

## **Downs Syndrome**

Downs syndrome is a genetic condition whereby a child is born with an extra chromosome. The condition is usually detectable at birth. Children with Downs' syndrome have distinctive physical features. They often suffer from heart, breathing and eye problems and have moderate to severe learning difficulties. This is a very wide spectrum. Some children will be able to have full access to and participation in the curriculum with appropriate levels of learning support.

Children with Downs syndrome are well known to be generally cheerful and loving. They can also be very active and lack any sense of danger or social propriety. A child with Downs syndrome will normally need a dedicated teaching assistant to support their learning. However, they can also be helped to participate in group and class activities to great effect. They will need to be encouraged to develop independence gradually and not be over supported in the primary years. Outreach with the local special school can often be arranged in order to support the mainstream school in giving the child with Downs syndrome access to the curriculum.

### **Key Characteristics:**

Children with Downs syndrome may:

- Walk and talk much later than other children.
- Have some auditory and visual impairment.
- Develop more slowly physically and be relatively immature emotionally.
- Have delayed fine and gross motor skills.
- Be strong visual learners but poor auditory learners.
- Have significant speech and language delay relative to their cognitive abilities.
- Have difficulties with short term auditory memory and auditory processing.
- Have a short concentration span.
- Have difficulties with consolidation, retention, generalisation and transfer of skills.
- Have a tendency to avoidance strategies.

### **Strategies we use in the Classroom**

We may need to:

- Ensure that the learning activities are broken down into small steps and are clearly focussed.
- Provide a multi-sensory approach to learning.
- Provide activities to develop motor skills.
- Use visual and concrete materials to aid understanding.
- Keep language simple and familiar.
- Make use of songs, rhyme and rhythm to aid learning sequences e.g.alphabet, days of the week.
- Keep instructions short and concise.
- Ask children to repeat instructions in order to clarify understanding.
- Vary the level of demand and type of support within a lesson.
- Allow time for children to process and respond to verbal input.
- Provide alternative methods of recording.
- Ensure repetition and reinforcement within a variety of contexts.
- Encourage participation in all school activities if possible.
- Encourage independence and self-help.

- Develop outreach liaison with the nearby special school.
- Monitor and record progress so that each small achievement is recognised.

**Useful websites:**

[www.downs-syndrome.org.uk](http://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk)