

Dyspraxia

What Is Dyspraxia?

Dyspraxia is a lifelong condition in which a person's movement and coordination are affected. It can affect fine motor skills (e.g. fiddly tasks such as buttons and shoelaces) and/or gross motor skills (Large limb movements such as running, skipping, throwing and catching), and can make everyday tasks involving movement and co-ordination challenging. Someone who has Dyspraxia can also display difficulties with sequencing, language, and maintaining attention. Children with Dyspraxia usually have normal or above average intellectual abilities. However, their motor coordination difficulties often impact their academic progress, social integration and emotional development.

Common difficulties that someone with dyspraxia may experience include:

- Poor concentration
- Difficulty manipulating small objects
- Difficulty completing jigsaws
- Difficulty in holding a pencil or handwriting
- Difficulty in understanding concepts such as 'in', 'on' or 'behind'
- Difficulty with throwing and catching
- Difficulty following instructions
- Difficulty completing tasks that involve a sequence of activities
- Difficulty dressing or tying shoelaces
- Difficulty in using a knife and fork
- Tires easily
- Limited social skills
- Poor posture and spatial awareness
- Inappropriate verbal responses.

Dyspraxia and Autism Spectrum Disorder

Dyspraxia, like ASD, is on a spectrum and can occur to different degrees, so every individual diagnosed with Dyspraxia will have varying areas of strengths and weaknesses. Having ASD does not mean that you will also have Dyspraxia, but it is possible to have both conditions diagnosed. Some of the characteristics of the two conditions overlap, for example some sensory sensitivities, a preference for routine, poor attention, so it is important that the people involved in the diagnosis and management have the relevant knowledge and experience.

Dyspraxia is thought to affect up to ten per cent of the population, with males four times more likely to be affected than females. Dyspraxia sometimes runs in families. There may be an overlap with related conditions such as dyslexia and autism spectrum disorders.

People with ASD often have difficulties with motor co-ordination and, if they are significantly affected in this way, may also be given a formal diagnosis of Dyspraxia.

Dyspraxia and COPASS

COPASS works with NHS Occupational Therapists, and a consultant Occupational Therapist, who specialises in the assessment and management of children with Dyspraxia. Occupational therapists are concerned with a child's ability to manage all aspects of life at home, and school and at play. Programmes are individualised and monitored regularly to support pupil's who have this provision specified in their EHC plans and are funded accordingly.

Strategies we offer in our provision at COPASS:

- Helping children to develop specific skills, for example through fine motor activities or a special handwriting programme as instructed by OT
- Changes to the child's environment. This might include suggesting the child is positioned differently in the classroom to reduce distractions or that he/she uses a different chair at meal times.

- Suggesting different ways of doing things, like using a different pencil, trying a computer or teaching new ways to tie shoe laces
- Alternative ways to record written work e.g. use of a laptop, access to a scribe, extra time
- Individualised motor skill development programmes
- Access to daily sensory motor circuits
- Rebound therapy
- Paston Pack Occupational Therapy activities (OT)
- Outdoor gym equipment – accessed at break times and as part of individualized programmes