

The Behaviour:

This is the visible, often challenging, behaviour that we observe in the classroom. It is the symptom of an underlying issue, not the root cause.

Disruption and talking out of turn

Withdrawn or quiet demeanour

Refusal to do work or participate

Anxiety and avoidance (e.g., school refusal)

Aggression or physical outbursts

Frequent lateness or absences

The Root Cause:

These are the hidden needs, emotions, and experiences that are driving the behaviour. An experienced educator's role is to look below the surface to understand what is truly going on.

Unmet Needs:

The student may be feeling a lack of safety, belonging, or control. Their behaviour could be a way of trying to meet these needs.

Mental Health Issues:

Anxiety, Depression, ADHD, Trauma (e.g., family breakdown, bereavement)

Social & Emotional Skills:

The student may lack the skills to regulate their emotions, communicate their feelings, or resolve conflict constructively.

Learning Difficulties:

A student may be acting out due to frustration with an undiagnosed learning difficulty or a lack of understanding.

External Stressors:

Issues outside of school, such as family conflict, poverty, or housing instability, can profoundly impact a student's behaviour.

Practical Application:

- Implement positive reinforcement strategies to actively increase positive behaviour among students.
- Prioritise understanding the causes of difficult behaviour.
- Maintain clear, consistent, and positive communication.
- Set expectations and boundaries by establishing a clear code of conduct.
- Ensure certainty of sanctions by following through on promised consequences.
- Address challenging behaviour privately whenever possible.
- Recognise and praise good achievements and hard work to provide positive attention.
- Utilise the school structure by knowing the school's clear behavioural policy, line management, and available support services.
- Promote student well-being.