

SEND Bulletin No. 13



Dyspraxia and developmental coordination disorder

Dyspraxia is a specific learning difficulty. Pupils with dyspraxia have problems with motor coordination and often appear clumsy when moving around the classroom. They have perceptual-motor problems and find writing difficult. They may also have pronunciation difficulties, caused by problems in controlling the movements of the mouth and the tongue. Developmental dyspraxia is suspected when it is obvious that the difficulties are not due to a medical condition.

Approximately one child in twenty suffers from this condition, which affects four times as many boys as girls.

Key characteristics

Children with dyspraxia may:

- appear to be clumsy, bumping into people and objects
- have difficulty in judging distances and the position of objects in space, so find ball games particularly hard
- be unable to change speed and direction without overbalancing
- need to be watched carefully when climbing on equipment because they have no sense of danger
- appear to be uncoordinated, particularly when running, jumping, hopping or riding a bike
- be unsure of which hand to use and may change hands in the middle of an activity
- have immature use of pencils, crayons, scissors, puzzles and simple construction toys
- have difficulty in copying shapes and pictures
- have difficulty producing some speech sounds and be unable to communicate their ideas easily

- find it confusing if they are given too much verbal information at a time because they take longer to process it and are rarely able to make immediate responses
- find it hard to sequence information and reproduce it verbally, which affects their ability to answer questions in the classroom
- find it difficult to adapt to a structured school routine
- have limited concentration and poor listening skills
- be easily upset and have temper tantrums, which annoys other children
- have poor social interactions and difficulty making friends
- be rough and aggressive because they have difficulty controlling their movements.

Support strategies

You may need to:

- give clear, simple instructions and constant reminders, both oral and written
- provide a reasonably quiet working environment
- organise activities to develop listening skills and attention skills, such as sound tapes
- encourage learners to present ideas using ICT
- incorporate recommended motor coordination exercises into a PE programme
- organise games and activities requiring cooperation and turn-taking
- practise a range of sequencing activities, such as pictorial activity or story sequences, word and sentence sequences, days, months or number sequences
- help pupils organise their written work by using writing frames
- praise every effort and successful achievement of new skills
- practise tracking activities, such as mazes, tracing etc.

Support agencies

- Dyscovery Centre: <http://dyscovery.newport.ac.uk>
- Dyspraxia Foundation: www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk
- Dyspraxia USA: www.dyspraxiausa.org

If you have any interesting information or resources which you would like to share with your colleagues via this fortnightly bulletin please e-mail them to me:

ari@st-peters.bournemouth.sch.uk

Many thanks

Anne