



## Staff Support and Development - CPD Session

### Background Information

A SENCo approached Gemstones for help to review a case and support transition planning for the child who was due to move to a new class.

- Age 6 years and 8 months.
- This is his third school.
- Single Parent.
- His parent has always felt there was something 'different' about him from a very early age, provides a lot of structure for him at home and finds his behaviour a challenge.
- He was referred to CAMHS and assessed. He was diagnosed as having Pervasive Developmental Disorder. (Some symptoms of PDD are similar to aspects of ASD, including social communication and rigidity of behaviour such as difficulty coping with change and unusual responses to sensory stimulation such as noise). **What solutions have you already found?**

### Aims for the session

- To identify strategies that work so that these can be passed on to his next teacher.

### What specifically is it that you want to change about a child's behaviour?

- Reduce/eliminate acts of aggression towards peers, including hitting, kicking, nipping.
- Domineering/intimidating and controlling behaviour toward peers.
- When trying to make social contact with other children he tends to use a lot of 'one-upmanship', e.g exaggerated and sometimes, absurd claims.
- Lack of attentive learning behaviour when working, even though he is of average ability.
- Lack of remorse when he is shown the consequences of his actions.
- Patterns of behaviour identified:
  - The more violent aggressive acts tend to happen at playtimes, points when the class is moving around e.g. going to get coats and at points of transition between activities.
  - The less serious acts tend to occur when he is supposed to be getting on with a work based activity or on the carpet, where he tends to poke or otherwise annoy classmates.
  - This kind of lower level disruptive activity also occurs when the adult support moves away to assist someone else or is otherwise distracted.

### What solutions have you already found?

- Visual timetable.
- Checklist to help focus on work activities.
- Lots of positive reinforcement such as praise.
- Being kept in at playtime with a known adult. He does not see this as a punishment but more as a support for him.
- Social stories.
- Giving responsibilities.
- Take a break (controlled by adults!).
- Consistency, clear boundaries.
- Feelings book.
- Tone of voice and staying calm.
- Sound field system.
- Pattern interrupters.
- Activate and Relax Kids Other Observations.

### Other Observations

- He has had to cope with considerable amounts of change in his life - 3 schools, a part time placement in First Base, all with slightly different expectations, contexts and lack of opportunities to make lasting social contacts with peers and also many adults too. For a child that has difficulties coping with change this is a massive factor for him.
- He lacks social skills with peers. This will be part of his 'disorder' but also due to the numbers of school placements he has had and the dual roll situation in which he now finds himself. This may have encouraged him to disregard friendships with peers as a protection strategy or because he does not see them as important to him. Adults are usually more reliable and consistent and therefore 'safer' for him.
- He enjoys playing on his own inside - this is when he seems happy. Is this a security factor for him? He is away from the unstructured playground setting with more 'unpredictable' children and with a familiar consistent adult able to play on his own without interference. At some level this is fulfilling a need that he has.
- He has social skills, which he uses with adults but this is usually by way of seeking to gain control so that he gets the outcome he seeks.
- The way that strategies seem to work for a while and then not could be due to him realising that the adult is in control - it fulfils a need that he has but his 'want' is to test out and overthrow that control so that he has the upper hand. Another way of looking at this is that when a tried and tested successful strategy suddenly does not work, this is a sign of the adult's effectiveness and not failure.
- Children and people with ASD/PDD tend to have very high levels of anxiety when trying to manage over stimulation of senses (crowds and loud noises) and transitions or changes to routine. The anxiety leads to them lashing out which then is often wrongly interpreted by others as anger.
- When in unstructured situations with lots of other children (e.g. playtime) he is likely to lack awareness of his own and other's need for space and appropriate touch.

- Lack of apparent remorse for the consequences of his actions is a symptom of the social and emotional immaturity or impairment of people with ASD or PDD. It can be acquired through direct teaching but is slow to develop. Strategies such as reflecting on these incidents using the feelings work you describe is part of the solution.

#### **Where to from here? (The Action Plan)**

- Transition work planned to support his move to the next class, including a list of all the successful strategies.
- Try no eye contact when having to correct or manage his behaviour. This stops him affecting the adult with negative energy and ensures he gets no attention reward. Keep him in periphery vision at this time.
- Face to face and eye contact is good for praise but not for correction.
- Identify the most effective pattern interrupters that you use.
- Try introducing 7/11 breathing to whole class perhaps during circle time and in conjunction with relax kids.
- Consider introducing Massage in Schools to teach him about safe touch and respect for others and to counteract high levels of cortisol associated with high levels of anxiety.
- During circle time talk to all the children about 'elbow' space and arms length space as a way of gauging when a person's body space is invaded and when it is honoured.
- Try introducing EFT - tapping on the Karate chop point during circle time or when he is calm and reflecting on an incident. Examples of some of the statements you might try whilst tapping yourself and getting him to tap on the karate chop point: Even though you had a problem in the playground we know that you are a loveable boy. Even though you didn't get it right this time, we know you are a loveable boy. Even though you made a mistake in the playground its okay, your okay we know you are a loveable boy. (Encourage him then to say, even though I had a problem in the playground I know I am a loveable boy, etc etc.