants can play a key role in making this easier for some children. Katie has worked with Year 1 pupils who have just made the transition from reception, a significant vertical transition in their education journey.

Activity 2
Allow about 30 minutes

Imagine that you are Katie and you are being asked about your role as a teaching assistant. You don't have to be working as a teaching assistant – you may have experience of working with children in other ways, perhaps as a parent or a grandparent. Reflect on the different aspects of your role. If you have studied only some sections of the course, you should be able to use this information to reflect on these questions.

- Do you play a part in developing and managing relationships?
- Do you work closely with individual children and do any of them have special educational needs?
- How do you encourage reading and literacy in your setting?
- What aspects of the course have been useful for your own practice?
- What aspects of your practice have not been addressed by this course?

Make a few notes in response to these questions and summarise what you remember from the sections you have read. Use your notes to try to identify areas of your practice or experience that you would like to develop further.

> *Provide your answer...*

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4 Identifying skills

Katie has identified the fact that she enjoys her role as a Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) and has no desire to become a teacher. The skills required to be a teaching assistant are complementary to, but different from, those of a teacher and she has a good relationship with the teachers in her school.

Activity 3
Allow about 30 minutes

When you attend interviews you will be expected to provide evidence of your skills so it's a good strategy to think about these beforehand.

Specific skills

The following skills and qualities have been identified as required for working as a primary teaching assistant, but most are applicable in other types of work with children and young people:

- nurturing skills;
- listening skills;
- ability to work under pressure;
- ability to work independently, and as a member of a team;
- understanding and awareness of children's needs;
- willingness to learn;
- adaptability;
- patience and a sense of fairness.

Try to identify one or two of these skills from your current role. This could be as a teaching assistant, employed in a school or it could be a more informal role, as a volunteer or within the family. Reflect on which of these are important in your work and think about how you would provide evidence of them if asked about them at an interview.

Try to avoid taking your employability skills for granted, e.g. by saying 'well, I just do it'. In order to be successful in job applications and interviews it is vital that you are able to recognise the skills that you possess and can describe them effectively.

(The Open University, 2016, adapted from Childhood and youth studies qualification website)

Discussion
You tend to take for granted the skills you have. You use these transferrable skills on a daily basis without necessarily being aware of them.

Katie has more opportunity to work one-to-one with individual pupils than the teacher. She *plans* to develop her skills in working with children with special educational needs and has

taken *action* to start training in this field. Katie regularly reflects on her role and *reviews* her training needs.

You do not have to be in employment to start thinking about the skills you have already developed in relationships with children at different stages of their development. You may find that you have developed some of the transferable skills listed in Activity 3 and that these will stand you in good stead if you decide to work with children.

We hope you found this opportunity to reflect on your learning and practice a useful one and that you will build this into your practice as an ongoing process of *recording* and *review*.

5 Personal development plan

In the final activity, you will look at opportunities for taking your career further. In undertaking the reflective activities in this section, you made a start towards developing your own personal development plan (PDP). PDP promotes the idea that learning and development are lifelong activities and is a structured approach to building reflection into your practice and career planning.

Activity 4
Allow about 30 minutes

Watch this video clip, What's it all about?, which outlines the five stages that make up an effective personal development plan:

- Identify
- Plan
- Action
- Record
- Review.

Now that you know what we mean by a personal development plan, use the five stages to draw up your own PDP. A good starting point would be to use the reflection from Activities 2 and 3 as a basis for thinking about future planning and action.

Discussion
You may have already thought about your own learning and career development, but drawing up a personal development plan gives structure to this process and provides something to refer back to and build on over time.

Summary

We hope that you decide to take your learning further and have found this taster course of interest. We also hope that it has given you some awareness of different aspects of the teaching assistant role and has encouraged you to find out more.

The final section, Taking my learning further, will point you in the direction of further study opportunities.

Taking my learning further

1 What have I learned?

We hope you found *Supporting children's development* interesting and informative.

You may remember answering a few questions at the start of the course about your learning motivations. Now you've completed all or part of the course we'd like to ask you to reflect on your experience by completing one last short activity.

Activity 1
Allow about 15 minutes

Questionnaire about your learning (2)

If you would like to review your responses to the first questionnaire at the start of the course you can do so by revisiting the Questionnaire about your learning (1).

Consider where you were when you first started this course.

- How did studying this course fit within your general everyday routine? Did you make or were you given dedicated time to work on it?
- Were there any particular challenges you faced? How did you overcome them?
- Have you learned anything that you will be able to take forwards in the future? How might this influence how you do things in the future?

By studying this course you should now:

- have gained an insight into the varying perspectives of children from early years through to secondary school
- be able to reflect on personal experience and practice, identify strengths and weaknesses, and apply this to your practice issues
- understand how some theories attempt to explain children's development
- be able to reflect on the value of the work of teaching assistants, the support skills involved, and be thinking about your future role.

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2 Badge and statement of participation

We hope that you now feel a sense of achievement gaining the badge for *Supporting children's development*. For a reminder on how to obtain your badge, please see How do I access my badge?

For a reminder on how to obtain your statement of participation after achieving your badge, please see How do I access my statement of participation?

When you have successfully passed the final quiz assessment, you will receive your *Supporting children's development* badge. You will receive email notification that your badge has been awarded and it will appear in your *My badges* area in your OpenLearn Create profile. Please note that it can take up to 24 hours for a badge to be issued.

You will be notified by email if you have received a statement of participation. Once it is available (as a PDF file), you will be able to see and download it from your OpenLearn Create profile.

It may take up to 24 hours for the statement of participation to be issued after you have completed the course.

3 Where next?

We hope you enjoyed *Supporting children's development*, and we hope the course has inspired you to continue your learning journey. Below are some key links to where you might like to go next.

Progressing your career

These links from the TES and National Careers Service discuss the role of teaching assistants and the transferable skills required, and give you an insight into the different levels of entry into the profession:

- TES: How to become a teaching assistant
- National Careers Service job profiles: Teaching assistant
- Skills for schools: A variety of resources relating to the various roles within schools.

Volunteering

You may like to consider volunteering to extend and enhance your skills and knowledge. These websites may help you to think about your options:

-
- National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)
- https://www.volunteering-wales.net

Best Practice Network

The Best Practice Network has over 10 years' experience in delivering courses and training for support staff.

Trade Unions

Trade unions offer training and development programmes for their members, often in partnership with providers such as The Open University. Please speak with your union representative to find out about any local opportunities.

More free and informal courses

Supporting children's development is one of a suite of six courses. You may like to study one of the other five.

The Open University also provides further online introductory courses and skills for study courses, all of which are free and online.

FutureLearn also has a wide range of online courses that you may like to consider.

The Open University

You may like to consider one of The Open University's Access courses to prepare you for successful study towards a nationally recognised higher education qualification.

The OU offers a range of qualifications that you might want to consider.

Education, childhood and youth qualifications

If you would like to take a more in-depth look at childhood studies then you can find out more at The Open University's Education, Childhood and Youth qualifications website.

The PEARL website

Part-time Education for Adults Returning to Learn (PEARL) is a useful website for adults looking for part-time study opportunities, including all types of provision from free, non-accredited courses through to higher-level learning.

Other

You may recall that Katie was very happy with her role as a Teaching Assistant, but is interested in building up experience as a teaching assistant before becoming a teacher or embarking on a teaching qualification. We recommend contacting your local PGCE (postgraduate certificate in education) provider to find out their specific requirements with regards to the national curriculum content they require in a degree. You will also be required to have GCSEs in Maths, English or Welsh and Science or an equivalent qualification before you become a teacher.

4 Feedback

Finally, please take our short end-of-course survey.

We're really interested in hearing from you and completing this survey should take no more than 10 minutes.

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Acknowledgements

Figures

Developing and managing relationships

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Behavioural management

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Figure 4: courtesy Kate Harrison (Teaching Assistant)

Special needs

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Video

Activity 3

The Strange Situation – Mary Ainsworth transcript:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTsewNrHUHU#t=16 thibs44

Activity 6

Boys will be boys transcript: Georgia State University in ITunes U

Activity 7

TES video https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/low-level-disruption-6344146
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/

Special needs: Activity 6

Transcript from video, *Let's fight it together*, Childnet http://www.childnet.com/

Professional development plan: Activity 1

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Professional development plan: Activity 4

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