

Dyspraxia (developmental coordination disorder)

Dyspraxia (Developmental Coordination Disorder) is 'An immaturity of the brain resulting in messages not being transmitted to the body', whereby children have particular difficulty with fine motor and cross motor skills.

Dyspraxia is a specific learning difficulty. Children 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. Dyspraxia is usually identified by an occupational therapist, which we can do following 50 sessions of BEAM, Jump Ahead or sensory circuits. Approximately one child in twenty suffers from this condition, which affects four times as many boys as girls. In this condition, specialists often talk about the mid-line. To explain simply, our brains are divided into two sides (hemispheres) and one side controls the majority of the other side of the body, ie the right side of our brain. Children who have dyspraxia often display great difficulty in any activity which requires crossing the mid-line.

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 playground 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 choose 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 structure school routine.
- Have limited concentration and poor listening skills.
- Have high and low levels of motor activity e.g. hand flapping.
- Have difficulty in self-care skills like dressing.
- Be easily upset and have temper tantrums – which annoys other children.
- Have poor social interactions and have difficulty making friends.
- Be rough and aggressive because they have difficulty controlling their movements.

Strategies we use in the Classroom

We may have to:

- Give clear simple instructions and constant reminders, both oral and written.
- Provide a reasonably quiet working environment.
- Organise activities to develop listening and attention skills such as sound tapes.
- Encourage children to present ideas using ICT.
- Incorporate suggested motor coordination exercises into a PE programme.
- Organise games and activities requiring cooperation and turn taking.
- Practise a range of sequencing activities e.g. pictorial activity and story sequences, word and sentence sequences, days, months and number sequences.
- Develop role play and drama activities, including puppets.
- Help children organise their written work by using writing frames.
- Give clear, simple instructions with frequent reminders but avoid nagging.
- Praise every effort and successful achievement of new skills.
- Practise tracking activities e.g. mazes, dot-to-dot, tracing, letter shapes.

Specific Interventions that we may offer at Claremont School:

- BEAM
- Jump Ahead
- Sensory Circuits
- Handwriting support
- The Speed up program
- Use of assistive technology (Ipads, Speech recognition software, recording devices, laptops, as well as Touch typing courses)

Useful Websites:

www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk

www.cleverfingers.co.uk

www.ioo.org.uk (Institution of Optometry)

www.specialdirect.com is a good resource for SEN needs with some free downloadable resources

Cbeebies do a Monday programme for children with dyspraxia

Google Stockport OT Service for handwriting assessments/record sheets plus simple motor skills check list

Books in SEN department:

Sensory Circuits by J Horwood

The Out of Sync Child by Carol Stock Kranowitz

Hands On Dyspraxia by Jill Christmas

Brain Gym books

Move-It