

Our School

Welcome to The Bridge SEN School Newsletter

Fortnightly News: 28th May 2021

Next week is half-term and for many of us this means a brief but well-earned break. With Covid restrictions lifting and the vaccine now being made available to the under 40s, a rightful sense of optimism is in the air. But school holidays can bring with them a challenge for anyone on the autistic spectrum, as well as for those who care for people with autism. In this month's newsletter we discuss these issues and offer some practical advice on how to manage this time well, and how to make sure the break is enjoyable and fruitful for everyone. I wish you all a restful half-term, and I feel confident that the second half of 2021 will be brighter, happier and more productive for us all.

-Edith Eneanya-Bonito – Principal



Educational

This week the learners have been exploring biology and the natural preparing for the spring by learning about the different parts of flowers and the seasons so they learn about development. This can lead into understanding human development and the aging process. It also provides opportunities for sensory exploration by experiencing real flowers in public. As it is local and community history month, our older learners have been exploring different ways to help and support the community.

Challenging Behaviour

Challenging behaviour is something which many parents or teachers of young people with autism may be all too familiar with. Here we will explore different methods for dealing with challenging behaviour and also look at some of the possible causes and explanations. But first, what exactly is challenging behaviour?

Put simply, challenging behaviour is any kind of action which can be difficult for others to manage. This may cause harm to those around the learner and or harm to the learner themselves. Examples of this range from kicking and hitting (either self or others) to throwing objects and even, in some case, sexualized behaviour. By its very nature, challenging behaviour is difficult to deal with.

In addition to the potential physical harm which challenging behaviour can cause, the behaviour itself can also be distressing for both learners and careers. In moments of stress or tension, it is normal to become defensive. Unfortunately, defensiveness can create further problems and contribute to making the situation more difficult to control.

The first step to responding well to challenging behaviour is to understand that it happens for a reason. When working with or caring for people who are non-verbal, we must recognize that challenging behaviour is very much an attempt to express some kind of need. Very often, this behaviour is an attempt by the learner to get control of their environment.

In the case of a non-verbal learner, challenging behaviour could be, for example, as sign that the learner is in physical pain. They might be ill, or hungry, or any number of things which you and I simply expect to be able to explain or verbalise. The important is to try to understand what the behaviour refers to, and how the need can be met. This will make managing the behavior much easier, and much less destructive.

The recommended strategy for dealing with this behaviour is as follows:

Try to identify a cause or trigger for the behaviour – e.g. is the person hungry? Is it dinner time?



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What did the person achieve by their behaviour – did they get attention, food, sensory feedback? All behaviour is purposeful and challenging behaviour is no different.

How can we help, calm, make happy the person? Some tactics are to divert attention by using a distraction. Or you could remove the person from the situation (away from the trigger.)

We must also remember not to judge or be critical of this behaviour, and only to find solutions. Ask yourself if you have ever snapped at someone because you were feeling a bit tired, or even just hungry, or a little stressed? If so, you're probably not alone. But whereas when we do these kinds of things, we tend to pass them off as insignificant. A learner with autism has the same needs as any person, but they struggle to express these needs, and therefore struggle to have them met. By increasing our understanding of this behaviour we both better meet the needs of a learner with autism and, happily, reduce or manage better challenging behaviour.

This is a vast subject and cannot be wholly understood in the space we have here, but there are some **excellent** resources available, such as:

<https://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/quickreadchallengingbehaviourguidv6.pdf>

Useful websites include:

<https://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/>

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/behaviour/understanding-behaviour/challenging-behaviour-asd>

Routines and Consistency

As you are no doubt aware, half-term is coming up and this means a break from school and a chance to – hopefully – enjoy some sunny weather. But it also means a change in routine and, while this can be fun for many people, it can also be profoundly disruptive for people who are on the autistic spectrum.

Changes in routine can be disturbing for people on the spectrum and the confusion can often result in challenging behaviour. A change in routine can be anything from cancelling a trip to the park because of bad weather to going somewhere entirely new, such as visiting a dentist or the doctor.

To complicate matters further, verbal explanations about the change of routine might be not understood by the learner, leading to greater confusion and discomfort. So, how do we successfully incorporate changes into the lives of learners with autism, and how do we help learners to feel in control and relaxed about their new activities?

Strategies for Changing Routines

Social stories are a good way to impart vital information about changes in routine. If, for example, a trip to dentist is necessary, telling a story about a child going to the dentist, having their teeth checked and being made to feel comfortable by the dentist, can be very effective. The story should end positively with the child leaving and feeling better for having gone, perhaps rewarded by a visit to the park. Using pictures and images can help make a social story come to life and help me it easily understood by the learner. The outcome of a practice like this is to help the learner know what to expect when a change happens. It also helps to reduce anxiety and show that change in itself is not something to be frightened of.

A change in routine such as a school break is bigger than a trip to the dentists, for sure. But the principles are the same – making sure the learner knows that the change is going to happen, explaining what will take place instead, how, where, when, especially with social stories. If your child will be taking a short break from school in the near future, it is a good idea to help them by showing what other kinds of activities they can do. Break time is good healthy, but the time is best used if it is organised, structured time. Plan some activities with your child and used social stories to help them understand what to expect. The main point here is to avoid surprises and to give the learner as much information as possible, in a way that is comfortable and helpful for them. For ideas on changes in routine, take a look [here](#).

New Teacher

This term we are happy to welcome a new SEN teacher, Dr. Theresa Okafor, to The Bridge SEN School. Dr. Okafor has worked with young autistic and learning disabled learners for many years in the UK and the USA. She has a PGDE in Mass communication from the University of Lagos and a Doctorate in Education from the University of Nottingham. She is currently working with our younger learners, also having recently joined the school.



Our Activities Centre



This week in the activity centre, the clients have been utilising visual schedules and calendars to practice different activities and pastimes in the school and out. Now that many of the previous restrictions have been raised there is more opportunity for the learners to go out into the community again and they are looking forward to being able to enjoy some of their previous activities again.

Geovannessa Wedderburn - Activity coordinator

The Bridge SEN School admits students all through the academic year between the ages of 14-25. If you are interested in placing a student at the school or obtaining more information, please contact admin@thebridge-school.co.uk.

COVID 19

We are in regular contact with the local authorities to ensure that we react appropriately and in a timely fashion to any development. We observe the most up-to-date rules concerning COVID 19.

- Weekly tests are carried out on learners and staff
 - Social Distancing measures are in place
 - Regularly handwashing is mandatory
 - NHS Track and Trace QR Code are signposted around the school.
 - Face masks are worn throughout classes
- Our Full Policy is available on our Website**

THE BRIDGE ACADEMIC CALENDAR

EDUCATION

- Half term 31st of May to 5th of June
- End of term 23rd of July

Please visit our website: www.thebridge-school.co.uk for full Academic Year 2020/2021 Calendar)

ACTIVITY CENTRE

Our activity centre in Thornton Heath is open throughout the year, Except on Bank Holidays.

Drawings/Pictures of the month



OPENING TIMES AT LIRAL VEGET COLLEGE LONDON

Liral Veget College is the sister company of Right Support Management, under which The Bridge SEN School is now operating. We offer a variety of **English language courses**, **After School Club** and **Life in the UK Preparation classes**. Our current opening times are 8.30am – 18.00pm Monday to Friday and 10.00am - 14.00pm on Saturdays.

Academic Manager - James Nuttall.

QUOTE OF THE FORTNIGHT

Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a harder battle.

— Plato

We publish our newsletter fortnightly. Copies will be emailed to you and made available on the school's website (<https://www.thebridge-school.co.uk/our-school>). Thank you for your feedback. If you would like to contribute to our newsletter, please email me at admin@thebridge-school.co.uk - Maryanne Orakah.