

Autism Spectrum Disorder Training Pack

Resources for schools

let's play behaviour detective

part one - primary



a case study - a primary school student with
autism and challenging behaviours



Janet is a year
4 student

Janet is a Year 4 student

- she is academically bright
- she lives with her sister in a functioning and supportive family
- she likes school
- she has a good sense of humour
- she has some friends
- she can share and be kind
- she gets lots of in-class support
- she is on Ritalin and it has helped



**Janet is a
'behavioural
nightmare'**

Janet is a 'behavioural nightmare'

- she 'controls' other children at playtime
- she demands to see the principal when upset
- she runs out & jumps over the fence
- she refuses to go to hall assemblies
- she puts her hand up all of the time
- she 'goes bananas' when she makes a mistake or can't do something new straightaway
- she fiddles all the time and will not stop
- she puts her hands over her head

Janet is a 'behavioural nightmare'

- she refuses to try and will not budge
- she hurts kids and staff
- she says "I hate you"
- she clams up and won't talk to you
- she 'goes into a strop' every time she doesn't get what she wants, when she wants it
- she cries and screams - really loudly
- she exhausts staff

start this investigation



**collect five clues
from what you
know so far**

clues - look for patterns in her behaviour

where?

- look at her timetable
- certain subjects, teachers, students
- look at support staffing
- look at structure and non-structure

now look for sources of anxiety:

- new things: places, people, work
- uncertainty, fear of failure
- tasks that assume/need flexible thought or empathy

look for patterns in behaviour

identify other triggers

- overloads: background noise, sudden noise, visuals
- sensitivity to clothing and touch (PE/dance/drama?)
- self-distractions, hyperactivity - am?/pm?
- where is she sitting and who with **get more information**
- talk with parents - patterns at home before school
look at what she can control and what she can't

what could you do to start to deal with / change these behaviours?



- in crisis
- in class
- in school

think of three things

look for patterns in behaviour

strategies for 'crisis' intervention

- be 'in control', even when you don't feel like it
- know what to do when nothing is working:
- 'change of face'
- 'change of place'

consistent 'crisis' handling

- set up a Behaviour Management Plan (BMP)
- share the making of the BMP with all staff and carers
- train for emergencies - everybody knows what to do
- agree a 'safe place' to go to

did you get any of these?

strategies for 'crisis' intervention

- make it okay for staff to back off - use agreed phrases e.g. “Mrs Smith, would you like a cup of tea?”
- dangerous behaviour = immediate consequence
- consequences are clear, known and followed through
- keep consequences 'open' - Janet knows - there should be **no surprises!**
- get carers involved, get support/follow up at home
- use her name, simple instructions, repeat 'play the broken record'
- if it's needed, offer training in safe and effective physical interventions (MAPA)
- specific praise for any turnaround, however small

did you get of any of these?

strategies for 'in class' behavioural improvement

safeguard structure

- warn of changes to carers, staff and Janet

go around behaviours that you can't change

- let her fiddle with things that don't distract others
- e.g. Blu Tack

reduce other anxiety triggers

- early release from class before busy school times
- in assemblies, Janet arrives before everyone, or after everyone is settled
- Janet sits near the doorway for easy entry/exit

did you get of any of these?

strategies for 'in class' behavioural improvement

reduce work/failure anxiety

- 'buddy' or 'separate' (but included) work area
- make it more manageable: tick lists, timers, small chunks, set limits, negotiate major areas of anxiety
- build in 'downtime' - it's exhausting

manage competing demands

- be specific about when you are going to help Janet
- e.g. "after John and Freddy, I will come and help you"
- less talk - point to a visual symbol to reassure/instruct

did you get of any of these?

strategies for 'in school' behavioural improvement

reduce chances of negative peer contact

- separate play with a rotation of one/two students
- decide with Janet on the structure of play in advance but build in turn-taking
- 'quit while you are ahead' - build on your successes

increase chances of positive peer contact

- set up a Circle of Friends group/other support group
- encourage after-school events, but with carers on-hand

did you get of any of these?

strategies for 'in school' behavioural improvement

extend relationships and hierarchy

- slowly increase the number of staff Janet can go to
- start by having other staff in with the principal at different times
- e.g. other staff to take Janet 'give praise/reward' Janet in front of principal
- have objects of security and bits of good work in other staff rooms and take her there for small crisis you know will have quick turnaround/good outcomes
- parents and all staff present 'united front'

did you get of any of these?

strategies for 'in school' behavioural improvement

share success

- send copies of work/samples home to an agreed display place

avoid the 'homework trap'

- staff and carers made aware of the small returns from putting lots of effort into demanding homework
- quality, not quantity
- if possible, do it at school

what will you change first?

