



PARENT LINK- INFORMATION SHEET no. 7

Dyspraxia

1. What is it?

Developmental dyspraxia is a difficulty with the development of co-ordination and the organisation of movement. It is found in children who have no clear neurological disease but who experience a delay or disorder in the planning and/or execution of complex movements. Approximately 1 in 20 children are thought to have the condition, with a ratio of boys to girls affected of 4 to 1.

The term dyspraxia is used differently by professionals such as occupational therapists and speech and language therapists, and there are other labels such as clumsy or minimal cerebral dysfunction, DCD and OCD but these have no clear definition. Diagnosis should involve a range of professionals, including health visitors, paediatricians, speech therapists, occupational therapists and educational psychologists.

- An Ideational dyspraxic will have problems with planning a sequence, so that the individual actions are competently performed, but not in the right order.
- An Ideo-motor dyspraxic will know what they want to do but the individual actions may be clumsy and slow.

2. Implications

The signs for dyspraxia are often noticed by parents early on and typically include difficulties in achieving normal developmental milestones. These may include crawling or walking; needing help with dressing; putting clothes on in the wrong order, i.e. shoes before socks; problems with jigsaws or sorting games; and not being able to hold a pencil correctly.

At school, pupils may have difficulty with -

- Remembering and following sequential instructions

- Clumsiness- pushes into things, knocks into furniture or other pupils, knocks over paint.
- PE - loses or forgets kit, very slow to dress or undress, problems tying laces and ties, fastening buttons, and particular difficulties with throwing and catching.
- Attention span- reacts to all stimuli without discrimination
- Handwriting, which may be immature; using scissors; poor copying ability especially from the board
- Organisation.
- Eating - using a knife and fork correctly, a messy or slow eater, and difficulty with chewing.
- Estimating speed, direction, distance or time - this can result in an inability to recognise potential danger in school e.g. how to use Science equipment safely, or on visits e.g. traffic.
- Balance- difficulties riding a bicycle, synchronising movement in swimming etc

Dyspraxia means that pupils may become tired and irritable. They may have difficulties with relationships or display attention seeking behaviour. They may only rarely be chosen as a partner when required in activities such as Drama or PE. This will contribute to low self-esteem and a fear of failure.

3. Strategies

* You may need to access specialist advice - see County Psychological service

Pupils can be helped by -

- Giving extra praise and encouragement for effort, not achievement
- Giving clear instructions and checking understanding
- Checking seating arrangements and posture, e.g. both feet placed on the floor
- Seating the pupil facing the teacher and away from distractions
- Using guidelines for writing, putting a coloured dot to show where to start writing, giving lines for the heading and date, and providing a box to show where to place diagrams
- Giving help with personal organisation
- Allowing the pupil his own copy of lesson notes or summary

- Use of IT
- Giving outlines of diagrams or maps so that only labelling is required
- Limiting the amount of copying from the board, and giving extra time for finished work.
- Remember that special arrangements for examinations may be appropriate

4. More information

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