

Social, emotional and behavioural influences on young children's pre-reading and word reading development

A summary for teachers

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Background: The first formal instruction of reading typically takes place in the school environment setting. Therefore, there is good reason to predict that children's classroom behaviours at the time of formal learning will influence their early reading acquisition.

Aim: To examine the extent to which symptoms of hyperactivity/inattention, conduct problems, emotional problems, peer relationship problems and pro-social behaviour predicted children's pre-reading (letter-sound knowledge, phonological awareness) and word reading development.

Participants: 73 children from a single schools in England were tested 3 times: T1 (second week of reception – mean age 4yrs 7mths), T2 (6 mths later, 5yrs 1 mth), T3 (1 yr later, 6yrs 1 mth). Children completed assessments of letter-sound knowledge, rhyme and phoneme awareness (T1&2), word reading skill (T1,2&3) and teachers reported on their behaviours (T2&3)

Behaviours:

Negative: Hyperactivity/inattention (HI), conduct problems (CP), emotional problems (EP), peer relationship problems (PR)

Positive: Pro-social behaviour (PS)

Pre-reading and word reading skills:

Letter-sound knowledge; phoneme awareness (PAT); rhyme awareness (PAT), single word reading (BAS II)

Results T2	HI	CP	EP	PR	PS
Letter-sound	-.34**	-.00	-.00	-.01	.20
Rhyme	-.13	.30**	.00	.01	-.13
Phoneme	-.27*	-.05	-.07	.01	.15
Word reading	-.33**	.03	-.10	-.07	.07
Results T3					
Word reading	-.49**	-.25*	-.11	-.26*	.20*

*/** statistically significant, 1 = perfect relationship, 0 = no relationship

Results

Hyperactive/inattentive behaviour showed the closest and most consistent relationship with the children's pre-reading and word reading development. Nevertheless, all but emotional symptoms did predict change in at least one aspect of pre-reading or word reading development over the first two years of schooling.

Discussion and implications for education

It is likely that children demonstrating inattentive or hyperactive behaviour are disadvantaged during early reading instruction as they will struggle to engage in and concentrate on learning activities for periods of time.

This study highlights the importance within education of ensuring sufficient supports are available for children demonstrating difficulties in these areas, particularly hyperactive-inattentive behaviours, but not exclusively.

