



Behaviour and consequences

There is always a reason for behaviour. This can be an unmet need or a reaction to a situation. Forced consequences often don't have an impact on behaviour in the long term. Mainstream school staff often report that it is the same students who get detention for the same behaviour, or the same children are moved to the 'raincloud'.

By identifying the reason for the behaviour and addressing that, we teach children to recognise their own needs and help them to avoid certain behaviours in the future.

If a child is hitting out at others we need to find the reason why. Do they feel unsafe, frustrated, perhaps they need sensory input. If children are acting in this way, then by identifying the need we can help them in the future. If they feel unsafe, we can teach them how to identify this and ask for help. If they are frustrated, we can give them strategies to deal with this and ease frustrations – if it's a communication frustration we could identify other ways they can communicate their needs. If they are doing it to get sensory input, we can look at their sensory needs and how they can better meet them.

As we get older, natural consequences become greater. A nursery child hitting their friend has fewer social repercussions than if a 7-year-old hit their friend. As we get even older and into adulthood, we would potentially face criminal charges for these actions.

Within our schools we have processes in place to keep children safe that also act as natural consequences. For example, if a child has been dysregulated and unable to follow staff instructions there may be certain activities, they cannot do at that time due to safety concerns. This could be as simple as a planned walk in the community. How we communicate this to pupils is very important.

'You're important and we want to make sure you're safe. At the moment it's not safe for us to go out on the walk as you're struggling to listen to staff. Instead let's go and play a game in the playground (or other similar activity).'



Another example could be, if a child hits out at another child, one of them would be moved away. The communication that follows should be:

'It's our job to keep you safe because you're important. It's also our job to keep safe because they're important too. We're moving you/them away to keep them safe while we work together to feel settled again.'

These conversations are just examples to set the tone. The content may change depending on the understanding and communication skills of the child. Some children will need you to explore and fix the reason for their dysregulation. Others may be able to jointly explore this with you in a supportive way.

Not working out the source of a behaviour but putting rewards or consequences in to get a child to comply, is ABA (applied behaviour analysis), which goes against Beechfield policy. In doing this, children either continue with the behaviour or change it purely to comply which can lead to poor mental health and a re-emergence of the behaviour at a later time.

Here is an example of this :

Meghan struggles to sit still on the carpet during story time. The carpet feels funny and scratchy on her skin. She can feel it through her clothes. Meghan moves about when she is told to sit on the carpet and sometimes even stands up. Sometimes Meghan will talk to her friends to try to distract herself.

Meghan's teacher often moves her name to the raincloud for being unable to sit still and for talking. At parents evening Meghan was asked why she won't still. Meghan shrugged and quietly said she doesn't like sitting on the carpet. Meghan was told 'sometimes we need to do things we don't want to do'. Meghan's parents said they were disappointed in her.

Meghan now tries really hard to sit still on the carpet. It is very uncomfortable and sometimes at nighttime Meghan will cry when she thinks about how much it scratches. Meghan also misses most of the story as she is concentrating hard on sitting still. Meghan's parents and teacher are happy that Meghan has learned to sit still better, and Meghan is happy and proud that her name is now on the sunshine at story time.



In this example, the raincloud' (public shame) has been used as a consequence to encourage Meghan to do something that will cause her a lot of discomfort. Meghan has a sensory issue that is not being addressed. Long term this is teaching Meghan that her feelings are not valid and that it is better to suffer in silence.

Take some time to fully digest how the ways this could impact someone's mental health.

Think of times in your life where you, or someone you know, have experienced something similar.

This should assist you in thinking about how we address behaviour and in looking for the reasons behind it.

Do we ever exclude?

Yes – sometimes exclusion is necessary **but** only in very specific circumstances.

If a child is being abusive, either to staff or other pupils, and this abuse does not stop with intervention or redirection, then an exclusion is necessary. Children are often not abusive with that intent; however, their actions can harm others and therefore be considered abusive. In an exclusion for abusive behaviour – the exclusion is not given as a 'teaching' consequence for those actions but a way to keep others safe. The length of the exclusion is determined by the time needed to put a safety plan in place to minimize the risk of this happening again.

If a child is being unsafe, and cannot be made safe, or there is a high risk of the unsafe behaviour happening again that day, then an exclusion is necessary. An example of this can be a child absconding from school and refusing to return immediately, or still being heightened on their return and the risk of absconding remains. Again, the length of the exclusion is determined by the time needed to put a safety plan in place to minimize the risk.