8.1 What is Functional Behaviour?

Functional behaviour is an approach to positively shifting students' behaviour via an understanding of behaviour as communication. This approach is based on the premise that children misbehave when the expectations placed on them outstrip their ability to respond adaptively, and that effective approaches to improving children's behaviour are often counter-intuitive.

Functional behaviour uses data and analysis to identify the purpose or "why" of a student's behaviour through the lens of four functions:

- The TANGIBLE function: *To obtain an item or activity*
- The ATTENTION/CONNECTION function: *To get attention from others*
- The ESCAPE function: *To escape or avoid an unwanted situation*
- The SENSORY function: *To seek or gain stimuli or input*

Understanding the **function** of a student's behaviour allows school teams to:

- Understand the setting events and triggers that cause the challenging behaviour
- Understand the need driving the behavior and meet that need in a more pro-social manner
- Understand what skills the student needs to communicate their needs in a more positive manner
- Understand how staff can change the environment and how they interact with the student to not trigger the behavior