

Social behaviour: developing skills and reducing difference

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Overview

- Introduction
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 - The question that drives the study
- The nature of social skills and social behaviour
 - How is social behaviour learned
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- Critical concepts relating to social behaviour
- Findings of the study of parents' and teachers' views of the social behaviours of young people with vision impairment



Introduction

- Children require well developed social skills in order to:
 - Reduce difference
 - Build relationships
 - Develop positive self-esteem
 - Gain acceptance into society (Wolffe, Sacks & Thomas, 2000).

The nature of Social Skills and Social Behaviour

- **Social Skills**

- Identifiable, learned behaviours
- Competence in social situations
- Ways of behaving that help children get on with each other
- Ability to interact with others in valued acceptable ways
- Ability to interact in ways that are mutually beneficial to those involved

- **Social Behaviour**

- Social behaviours are the “building blocks of interaction” (Odom, McConnell and McEvoy, 1992, 7)
- Social reciprocity
- Children gain insight into social behaviour as a result of interaction in social situations

Social behaviour

- A child's social behaviour is:
 - a function of certain genetic factors (e.g., gender)
 - influenced by his/her social environment
 - Influenced by the behavioural repertoires, which she/he brings to the social situation
- Appropriate social behaviour is directly related to:
 - specific social skills that enable a child to establish and maintain social contact
 - the ability to observe peer interactions
 - parents' child management skills (a child's relationship skills may be accounted for in part by the parents' child-management skills) (Finch & Hops, 1983, p. 35)

How we learn social skills



- Social Skills are learned through:
 - Visual observation
 - Imitation
 - Experiential learning (Sacks & Silberman, 2000)
 - Play (Sacks 2006)

Why are social skills and socialising important?

- Effective social skills are fundamental for:
 - Relating to peers
 - Establishing peer relationships
- Children need to learn
 - a repertoire of social skills from an early age
 - strategies that enable them to manage their own social behaviours and to relate to the social overtures of others.



The impact of vision impairment on social development

- ***Decreased visual acuity restricts a child's:***
- understanding of the context of social interaction
- ability to choose appropriate initiations or responses
- May affect his or her ability to process and act upon other information such as:
 - What they hear other children saying
 - How peers interact with each other
 - How they play with toys
- Nystagmus affects the child's ability to make and maintain eye contact.

The Literature

- Learning and using appropriate social skills, is critical for students with vision impairment (MacCuspie, 2006).
- “The acquisition and maintenance of a repertoire of social skills is the foundation upon which personal relationships are built”
(Sacks & Barclay, 2006, p. 279). .
- Children with good social skills, who can interact with peers and demonstrate appropriate social behaviour are more likely to gain entry into groups of peers (Celeste, 2006). .
- ‘high- quality’ environments, with supportive professionals still require children to have a repertoire of social skills and appropriate social behaviours to gain entry into existing groups and to sustain social interactions (Celeste, 2006).



The question

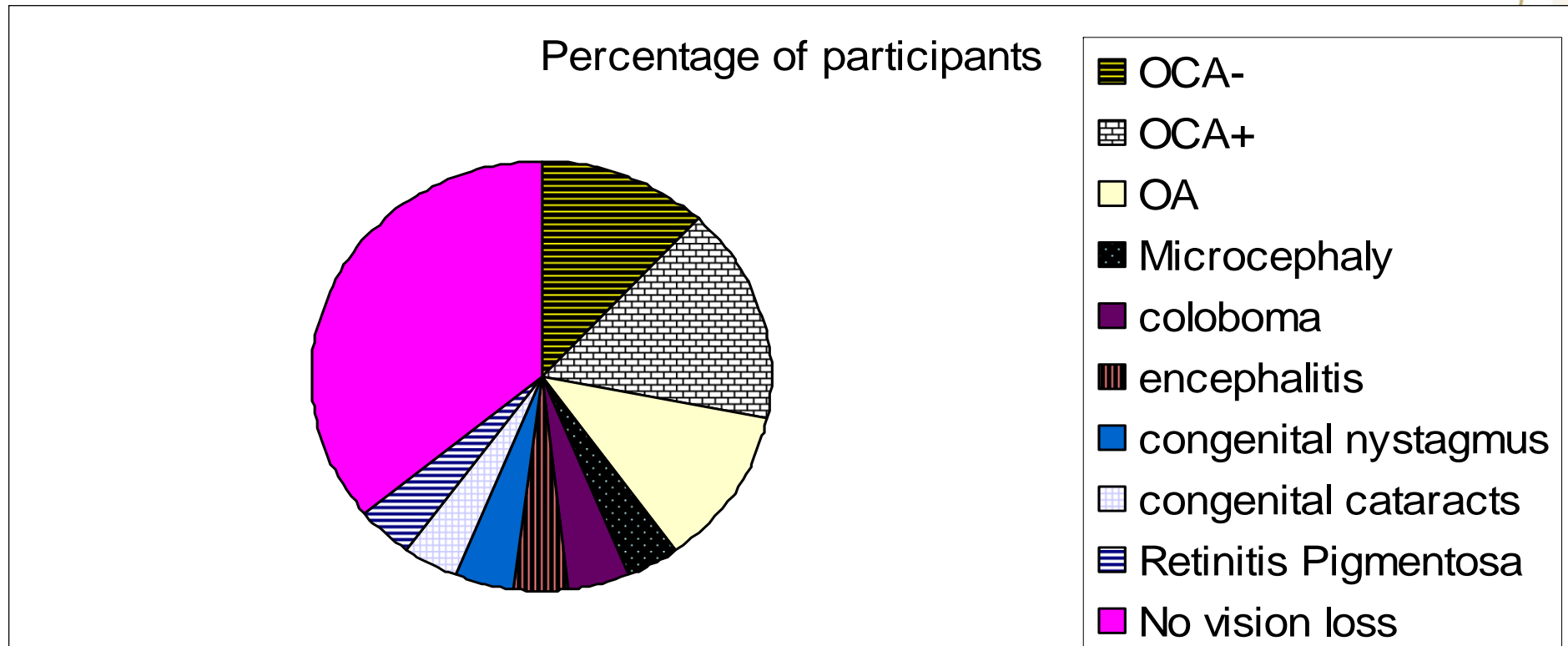
- What are the perceptions of parents and teachers of young people with vision impairment regarding their social skills and social behaviour?

The Study

- **The aim**
- **Five elements of social behaviour were examined:**
 - sharing,
 - turn-taking,
 - joining groups,
 - participation in groups and
 - acceptance of others' opinions.
- **Parents and teachers were also asked to assess whether the participants were:**
 - friendly, outgoing, quiet, moody and good mixers.

Participants: 26 students aged 8-16

- 10 with Albinism
- 6 with other forms of vision impairment
- 9 with no vision problems



Procedure



- Structured interviews
 - Parents
 - Teachers
- Parent survey

Findings



- Pertinent similarities and differences were found between parents' and teachers' views on the social behaviour of:
 - students with albinism,
 - students with vision impairment (not albinism) and
 - students with no vision loss.
- In relation to:
 - sharing
 - turn taking
 - and whether or not the participants were friendly, outgoing, quiet, moody and good mixers.
- Teachers views on group behaviour and acceptance of others' opinions are also reported

Sharing - children with albinism

Name	Shares T	Shares P	Teachers' Comments	Parents' Comments
Sam	Yes	Yes	No problems	He's getting better
Trish	Yes	Yes	Without reminders	Lends and swaps. Kind
Jan	Yes	Yes	Can dominate	Definitely
Tim	Yes	No		Likes to keep his things
John	Yes	Yes	Just tends to forget	Think so. Does like to have own things. Little reluctant
Don	Yes		I think so	
Josh	Yes		Not his hat or football	
Sara	Yes	Yes	Can be too generous	Good overall, some things are special
Tom	Yes	He will		Hard to share Special things
Jim	Yes		Part of the group thing	

Sharing - children with Vision Impairment

Name	Shares T	Shares P	Teachers' Comments	Parents' Comments
Judy	Yes	Yes	She could perhaps be vulnerable and taken advantage of.	Definitely
Tessa	Yes	Yes	I think so, Yes	But protective of her own things
Ian	Think so	Yes		Too generous. Very generous
Alice	Yes	Yes		No problems
Travis	Yes	Yes		He's very generous. I have to stop him from being generous
Toby	Yes		Not just material things, but his expertise	

Sharing - children with no Vision Impairment

Name	Shares T	Shares P	Teachers' Comments	Parents' Comments
Jesse	Yes	Yes		Will fight if he thinks an injustice is happening He finds it difficult. It doesn't come naturally
Ben	Usually	At times		
Luke	Yes	Yes		
Gill		Yes		Very much so. Just winning and losing is a problem
Mat	Not overly.	Yes	He would suss out the situation, look at what it could do for him.	
Ray	Yes	Yes	He's very good at sharing	
Dennis	Yes	Yes		
Jay		Yes		
Mark		Yes		

Turn taking-children with albinism

Name	Teachers	Parents	Teachers' Comments	Parents' Comments
Sam	Yes	Yes	Not a problem	He's a leader
Trish	Yes	Yes	Needs to be reminded	
Jan	Yes	Yes	Big issue, domineering personality.	
Tim	Yes	Had to	If interested. Needs reminding	Had to in Primary School
John	Not always	Not good	Depends on the activity	Not so good at that
Don	Yes		He's very fair	
Josh	Think so			
Sara	Yes	Yes	Definitely	
Tom	Yes	Not a lot		Not a lot
Jim	I think so		Haven't noticed, but feel he would.	

Turn taking-children with VI

Name	Teachers	Parents	Teachers' Comments	Parents' Comments
Judy	Yes	Yes		No selfishness like that
Tessa	Yes	Yes	Yes, I think she does	
Ian	Yes	Yes	Under pressure	If not kids playing with him will give him a serve
Alice	Yes	Yes	She's more than happy	Dominant ones take over.
Travis	Yes	Yes	Think so	Will stand back and let others boss him around.
Toby	Yes			

Turn taking-children with no VI

Name	Teachers	Parents	Teachers' Comments	Parents' Comments
Jesse	Yes	Sometimes		Generally a dispute why he shouldn't be out
Ben	Sometimes	Yes	Sometimes yes, sometimes no. Sometimes the bully boisterous side of him comes through	
Luke	Yes	Yes	As far as I've seen	Begrudgingly (not with brother)
Gill		Yes		
Mat	Yes	Yes	Generally, he does like his turn. He's quite fair.	
Ray	Yes	Yes		
Dennis	Yes	Yes	He's fantastic at that.	
Jay		Yes		Sometimes a bit slow
Mark		Yes		

Teachers' assessment of group behaviour (albinism)

Name	Participates	Joins Group	Teachers' Comments
Sam		Not good at this	As observer
Trish	Interacts quite well in an immature way	Pushy type introduction	It is the introduction to the group that fails her and doesn't allow her to go any further. Likes to have her say
Jan	In a dominant way	In a pushy, loud manner	Loves to be part of a group, threatening to others. Something she still has to learn.
Tim	A lot of verbal stuff. He is not reflective	"He'd barge in"	He's not good at initiating at all.
John	He likes to take over bombastic	Needs to work on this. Seen to be bombastic	Improving. Beginning of year "bit of bombastic stuff. You push your self in."
Josh	Trying to see approval Doesn't really participate in groups.	Confident only if one of group is someone he gets along with well	Hates girls. Doesn't want to talk to them at all. He would rather sit and chat with one or two people than join in the group discussion.
Don	Dominating if he has an opinion. Pretty positive	Competently. Stands watches, asks to join.	It's more enthusiasm, rather than trying to blot out everyone else. If an idea comes he wants to get it out.
Sara	Willing to listen. Expresses views	Teacher didn't know	
Tom	Follower. Cooperates Not a leader	Not confidently	Especially if he doesn't know them. He'll wait sum up situation & go in when invited.
Jim	Quiet listener	Not confidently.	He might stand on the periphery and then sort of move in. He'd be quite reticent, I think.

Teachers' assessment of group behaviour (VI)

Name	Participates	Joins Group	Teachers' Comments
Judy	Not assertive	She hovers	Not assertive. Someone says "come on" or she hovered long enough and just gradually worked her way in.
Tessa	Interacts well	She just goes in	No difficulty, she's established the sort of people she wants to be with
Ian	Dominating	Announces he is joining and does	A complex child. He just joins. This can cause conflict. Others may say, "No you're not" and that causes problems.
Alice	Very timid	Stand, hover, wait to be asked	Sometimes surprises you
Toby	Positively participates	confidently	
Travis	Prefers to sit back and let others do the work	Good skills, doesn't always use them	He might stand for a while, then say can I join in? Interacts quite well with the other kids

Teachers' assessment of group behaviour (No VI)

Name	Participates	Joins Group	Teachers' Comments
Jesse	Leadership role	Always ask to join	Wouldn't barge in. Can be a very good leader. People take notice of what he says. Much respect from others.
Ben	Emerges as a natural leader	Finds it difficult. uncomfortable	Depends on the task, whether interests him or not.
Mat	Could get frustrated.	Uncomfortable Would do it	Not that he doesn't have the skills but he believes he is right. Curiosity
Luke	Leads in a quiet way	Just slips in quietly	He's good working in groups
Dennis	Depends on confidence		Yes if he feels he has plenty to offer
Ray	Be a good leader	Ask to join in	He would always be accepted

Acceptance of others' opinions (albinism)- teachers

Name	Accepts Others' Opinions	Opinions are Accepted by Others	Comment
Sam	Yes	No	I observed in class that students did not accept his opinions
Trish	Yes	Tape finished	Needs to actually listen and understand other people's feelings about things.
Jan	Yes	Not sure	
Tim	He'd probably struggle with that	If they are tolerant Only about some things.	Generally no. He would have his own opinion. Peers see him as an oddity
John	Yes	Yes	He is very tolerant that way
Josh	Depends who they are. No he really does not.	He doesn't really give opinions unless it is just "this work is really awful"	Particularly if it is a girl he doesn't like He tries to give opinions that others will agree with.
Don	Yes		He'll often say whether he agrees or disagrees, but not in an aggressive way.
Sara	Definitely	Yes	
Tom	Yes	Yes	
Jim	No	Think so	

Acceptance of others' opinions (VI)- teachers

Name	Accepts Others' Opinions	Opinions Accepted by Others	Comment
Judy	Yes	Yes	
Tessa	Usually	Think so	Sometimes quick to jump at other people
Ian	No	Not sure	
Alice	Yes	Not sure	Think she just accepts other people's opinions. I don't think she weighs them up if they are conflicting opinions.
Toby	Yes	Not sure	Especially if it is a serious matter. He can see there are two sides and there are no rights and no wrongs.

Acceptance of others' opinions (No VI)- teachers

Name	Accepts Others' Opinions	Opinions Accepted by Others	Comment
Jesse	Yes	Yes	Respected
Ben	Sometimes	No	Depends what it is. Comes across in the sociogram as rather unpopular: doesn't have much respect from others.
Mat	Yes	Yes very strongly	If Luke thinks it is right then it is right.
Luke	Yes	Yes	
Dennis	Not sure	Not sure	Not sure
Ray	Yes	Yes	

Teachers' assessment: Social behaviour of students with Albinism

Students	friendly	Outgoing	Quiet	moody	Good mixer
Sam	Very	Yes	No	No/always sunny	No
Jan	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes not always appropriate
Trish	Yes, over friendly,	Very	No	No not really	Not always appropriate
Tim	Very, yes	Mostly pretty outgoing	No not really. middle road	No not at all.	Very much a good mixer.
John	Yes	Yes at times	No, overly lazy & loud.	No	yes
Josh	Fairly friendly	Definitely	No	No	I think he is.
Don	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Sarah	Definitely	No	Can be	No	Classroom situation yes.
Tom	Friendly	Can be	Reserved	No	Yes mixes
Jim	Yes	Yes - quiet	Yes	No	yes

Parents' assessment: Social behaviour of students with Albinism

Students	friendly	Outgoing	Quiet	moody	Good mixer
Sam	Very	Likes to take control	No, definitely not	Yes.	Depends on the situation
Jan	Yes very	Yes	Not really, no	Depends on the situation	Yes
Trish	Yes very	Very	At times very quiet	Yes very	Yes
Tim	Yes	Yes	Can be	Yes if doesn't get own way	Up to a point,
John	Yes, friendly but curt	Reasonably, tends to withdraw	Generally not quiet	Yes can be	No, not quick to mix
Josh	No response	No response	No response	No response	No response
Don	No response	No response	No response	No response	No response
Sarah	Yes Definitely	In some situations.	no	Yes can be	Yes
Tom	Yes	bit reserved.	Depends on the situation	Can be	Yes
Jim	No response	No response	No response	No response	No response

Teachers' assessment: Social behaviour-students with VI

Students	friendly	Outgoing	Quiet	moody	Good mixer
Judy	Yes very	Not outgoing appropriate	Yes	No	Starting to show some skills
Tessa	Yes	Yes	Yes in a large group	Yes	Usually
Ian	Can be.	Yes	No	Yes	Mixes well with chosen group.
Alice	I think she is	Very shy	Yes	No	Where Confident
Toby	Yes	Yes	Not quiet, but not loud	No	No
Travis	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes

Parents' assessment: Social behaviour-students with VI

Students	friendly	Outgoing	Quiet	moody	Good mixer
Judy	Yes	Yes, only in certain environment	No	Oh! Yes!	Yes where comfortable
Tessa	Can be	No confident not outgoing	Anything but	Very	Not with peers. Great with adults
Ian	No, lets very few get close	Yes and no	Depends how he is feeling	Yes	Mixes incredibly well
Alice	Pleasant nice kid	At times with mother. Not at school	Yes very	No	No, makes an effort
Toby	No response	No response	No response	No response	No response
Travis	Yes when comfortable	Reasonably, depends on circumstance	No really noisy	Yes. Very sensitive	Yes with own peers. New people withdrawn

Teachers' assessment: Social behaviour-students with students (no VI)

Students	friendly	Outgoing	Quiet	moody	Good mixer
Jess	Yes	In some ways	Yes	No	Yes
Ben	Sometimes	Yes	No	Sometimes	Yes
Mat	Polite, not over friendly	No	Yes in general	Yes and very sensitive	Depends on the group
Luke	Yes	Depends on the situation	Depends on the situation	Can be – very sensitive	Yes
Ray	Yes	Yes	Can be	No	Yes
Dennis	Extremely so	Very outgoing	Not particularly	Not generally moody	An excellent mixer
Jill	Transcript lost				
Jay	Transcript lost				
Mat	Transcript lost				



Parents' assessment: Social behaviour-students with students (no VI)

Students	friendly	Outgoing	Quiet	moody	Good mixer
Jess	Yes	Yes	Not generally quiet	Yes	Good mixer
Ben	Yes	Very outgoing	Not quiet	Can be very moody	Good mixer
James	Holds back until knows the person	No	Not really	yes	Selectively
Daniel R	Yes	Yes	Can be	In the mornings	Yes
Dennis	Yes	Yes	Depends on the situation	Not moody	Good mixer
Julia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes sometimes	Enjoys own company
Mark	Yes	Doubly outgoing	Moderately	No	Yes
Jay	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Ray	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not really	Yes

Summary social behaviour: Teachers' & Parents' views

- **Students with albinism: Teachers n=10**
 - friendly (10), outgoing (7) quiet (4) moody (0), and good mixers (6)
- **Parents N=7** (3 parents refused interviews)
 - friendly (7), outgoing (4), quiet (1), moody (7) and good mixers (4)
- **Students with vision impairment: Teachers n= 6**
 - friendly (4), outgoing (4), quiet (3), moody (2), good mixer (3)
- **Parents n=5**
 - friendly (3), outgoing (4 [at times]), quiet (1), and moody (4).
- **Students with no vision loss, Teachers N=6**
 - friendly (4), outgoing (4), quiet (3), moody (3), good mixers (5).
- **Parents N=9**
 - friendly (8), outgoing (7), quiet (4), moody (6) and good mixers (7).

Critical Concepts



- Socially appropriate behaviour
 - is mediated by vision
 - is acquired through imitation and modelling
- Children with vision impairment
 - do not acquire social skills incidentally like sighted peers
 - do not learn social skills naturally
 - need routines and experiences that facilitate social development (Sacks, 2006).

What can be done?

- Children must have access to appropriate social skills training by trained professionals.
- Parents and professionals need to work together to develop strategies to teach these children:
 - appropriate social behaviours
 - sharing, turn taking, group skills and to accept the opinions of others
 - competence in social situations
 - ways of behaving that help them to interact with others in valued acceptable ways and that are mutually beneficial to those involved:
 - to be friendly, to know when to be quiet and when to be outgoing, to understand that moodiness is not valued and to practise interacting with peers.

What else needs to be learned?

- Students with vision impairment need to learn to:
 - read the nonverbal cues of others
 - know how to respond to questions, greetings, receiving gifts
 - learn how to maintain conversations
 - learn how to interpret and respond to the feelings and needs of others (Wolffe, 2006)





Conclusions

- Findings from the research indicate that students with vision impairment:
 - require a structured social skills program to assist them to develop a flexible repertoire of appropriate role behaviours, and learn the procedure for joining groups, interacting in groups, and conforming to group rules.
 - need to understand what is important and meaningful to the group, and learn their rules for socialising and making friends.
- Schools need to:
 - develop a whole school approach to social skills training and social awareness.
 - recognise that social competence has to be taught to some children, that some individuals are dependent on others interpreting the environment for them, and that there are many aspects of the day to day activities their peers engage in that are difficult if not impossible for students with vision impairment.

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