

Dyspraxia

Also known as developmental coordination disorder (DCD), motor learning difficulty, clumsy child syndrome, perceptuo motor dysfunction, Deficits in Attention Motor Control and Perception (DAMP). Dyspraxia is a condition that affects the development of age appropriate competencies in gross and fine motor skills, perception, memory, attention, maths, speech and language and social skills. Approximately 6% of children suffer from the condition (2% being significantly affected), with boys affected four times more frequently than girls.

Parents may notice the problem early on their child may have trouble with some of the following:

- balance and co-ordination
- dressing i.e. doing up buttons, tying shoe laces
- picking up small objects
- left / right orientation
- poor spatial skills
- sitting, crawling, walking
- poor eye control
- poor social skills
- fine motor skills, eg: writing, colouring, painting
- gross motor skills e.g. difficulties in hopping, jumping, riding a bicycle, PE, ball-games
- learning difficulties e.g. spelling, reversals, rote learning, sequencing
- doing a jig-saw or sorting game
- 'behaviour problems'
- difficulties with attention & task maintenance
- poor personal organisation
- difficulties coping with change in routine AS are widespread in the social setting of the home or school.

There might also be some speech and language or pronunciation difficulties caused by problems coordinating the various movements of the mouth and tongue.

Help at home

Getting dressed: Velcro on shoes not laces or buckles; lay out clothes in dressing order; loose clothing; avoid ties ; shirt buttons: larger holes and buttons; elasticated trousers and skirts; clothes with a distinctive front and back, for example, a V-neck sweater, pleated trousers.

Eating: Use flexible straws; don't fill cups too full; non-slide mat for plate; curved knives and forks.

Getting Organised: keep to a daily routine; use timetables; use post-it's as reminders; everything in a specific place; cupboards and drawers labelled.

Motor skills: Put aside time to help practice handwriting; buy fun toys that help improve holding, placing, spatial awareness etc; play throwing and catching games; encourage balancing on logs, walking on flower pots; help to learn to ride a bike/trike etc.

Give lots of praise and encouragement!

Help at school

- Reduce distractions in the classroom, keep their desk clutter to a minimum.

- Make a personal timetable and encourage them to use a diary re upcoming events, homework dates, any extra equipment needed.
- Offer lots of public praise at the appropriate time, but ensure that other children in the class or group do not begin to feel this is unfair treatment. Always pick good points from the child's work.
- Give him some responsibilities / tasks which should involve others; encourage teamwork and make sure other children support them especially in PE.
- Encourage the child to 'join in' with other pupils, by helping find and develop common interests such as pop music, fashion, etc.
- Make sure they are sat correctly on a chair with feet on the ground and the table is at the right height, sitting cross legged on the floor may be uncomfortable for them.
- An angled board for writing and reading books may be beneficial but will draw attention.
- Present small amounts of work at a time, set out tasks point by point, use tick boxes to aid completion of tasks, allow extra time and repetition.
- Copying from paper next to them rather than a whiteboard.
- Think about PE activities and how they can impact, give time to practice skills needed.
- Encourage different methods of recording apart from writing.
- Use a line guide, window, ruler to aid easier reading.
- Pupils with dyspraxia need considerable support from adults.

Depending on the degree of severity, they will also benefit from regular interventions from some of the following:

(Educational) Psychologist: If a child's difficulties are severe enough to require considerable in and out of school support, a full **psychological assessment** should be requested. When completed, this may lead to a Statement of Special Educational Needs.

Occupational Therapists are usually able to assist with visual-perceptual skills, fine motor performance, and pencil-hold and letter formation.

Physiotherapists help with gross motor skills, posture and general body image and management.

Speech Therapists can help young people who have speech and articulation difficulties.

There is a danger that the child may receive treatment from too many therapists and miss too much school, thus creating more problems.

Other Useful Contacts:

The Dyspraxia Foundation

Support and information for individuals, families and professionals affected by dyspraxia. They also run local support groups.

Web: www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk

Helpline: 01462 454986

Email: dyspraxia@dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk

The Dyscovery Centre University of Wales, Newport

Assessment, advice for parents and schools, tailor-made services, training and access to specific resources

Web: www.dyscovery.newport.ac.uk

Tel: 01633 432330

Email: mailto:dyscoverycentre@newport.ac.uk

Therapy in Praxis Ltd, York

A paediatric therapy and assessment service for children.

Web: www.therapy-in-praxis-ltd.co.uk

Tel: 01751 432298

Anything Left Handed Ltd, Oxford

All staff are left-handed; they produce a range of 200 items. Have a fact sheet on handwriting for left-handed children.

Tel: 0845 872 3272

Web: www.anythingleft-handed.co.uk

British Dyslexia Association

Web: www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

Tel: 0845 251 9002

Dyslexia Action

Web: www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk

Tel: 01784 222300

The Foundation for Conductive Education, Birmingham.

A charity for children and adults with incurable movement disabilities. Programmes for children with dyspraxia aged 3-14 years at four levels for progressing at their own rate. Services are free for 0-3's, fees for over 3's. Parents can self-refer

Web: www.conductive-education.org.uk

Tel: 0121 449 1569

The 3D Centre for Specific Learning, Halifax

Diagnostic assessments and tuition for children with dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia and training courses for teachers.

Web: www.the3dcentre.co.uk

Tel: 01422 365500

Reading

See also OAASIS information sheet '[Books – where to find them](#)'

OAASIS also publishes **A First Guide to Dyspraxia** in its First Guide series (£4.00 plus p&p or you can download it free from our website).

Routledge Education (member of the Taylor Francis Group)

Web: www.routledgeeducation.com (academic & research)

or www.routledgegeteachers.com for teachers.

Tel: 020 7017 6563 (Marketing)

Jessica Kingsley Publishers:

Web: www.jkp.com www.jkp.com

Email: post@jkp.com

Tel: 020 7833 2307

Sage Publications: For all professionals working in schools and educational settings (includes Paul Chapman Publishing and Lucky Duck books).

Web: www.sagepub.co.uk

Email: market@sagepub.co.uk

SEN Marketing: Books and software for special educational needs.

Web: www.senbooks.co.uk

Tel: 01924 871697

The internet book shop www.amazon.co.uk

Development Dyspraxia – Identification and Intervention – 2nd

edition: A Manual for Parents and Professionals. Author: Madeleine Portwood, 1999. £23.99 ISBN 978-1-85346-573-4.

Dyspraxia: A Guide for Teachers and Parents.

Authors: Kate Ripley, Bob Daines, Jenny Barrett. Includes resource materials. Price £21.99 ISBN 978-1-85346-444-7.

Understanding Developmental Dyspraxia

A Textbook for Students and Professionals. Author: Madeleine Portwood. Price £22.99 ISBN 978-1-85346-574-1.

All the above are published by Routledge Education or Amazon (see above for contact numbers).

Internet Sites:

www-unix.oit.umass.edu/~velleman/cas.html is a US paper on apraxia (verbal Dyspraxia) and has a link to www.apraxia-kids.org the Childhood Apraxia of Speech Association of North America (CASANA).

www.matts-hideout.co.uk a website set up and run by a teenage boy, aimed at other kids with dyspraxia.



www.cambianeducation.com

Cambian is the largest provider of specialist residential education and care for young people with Autism, Asperger Syndrome and other associated complex needs in the United Kingdom. Cambian is trusted by hundreds of parents and over 70 Local Education Authorities

OAASIS publications

- SEN Information Sheets
- First Guide to ...
- Cards explaining 9 learning disabilities
- Legal advice Information Sheets
- SEN 'How to' guides

All OAASIS publications can be downloaded from www.oaasis.co.uk