

Information and Strategies for Children with Dyspraxia

Dyspraxia

Dyspraxia is also known as Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD). It has been described as a “difficulty getting our bodies to do what we want when we want them to do it”, a difficulty that can be considered significant when it interferes with the normal range of activities expected of a child of their age. Dyspraxia can adversely affect speech and language, fine motor control and gross motor coordination.

What to look out for:

- The pupil may have handwriting difficulties.
- They may show difficulties with using tools, utensils and cutlery.
- They may also not be able to run in a straight line, struggle with kicking, running, hopping and they could regularly bump into people.
- The pupil may have a poor attention span and get easily distracted in class which could lead to them disturbing others.
- The pupil may have difficulty understanding concepts such as ‘in’, ‘on’ and ‘in front of’.
- They are poorly organised.
- The pupil will find it difficult to follow instructions.
- They can struggle with explaining their needs or answering a question.
- They may have difficulty with some social skills such as keeping friends, judging how to behave in company and struggle with the concept of personal belongings.
- The pupil may struggle with change and understanding how others feel.

Strategies:

- Give the pupil as much encouragement as possible.
- Be aware that protracted handwritten work may cause frustration.
- Ensure that the pupil’s pen and pencil grip is comfortable.
- Consider alternatives to writing such as word processors, speech to text software, scribe.
- Teach touch typing.
- Provide a non-slip mat to go under books.
- Allow extra time to complete tasks.
- Do not provide too many verbal or visual instructions at once.
- Give step by step instructions and check they are understood.

- If necessary, place simple written instructions on the pupil's desk.
- Sit the pupil near the board.
- Use checklists and story planners.
- Provide diagrams to label rather than asking the pupil to draw them.
- Position student away from distractions in the classroom.
- Provide handouts where possible.
- Encourage the use of mind-maps, spider diagrams and lists.
- Use lined paper with margins.
- In Mathematics, use squared paper.
- In Physical Education, a new skill may have to be fully demonstrated before the pupil can perform the task.
- Provide some social skills training.
- Encourage pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities that they enjoy.
- Provide written reminders for routines.
- Provide a mini laminated timetable.
- Encourage the pupil to make an equipment timetable to list what is needed each day.
- Allow extra time for the pupil to pack up at the end of the lesson.
- Provide specialist equipment to make practical activities more inclusive. Look at things like ridged rulers or looped scissors.
- Give homework at the start of the lessons so the pupil has chance to make a clear note of it.
- Work with parents to set up a system at home for a homework routine.
- Suggest time limits for homework.