

CHILDREN'S PROBLEMS AT PRIMARY SCHOOL AND DEALING WITH THEM

For primary school children purposeful learning activity becomes crucial. During it a child receives and processes a large volume of information. Starting school a child finds oneself in new social circumstances which demand organized arbitrariness necessary for learning activity skills. During school lessons a child is disciplined, develops patience, an ability to control one's behaviour and voluntary attention.

Sometimes it does not happen and a child cannot control one's behaviour at lessons. Inattentiveness and impulsiveness lead to failing in learning. We shall discuss what can be done in such cases to avoid more problems in a child's life.

When the functioning of activity voluntary regulation (control functions) is not developed, a psychologist's efforts should be focused on stimulating these processes development. The first area of activity is to develop voluntary regulation features, the second area is to introduce these features into different activities.

The work starts from developing selectivity of cognitive activity. It includes resistance to distractions, an ability to turn from one action to another, lasting performance according to algorithms, attention allocation. So it is important to teach the child verbal mediation («saying») when an action is to be learned. In this case mediation includes outer loud speech as an additional tool between a thought, the programme and its implementation. For example, a child can be involved in a game when he or she needs to clap twice in response to one clap, to clap once in response to two claps. Such a game causes impulsive reactions when a child claps once in response to one clap, but claps twice in response to two claps. To change it a psychologist can offer a child to describe the action before responding – to say the number of claps to make.

Controlling one's performance is another process requiring a special approach. As a rule, children with voluntary regulation difficulties neither notice nor correct their mistakes, often hurry, do not tend to check themselves. Therefore,

psychological treatment should include teaching a child to use checks regularly after completing assignments.

In addition, these children often find it difficult to plan their activities. Dealing with tasks having more than one solution is especially difficult for them when they need to work out an activity strategy. In this case a child's speech activity should be involved with a focus on planning in speech. It works well when you start from activities familiar to a child, lasting skills. A child is asked to teach a psychologist something that is easy for a child with the help of words but not showing it. The psychologist follows the child's instruction and overdoes weak points in the plan, makes mistakes.

For example, «Tell me how to make a sandwich with sausage». Usually a child does not divide actions into parts and says something like «Take some bread, some sausage, put it on the bread and eat». Then the psychologist points to the child's mistakes and explains what details are missing (bread should be cut into chunks as well as sausage and so on).

Apart from a psychologist's work parents' assistance is also needed as a child spends most time at home.

It is well known that parents' attempts to control such a child often lead to emotional tension increase in the family, quarrels with the child, punishment, etc. In order to avoid it parents need provide the child with external organisation of life, and not feel responsible for the child's actions or get involved emotionally. It is essential to agree with the child about the daily routine, involve him or her in decision-making concerning when, what and how something should be done. The arranged routine should be repeated every day. It is necessary to pay the child's attention to the fact that certain rules exist and they are not made by parents. Grown-ups as well as children have to follow rules. In this way responsibility lies with the situation, but not parents which decreases tension in the family. We recommend to do the same with control over different constituents of daily routine – involve a more neutral object, for example – timer, which will ring ten minutes before the home assignment time. In this way a child is warned about the time to

finish playing and turn to home assignment. A timer can help in regulating the home assignment period. Eventually a child gets used to working with the timer, if this method is regularly used, and the problem of long home learning is solved.

It is also important to ask a child to say the activities algorithm, say written tasks aloud, to draw pictures to illustrate parts of a difficult text and then to retell the text using the pictures. You can hang cards with reminders made by the child in the flat, etc. Consistency in providing information forms systemically organised memory, makes the search for the necessary thing easier, develops cognition. Providing information in this way decreases load on attention and systemic arrangement of material when memorising. Wording, pictures, formatting should contain nothing excessive or distracting.

Any activity offered to a child should be presented as a well-organised consequence of actions with breaks between them. Every action is presented as a short instruction reflected in a drawing or diagram. It is advisable that a drawing or diagram can be seen by the child. Instructions must be short or divided into short parts to comply with working memory capacity, to avoid information losses, changes, shifts.

To conclude the recommendations to parents, we would like to remind them some rules enabling to eliminate emotional tension in family relationships as tension increases a child's difficulties:

- Build relations with your child on rapport and trust.
- Stick to a «positive model» in relations with your child. Praise the child every time when he or she deserved it, underline even slight success. Remember that children develop and discover talents only in case of positive attitude to them.
- Constant shouting and punishing in which adults are unsparing do not bring desired results. More than that, they can contribute to forming and developing a child's negative features, negative attitude to learning.
- When a child misbehaves and annoys everyone, you can try to offer an alternative model of behaviour.

- Control the child's behaviour without imposing strict rules, be consistent and logical. Define acceptable behaviour limits for a child – what can and cannot be done. Give the child regular errands but do not do them for him or her.
- Avoid constant checks and prohibitions - «stop», «don't», «you must not» and so on. On the one hand, avoid excessive softness, on the other – overstated requirements for the child.
- Pay enough attention to your child, spend free time together, never row when your child is present.
- Remember that your child needs regular daily schedule and routine. Make a clear schedule of walks, meals, studies, daily duties and bedtimes, try to follow this schedule. Award your child for keeping to the schedule.
- Do not use physical punishment. Your relationship with the child should be based on trust, not fear. The child should always feel your help and support. Solve problems together.
- Introduce a reward system giving points or stars (every good deed can be rewarded with a star, a certain number of stars – with a toy, sweets or a promised trip).
- Make sure your child has enough sleep. Lack of sleep leads to worse attention and self-control.
- Develop the child's conscious inhibition, teach self-control. Before doing something let him count from 10 to 1.
- Develop the child's interests. The child needs to feel skilful and competent in a certain sphere. This will facilitate working out the success strategy. You should not overload the child with activities in different clubs, especially in those with significant overload on memory and attention, or in those where the child does not enjoy activities.

Teachers working with a child play a vital role. Teachers should address the issue of reduced motivation for learning in such children. A child is not very keen on getting new knowledge, but he or she is interested in being positively evaluated. Therefore, such children often give impulsive wrong answers (they do

not understand the question but are willing to be socially recognised). Children's negative reactions to criticism also root easily as well as reactions to the person that criticises.

A teacher can direct and organize the activity of such a child during the lesson applying the warning method. It means a child is personally told that important material discussion starts, it should be listened to attentively, in addition, it is advisable to address several pupils with this request not to identify the child in question among others. Another method involves repeating the teacher's instructions. You can ask the child to repeat for the whole class so that 'everybody remembers well'. It is also crucial to define activity rules which a child should voice from time to time. Teachers are recommended to remember that when rules are repeatedly applied every day, a child adapts, treats them as a necessity whereas changing circumstances annoy him or her due to difficulty with turning to something new. Another important method involves external prompts – simple diagrams, drawings, notes made by the child. They can reflect daily duties, rules studied at school, etc. Saying one's actions aloud also matters.

There is one more important point. A teacher should remember one rule when working with such children: you start with easy material, continue with harder tasks, finish with easy material. Though teachers are often recommended to start from the most difficult assignments, turning to easier ones later. There is some logic in it as children are fresh at the beginning of the lesson. It is true for any other children except kids with voluntary attention difficulties. If a child faces a difficult task in the very beginning, he or she gives up and does nothing losing concentration completely.

To conclude we would like to underline that dealing with children's school difficulties and problems in behaviour is possible in case of correct and constant psychological and pedagogical support which includes joint efforts of psychologists, teachers and parents. It will lead to good results and help a child adapt in the society.