

Intense Sibling Rivalry

Behaviour Verbal or physical aggression towards sibling, intense tale-telling about sibling or fear of sibling. Seeking out the sibling, perhaps in the context of 'helping'.

Possible Trigger

Incidents prior to arrival at school, home-time, playtimes, whole-school occasions, settings where two classes mix e.g paired reading, shared 'news' reminding pupil of earlier incident.

Possible Attachment/ Developmental Trauma Issue

This pupil's early life history could have involved siblings competing for attention, food, nurture etc. in order to survive.

There is a possibility attention could have focused around sexual abuse.

One sibling could have been the 'favourite' whilst others were victimized or neglected. The children could have been encouraged to be abusive towards each other.

Aggressive relationships could have been the example set by adults in their lives.

Possible Intervention

Avoiding settings where the siblings meet up will ensure their safety, both physical and emotional. If this is not possible, ensure adult support is available for each sibling. Be available to talk things out if the children need to. Perhaps, provide them with an item to give you if they wish to talk or use a toy for them to talk through. Do not put any pressure on them to chat though.

Validate the children's difficulties verbally. *"I can see how difficult this is for you."* Give reassurance to a child who is afraid of her sibling. *"I know you worry about being hurt. We are going to help you feel safe."* Although it may appear that one child is the perpetrator, be aware that each sibling is actually a victim.

⇒ The behaviour of the abusive sibling is her language, demonstrating her anxiety and unhappiness. It is important to be honest about this child's behaviour in a non-shaming way- *"I know that you sometimes hit your sister. I guess you learnt to do this when you were little. I want to help you be with your sister in a different way. This will help."*

Possible Executive Skill Difficulty:

- ◆ Behaviour inhibition
- ◆ Emotional control
- ◆ Self monitor

Possible Intervention:

Role-play possible scenarios to explore alternative responses.

Direct children to different areas of the playground.

Remind children of your expectations of behaviour before they meet up.

"I know how hard it is for you when we all play in the field together. I am going to help you keep to the far side of the path." 'If you see your brother, I expect you to wave to him. Remember not to go near to him and hit him."

After play, talk with the child in a non-shaming way about how she managed.

Information taken from:
Marion Allen for Family Futures, (2008)
Attachment, Developmental Trauma
and Executive Functioning Difficulties
in the School Setting.