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## How can we support children and young people with Dyspraxia in schools?

**Dyspraxia** is the term used to describe a neurodevelopmental condition which affects both fine and gross motor coordination in both adults and children. It is an umbrella term which encompasses difficulties with executive functioning ( and organisation) and articulation and speech. However, the term “Dyspraxia” is used less often by healthcare professionals, who tend to use the term “Developmental Coordination Disorder.” It is estimated that up to 5% of the population are affected by Dyspraxia. Some children can also be affected by Developmental Verbal Dyspraxia, also known as Verbal Apraxia.

### Signs of possible Dyspraxia in Early Years and Primary schools:

- ✓ Taking longer than other children to sit, crawl (some don't go through the crawling stage at all), stand, walk, speak and become toilet trained.
- ✓ Taking longer to build up vocabulary.
- ✓ Difficulties in balance, may be unable to hop, skip or jump. Poor spatial organisation.
- ✓ Difficulties in constructive play, for example, Lego.
- ✓ If verbal dyspraxia, little or no babbling in infancy.
- ✓ Poor spacing of words on a page and difficulty in copying text.
- ✓ Poor written content despite evidence of knowledge through discussion.
- ✓ Frustration when several things happen at once.
- ✓ Often distractible, with a tendency to daydream.
- ✓ Can affect reading development- the child may know which letters to say but cannot sequence them to form words.

### Five tips to support Dyspraxia in schools:

- 1) Consider the motor and visuospatial requirements of your lesson plan. Teach the movement elements explicitly and use repetition to embed understanding in the learner's working memory.
- 2) Use a pencil not a pen. A pencil provides a clearer measure of pressure. If Hand dominance is not established by the age of seven, do not insist upon the use of one hand. Encourage the learner to write as comfortably as possible.
- 3) Teach the use of the Dynamic tripod grip technique for holding a pen or pencil, as it provides more control. Use pencil/ pen grips. Encourage the use of an angled board with the learner's wrist resting on the board for more control.
- 4) Provide opportunities for the learner to develop touch typing skills. Use online typing courses, for example, [www.bbc.co.uk/schools/typing](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/typing) or [www.typewiz.com](http://www.typewiz.com).
- 5) In PE or Dance lessons, give clear instructions one at a time, allowing the learner time to organise their body into the right position before the next instruction is given. Use music, counting or a rhythmic rhyme to reinforce movement patterns.