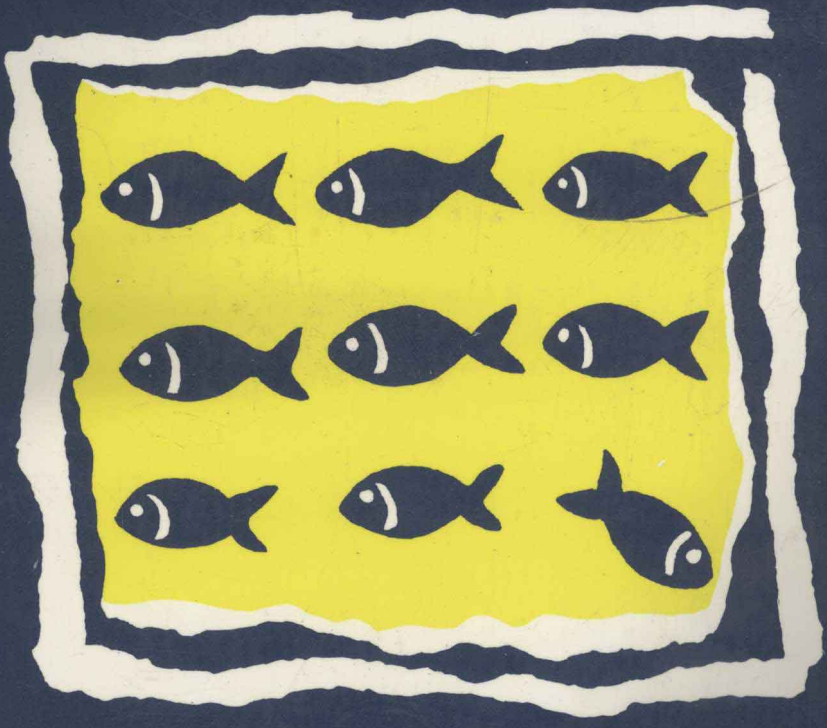
MANAGING BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS



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To the six-toed person

Acknowledgments

Thank you to all the pupils on whom I practised, the teachers who offered their advice and their case studies and the researchers whose work I have drawn upon. An especial thank you to Jo Foweraker for her most helpful editorial comments.

Glossary

ABA	Applied behaviour analysis
BATPACK	Behavioural approach to teaching pack
BC	Behaviour contract
CBG	Catch them being good
EBD	Emotional and behavioural difficulties
GSR	Galvanic skin responses
HOC	Hindering other children
IPR	Inhibition and positive reinforcement
3Ms	Management, monitoring and maintenance
MPR	Modelling and positive reinforcement
PAD	Preventive approaches to disruption
PAL	Positive attitude to learning
PAT	Positive attitude to teaching
PCI	Positive cognitive interventions
RSPR	Role shift and positive reinforcement
SNAP	Special needs action programme
SPA	Supportive positive attitude
TA	Transactional analysis
TIPS	Teacher information packs
TO	Time out
TOOT	Talking out of turn

Contents

Introduction

This book has been written for teachers who are concerned about the seeming increase in the number of behaviour problems of their pupils, and is intended to be a practical guide and handbook to managing and controlling these problems. This guidance extends to ways of working and talking with parents to help support classroom work and improve behaviour generally. It also involves strategies for analysing points at which lessons begin to break down and provides suggestions for changes in lesson planning and tactics which will overcome these problems. It is not intended to be a complete behaviour management programme, but some of the material could be used in this way.

The suggestions for intervention and change are all linked to a particular theory and practice of teaching, so that teachers can not only learn and use the techniques detailed here, but also move on to design their own versions, adapted to their own individual needs. Each technique presented is based upon extensive trials and evaluations by the teachers who attended in-service courses at Kingston Polytechnic, Faculty of Education, or those run by the author across the country.

In addition to a theory and practice of teaching, research has been combed to try to determine usèful links between causation, manifestation and behaviour management in classrooms. The strategies found to be successful in the research have similarly been validated in field trials. These techniques have also been validated through the Kingston Polytechnic Learning Difficulties Project on Teacher Appraisal. A system of classroom observation and enhancement has been devised and successfully tested over many years. In this Project teachers experiencing serious difficulty in classrooms have been helped to reach competent and good levels of teaching performance. This system embodies the classroom management principles expanded in this book and is detailed to help coordinators for special needs, support teachers, professional tutors and other senior teaching staff who may be involved in helping other teachers become more effective.

This book is written by a teacher, now teacher trainer, who was once a problem pupil, to help teachers in ordinary schools to understand and deal with those 'nuisances' in their classrooms. It presents

a selective review of the literature citing sources which have been helpful in understanding difficulties and devising intervention strategies for use in classrooms and offers a 'bottom-up' approach, viewing interpersonal skills and task relationships as key areas for promoting change. The fundamental focus of attention is teacher attitude. For useful recent reviews of the literature readers should refer to Reid (1986) and Galloway and Goodwin (1987).

1

Defining Behaviour Problems

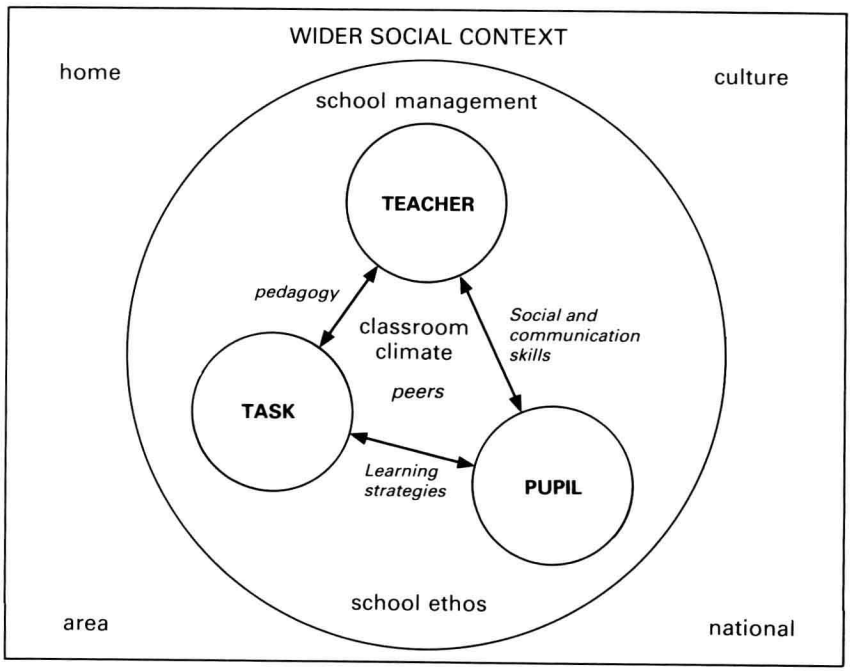
INTRODUCTION

Parents often complain affectionately about their pre-school children's naughtiness and say that they are 'unmanageable'. This is seldom really true. It is rare to find young children totally beyond their parents' control although the same cannot be said of adolescents. One reason put forward for this by Donaldson (1978) is that parents and teachers of young children tend to be more understanding or more tolerant of their misbehaviour. The misbehaviours and aggression of a small child can be viewed as less provoking and frightening than the same behaviours in a six foot youth in whom they might be considered unexpected for the age group and socially unacceptable. The same child may misbehave with one parent, or one teacher and not with another. Schools may also exert influences and pressures which can predispose to or protect certain children who are at risk from becoming problematic.

In a sense, schools and classrooms are unnatural places in which to keep young people as Booth (1982) pointed out. They are confined there when they are at their most active and it is not surprising that on occasions they 'misbehave'. In fact, if children have any spirit in them, teachers should expect them to misbehave and test out rules and regulations. Most children misbehave at some time or another and this misbehaviour cannot be considered as problem behaviour if it is an isolated event. Pupils' misbehaviours create problems for teachers and themselves when they begin to occur frequently and pervade many areas of activity. These misbehaviours then begin to cause suffering and concern to others and often the pupils themselves.

As pupils move into and through schools certain individuals come to be regarded by particular teachers or the school as having behaviour problems or being disruptive. It is usual for pupils to be regarded as the owners of such problems and for discipline and correction to be directed towards them. Although this is not an entirely surprising response on the part of the teacher, it will be seen in later chapters that an analysis of the origins of the problem can lead to quite different interventions with more success than if the pupil or the behaviour are directly approached.

Figure 1 *Sources and interacting factors relevant to behaviour problems in schools*



In any learning and behaviour network there are three primary sources, several secondary ones and many ways in which they may interact to provoke an adverse response from particular pupils.

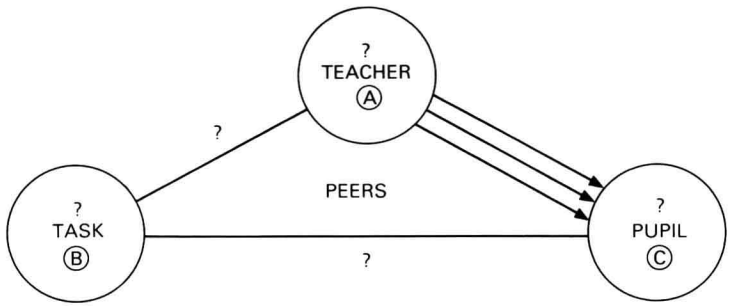
The nature of these interactions will be explored in later sections and a range of different strategies will be discussed to show how behaviour problems of various kinds can be dealt with effectively.

An illustration of the interactions and intervention from the model in Figure 1 might be as follows:

> The teacher is reading from a book to the class of pupils. As she proceeds several of the pupils begin to shuffle and talk to each other quietly. One boy begins to flick paper pellets. The teacher begins to notice the restlessness and looks up. What happens next . . .

This is a typical minor problem scene, but in one teacher's hands it can build to disruption and major confrontation whilst in another's it will recede as quietly as it came. It is likely that the teacher will pause in reading, look pointedly at the talkers, frown at the pellet flicker and resume reading. After a short while the restlessness begins again and the same scene is played until the teacher becomes upset by these interruptions and speaks crossly to her annoyers, snaps the book shut and gives out the paper. The introduction to the next section of the lesson is thus curtailed and some of the children will find it difficult to proceed without individual help, especially those who were not listening, and more inattention and behaviour problems are likely to ensue. Another teacher might at the first instance have reprimanded the 'miscreants' sharply before resuming reading. Sharp public rebukes often

Figure 2 *The main direction of the teacher's attention in the presence of behavioural difficulties*



offend and cause an emotional response, after which the pupil attends even less and complains to peers or sulks. This can lead to them seeking opportunities to wreak vengeance throughout the rest of the session.

In each of these cases the teacher ultimately focuses attention on the pupil as the source of the problem which must be tackled. The first teacher's strategy to pause, look and frown was good and temporarily effective but a resumption of noise should clue her to other likely origins of the problem. The text (task variable) may have been *too difficult, too distant* from the pupils' experience or *too dull.* On the other hand her interpretation or reading of it may not have provoked their interest. She may have failed to give it immediacy and audience effect, (teacher variables). If minor inattention persists this is a strong clue that these other situational variables should be considered. Figure 2 illustrates a teacher focusing all attention on the pupil and the problem behaviour (C). However, might the teacher's attitude and explanation (A) be at fault? Was the task set (B) too complex or too easy or did the pupil perceive the question incorrectly? Attention to these variables could prevent the lesson deteriorating as in the example given. However, it is not so easy to switch this attention. It is common to 'treat' the major 'symptom' or the response rather than the 'cause' if we use a medical model. In psychological terms it is common to find us projecting blame for situations upon others rather than upon ourselves.

THE NATURE OF BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS

One of the main difficulties in defining behaviour problems is that they are *socially disapproved* behaviours and what one person classes as bad behaviour, another might not, hence value judgments are involved. Galloway and Goodwin (1987) suggest that many pupils with behaviour problems have poor social skills. When they engage in socially disapproved behaviour they have insufficient social skills to negotiate themselves out of the trouble this creates, and so this group can easily become labelled as 'disruptive' and 'beyond control'. However, not all teachers' social skills are highly developed and they, too, can become vulnerable as they provoke pupils to further excess.

Some teachers regard much misbehaviour as 'delinquent' but it is wise to avoid this term because it has a specific legal connotation. Delinquent

acts are those such as stealing, truancy, arson and vandalism. They were 10:1 more common in boys, according to West (1967), but girls are increasingly to be found engaging in them. To these problems we can now also add drug abuse, but legal sanctions do not apply as yet to solvent abuse. There is no clear-cut psychological distinction between delinquent and non-delinquent behaviour – the difference is a *legal* one. The 'delinquent' is a young person who has been caught and convicted and the term tends to be used in criminology studies rather than in education where it was historically used. The term 'maladjustment' became common for those pupils whose behavioural and emotional problems were so severe as to warrent some form of special provision being made or special schooling. The Underwood Report (1955) was directed entirely to studying the nature of maladjustment and the provision required for such individuals.

In 1955 the Underwood Committee, in presenting its findings, defined the maladjusted child as follows:

> A child may be regarded as maladjusted who is developing in ways that have a bad effect upon himself or his fellows and cannot without help be remedied by his parents, teachers or other adults in ordinary contact with him. It is characteristic of maladjusted children that they are insecure and unhappy and that they fail in their personal relationships.

From this definition it can be seen that the maladjusted child was one who, for whatever reason, could not cope with all or major aspects of his/her life. He/she did not respond to normal discipline in the classroom, participate in classroom routines like most other children, accept affection and concern from the teacher or his/her peers, and was likely to over- or under-respond to normal criticism or blame. Gulliford (1971) described the maladjusted child as behaving more like a younger child in the severity and persistence of his/her symptoms and compared with other children.

The Association of Workers with Maladjusted Children (AWMC, 1984), like others in social services, were still using the old terms. They defined maladjustment as:

> We take maladjusted to include emotionally disturbed, meaning by this last term those children whose fears, guilt, hatred, aggression – and the anxieties caused either by the strength of these emotions or of their effect on others – overwhelm their resources so that their behaviour presents teachers and others with difficult tasks in understanding them and managing them. We also take emotionally disturbed to indicate the presence of intra personal and inter personal conflict which has delayed or prevented children from successfully resolving the psychological and social tasks of maturation and development.

The AWMC perceived 'socially maladjusted' children as:

> . . . those who, although they may have suffered deprivations and lack of adequate nurturing experiences, have personalities which are more 'intact' than emotionally disturbed children. They have not been so adversely affected by their experiences.

The AWMC thought that this group were more likely to benefit from rehabilitation programmes in ordinary schools and suggested that severely emotionally disturbed children needed a therapeutic education and stable life style which could be provided in residential schooling. The moves towards integration, the scarcity of resources for residential placement, falling school rolls and community welfare programmes

have meant that there has been a tendency to keep families together and to support their members in the community. This has reduced the numbers referred to residential schools (ACE, 1982).

The publication of the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) and the implementation of the 1981 Education Act in April 1983 created major changes in direction in this field. An attempt was made to remove the stigmatising nature of some of these labels and their medical connotations. Pupils' special needs were to be identified and the terms which referred to them were to be made to reflect the pupils' main *educational needs* where possible. The term 'emotional and behavioural difficulties' (EBD) replaced 'maladjusted'. It was always true that there were many pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties who never posed such severe problems that they needed to be placed in special units or schools. Now these umbrella terms can include the whole range of difficulties without necessarily labelling and stigmatising. Those with transitory problems and difficulties can also be included and may be given temporary support without the damning and seemingly permanent and hopeless condition of 'Malad' being attached to them. Although the 1981 Education Act and the climate of the time encouraged the integration of all pupils into mainstream schools, what seems to have happened is that the special schools for children with moderate learning difficulties which were being emptied, were being refilled with pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties or more special units were being attached to schools. Referrals were also being delayed wherever possible until the end of infant schooling. This policy also needs to be questioned because it may not be one which meets the real needs of the disturbed pupil or classroom peers. Peers may vicariously learn how to undermine teachers and the school system.

Lisa is an example of an emotionally disturbed little girl for whom the class teacher could obtain no special help and support from the LEA. By the time she reaches the age of eight she could be very disturbed and could create distress and disturbance in any classroom or school. The following report was written by her class teacher:

Lisa Age 5 years 6 months
Only child of single parent family. Mother an alcoholic.

Lisa will only settle to a task if she is given continuous individual attention. In story time or in any group or class activity, she roves round the room disrupting other children, singing and shouting and making a general noise. She exhibits severe attention-seeking behaviours.

Using the strategies outlined later in this book the class teacher was able to help Lisa overcome enough of her difficulties to settle her down to learn. Early help and support for teachers in this situation is essential if children are to be helped. Waiting for statements of special need to obtain support or special resources can take up to two years, by which time intervention can have become extremely costly.

Warnock's position on special schooling was:

> . . . we are entirely convinced that special schools will continue to be needed particularly for . . . those with severe emotional or behavioural disorders who have difficulty forming relationships with others or whose behaviour is so extreme or unpredictable that it causes severe disruption in an ordinary school or inhibits the emotional progress of other children. (para. 6.10)

The report did not specify day school, unit or residential placement, but stressed that the needs of the child were paramount and should determine the provision.

Determining the best ways in which to meet the needs of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties presents a complex picture. Early intervention and support would seem to be essential, but this should be provided for both 'acting out' and withdrawn pupils. Where single problems develop these can often be resolved by the child but a significant number of children identified as emotionally handicapped are not likely to resolve their adjustment problems without help.

Where and how this help can be provided is still a much debated set of issues. The AWMC (1984), for example, argued that many of the most seriously disturbed and deprived children were not the most disruptive, but still needed very special placement. These were often the pupils most likely to be retained in ordinary schools because LEAs tended to seek places for 'acting out' pupils, particularly those who had only a year or two of their school careers to run. At this stage the AWMC reported that it was difficult for schools to provide meaningful and appropriate experiences because these pupils had suffered many years of failure.

Most behaviour problems exhibited by pupils can be catered for in the ordinary school, provided teachers are supported in their efforts with in-service training and help from the LEA and in-school support services. This help should enable them to identify pupils' needs and assess the forms of intervention which might be appropriate, as well as to help them evaluate and redevelop these interventions as this becomes necessary.

The HMI (1986) in *The New Teacher in School* reported on research with probationers showing the issues or problems which were of most concern to them as follows:

1 Class management and discipline.
2 Building good relationships with pupils.
3 Teaching mixed-ability groups.
4 Using unfamiliar equipment and aids.
5 Becoming familiar with pupils' social background.
6 Conditions of work.
7 Personal problems: housing, finance, etc.
8 The functioning of in-school decision-making machinery.
9 Augmenting own knowledge in a curriculum subject.
10 The probationary year assessment.

As can be seen, the probationers' first three major concerns are central to the concerns of this book. When we asked experienced teachers on school-based training days and in-service courses what issues were of most concern to them, they too consistently referred to:

- discipline;
- mixed-ability teaching; *as well as*
- keeping up to date;
- communications.

When teachers came on in-service training courses on behaviour problems and were asked to list the behaviour problems they were concerned about, if any, they gave the following in order of priority:

- attention-seeking;
- disruption;

- short concentration span;
- aggression;
- negativism, disinterest and lack of motivation to work.

The same list was given by many hundreds of teachers in a wide range of LEAs whether they came from nursery, primary or secondary schools.

Attention-seeking and disruption always featured very strongly in the vast majority of their lists, and in their discussions about classroom problems. In descriptions it became clear that disruptive behaviour was also often a form of attention-seeking. At junior school level Croll and Moses (1985) found that teachers classified about two children in a class as having behaviour problems. Only one of the two was usually regarded as disruptive.

Disruptive behaviour was defined by the DES (1979) as '. . . that which interferes with the learning and opportunities of other pupils and imposes undue stress upon the teacher'.

Behaviour problems which are disruptive seem to include attention-seeking, continuous talking and muttering, making annoying noises, lack of attention, poor concentration, distractibility, shouting out, wandering about, snatching other pupils' property, annoying and distracting other pupils or the teacher, provoking each other by name-calling and unpleasant comments, lack of interest and motivation to work. Although each of these behaviours may be trivial, when they become persistent it is very tiring for the teacher to have to manage them day after day. Other children may also join in with the misbehaviour making the teacher's task more difficult and at times the situation can get out of control. In some classrooms there are no behaviour problems reported; in most, one or two; in some, a handful of children are a continuous nuisance; and in a few classes the teachers report that *all* the pupils are problematic. Although most teachers manage to cope with these difficulties it is as pupils move into the fourth and fifth years of secondary schooling that many more seem to grow disaffected and disruptive (Reid, 1986). This is especially true of the lower attainers in secondary schools and Hargreaves (1984) suggests that this is a product of, for them, an over-academic curriculum and too rigid disciplining techniques. At this level according to the HMI Survey (1988) the successful teachers become more negotiational in their dealings with pupils. HMI saw very few disrupted lessons despite media attention to what is said to be a worsening state of discipline in our schools. This recent survey was based upon the observations of over 15000 lessons.

In the Kingston Polytechnic Learning Difficulties Project (1984) the less frequently mentioned problems were: swearing, lying, cheating, damaging other pupils' property and work, withdrawal, daydreaming, fire setting, 'bunging up' the lavatories, flooding the sink area, tale-telling, and overt sexual behaviour. Even less frequently mentioned were: glue-sniffing, smoking, drug-taking, alcohol drinking, truancy, although some of these represent considerable problems in the local area.

Within each classroom, school and area there will be different patterns of problem behaviour, but the behaviours which are of the most concern to teachers are naturally the ones which disturb the purpose of their position. Truancy, for example, removes a learner from the presence of the teacher and so teaching processes with other pupils are not interrupted. Similarly, glue-sniffing, drug-taking and smoking take place mostly out of sight and out of lessons, although their effects may be brought back into them. The smell and effects of alcohol may often be noticed at morning

registration in tutorial time, as may the effects of glue-sniffing and drug-taking if the pupils actually return to school afterwards, or in the first session after lunch. A careful watch should be kept on those pupils who hang around near the school gates or the outer fence and who make contact with unknown adults during break times or on leaving school. Secluded areas of the school premises attract smokers, drug abusers and alcohol dependents, together with selected spectators and hangers-on.

WHAT THEN CONSTITUTES A CLASSROOM BEHAVIOUR PROBLEM?

Any kind of behaviour which prevents the teacher from teaching and the learner from learning could be classed a behaviour problem. Teachers will tend to centre on those problems which interrupt them and their teaching, but we shall also include those which prevent the pupil from learning because, in the end, they will hamper the teaching process. Behaviour problems also need to be considered from the pupils' point of view. Such problems would include boredom, fear of failure, alienation, and peer oppression. Signs of these should also suggest to the teacher that there is something more than a behaviour problem to correct or a pupil to discipline. Each of them can, in difficult or provoking circumstances, be the precursor to more serious disruptive behaviours. West's (1982) longitudinal research showed that individuals who had been committed for violent and aggressive offences showed a history of minor infringements and misdemeanours, many of them at school. Good management of behaviour problems can protect many such individuals from further difficulties but too often the school response is aversive and a rift develops with opposing positions being taken. When this occurs, schools can mobilise against the 'offender' and reject the individual, either referring him/her for special education, or by suspending and transferring the pupil.

Boredom, fear of failure and alienation also need to be seen as potential causes of *displacement activities* such as attention-seeking and disruption, rather than some children necessarily having an innate predisposition to be a nuisance to teachers. Patterns of behaviour problems will vary from mild – temporarily snatching other pupils' property, to severe – biting beating or stabbing other children, from writing furtively on desks, to spraying offensive graffitti on the school walls. Most children will, at some time, exhibit some form of behaviour problem in their school career but it is usual for teachers and those concerned with education to focus upon the 'acting-out' of types of behaviour problems, for these bring themselves to our attention and interfere with the schooling process.

There are, however, a whole sphere of behaviour problems which are, in the long-term, likely to be more serious for the individual (Freud, 1958) because they can lead to mental health problems which consist of *withdrawal* behaviours. The pupil becomes subdued, dreamy, apathetic, uninvolved, may be fearful and goes quietly unnoticed. Children have two main responses to emotional distress such as child abuse, anxiety and fear of failure, and these are to 'act-out' their emotional distress or to withdraw, becoming subdued and depressed. Thus, a classroom behaviour problem can have an origin in the social context outside school. It may also arise from bullying, harassment and oppression from peers or teachers within school and it may arise in response to the curriculum task.