

Helpline Number:

01785 356921



Staffordshire
S.E.N.D
Family Partnership



Information
Advice & Support
Service

Developmental Coordination Disorder
(DCD) or Dyspraxia -

A guide for parents

Description

All children are individuals and develop at differing rates. However, although some children develop at a different pace than others, they all follow more or less the same path, achieving the same milestones along the way, particularly in terms of their physical development.

Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD), which is now the preferred term for Dyspraxia, is a medical diagnosis given when a child has a marked impairment in the development of motor (or physical) coordination. Sometimes a child may achieve developmental stages in a slightly different order, or even miss them out completely.

It is unusual for a child to be diagnosed with DCD before they start school, as physical skills are very much still developing in all children at this age.

A medical diagnosis of Developmental Coordination Disorder may be given when a child fits the following criteria:

- The ability to carry out activities using physical skills is well below that expected given the child's age and learning development.
- The difficulties significantly interfere with the activities of daily living or progress at school.
- The difficulties are not due to a general medical condition such as cerebral palsy or muscular dystrophy, and the child has not been diagnosed with autism.
- If the child has general learning difficulties, the physical difficulties are greater than would be expected.

However DCD is not all about difficulties. Children may be good at problem-solving; many are artistic or good with computers (ICT). Every child has things they like and are good at. It will help if you try to discover and celebrate these strengths and work with the school to develop them. It is important to keep a child's self-esteem high.

Occurance

Developmental Coordination Disorder may occur in people from all backgrounds, cultures and abilities. It is thought to affect between 5 to 7 per cent of the population. Very often there is a family history of DCD, or other specific learning difficulty, e.g. dyslexia and DCD may also occur alongside other specific learning difficulties.

If you feel that your child is experiencing coordination difficulties, or has problems with carrying out fine and/or gross motor skills which may be affecting his or her performance in school, this may be the time to talk to your child's teacher to discuss your concerns.

Signs

Gross Motor Skills (big movements)

The child may:

- be late in achieving motor milestones, e.g. sitting, crawling, walking, talking. Some may miss out certain stages, e.g. crawling
- be low-toned or floppy – seem to have reduced control of the muscles, particularly around the joints. If there is low tone around the hips and shoulders, this may result in difficulty in being able to sit upright in a chair or on the floor
- have difficulty in maintaining balance, whilst sitting, standing, walking, climbing, etc., and may become very nervous and apprehensive
- have difficulty in coordinating both sides of the body such as when going up and down stairs or riding a bike

Fine Motor Skills (small movements)

The child may:

- have lack of strength in hands and immature grasp, which may cause difficulty in holding and manipulating objects, doing up and undoing buttons and zips, using cutlery, brushing teeth, using scissors or tying shoelaces
- have difficulty in using thumb and index finger in a pincer grip to pick up small objects
- be unsure which hand to use when writing, throwing, using scissors, etc.
- have poor grip and control of pencil or crayon when writing or drawing.

Some possible additional difficulties

Spatial and or Visual Problems

The child may have difficulty with:

- hand-eye coordination - catching a ball
- foot-eye coordination – kicking a ball
- reading – finds it hard to follow a line of print across a page
- copying from board - looking from one thing to another and being able to refocus
- judging distance and depth - may knock over a cup when reaching for it.

Language and Communication Difficulties

- speech may be unclear or slow to develop
- may not be able to establish good eye contact
- may not recognise 'non-verbal' messages - this can result in behaviour we would not expect in the situation
- may be unaware of own body position in relation to others and may stand too close
- may be unaware of own appearance
- may have a difficulty with the use of language, and not understand when 'leg pulling' is taking place, but rather take everything very literally.

Behavioural and Emotional Difficulties

The child;

- may display very immature behaviours, and over-react, e.g. burst into tears over a problem which others may perceive as trivial
- may be easily distracted and appear not to be listening. This may be due to inability to 'filter out' unwanted sights or sounds, or the fact that they are concentrating on balancing and sitting still
- may be totally disorganised, and unable to perform what should be simple tasks such as finding the right clothes to wear
- may be aware of how they are 'different' from others, and may suffer from low self esteem
- may be keen to succeed, but due to their difficulties, often feel that they have failed
- may be misunderstood by their peer group, and may have been the subject of bullying.

Variability

The child will almost certainly have 'good days', when they are able to achieve a lot with the minimum of fuss, and 'bad days', when nothing seems to work well and the child becomes frustrated and anxious. This change can even happen from hour to hour, and it is therefore important that this is understood and allowances are made for it.

Impact on the child and family

As a parent you may feel that:

- every morning is a nightmare trying to get your child organised and ready for school
- the child compares less favourably than siblings
- meal times are difficult for everyone – a potential battleground!
- you are frustrated at not knowing how best to help your child
- you do not know enough about DCD (dyspraxia)
- you find it hard to understand why your child may be able to behave well at school, but struggles and is very irritable at home
- you do not understand why your child may be, for example, intellectually at an 11-year old stage, but behaves emotionally more like a 6 year-old
- your child displays very inconsistent behaviour, so you never know what to expect next.

The child may feel:

- tired most of the time
- that everyone always seems to be shouting or nagging at them
- worried and apprehensive about the day ahead
- that they are blamed for things that are not their fault or that are beyond their control
- that no one seems to understand that they really are trying their hardest – it is still never good enough.

Siblings may feel:

- Angry with their brother or sister, even though knowing that it isn't really his or her fault
- Jealous as their brother or sister seems to receive more attention from their parents
- Embarrassed by their behaviour, especially in front of friends, yet protective because they do not want their brother or sister ridiculed or bullied by others.

However, with help and support from their families and other people, children with DCD can be very happy and successful.

What should I do if I think my child has DCD?

If you are worried about your child's progress then always speak to your child's school or early years setting. You may wish to make an appointment to see the class teacher or the school or Early Years SENCo (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator). If you feel you would like support when you talk to staff, you can always take along a friend or ask for support from SEND Family Partnership. They can be contacted on 01785 356921.

School staff may be able to reassure you that adequate progress is being made. However they may share your concerns that your child is experiencing some difficulties and you may wish to seek medical advice. This can happen in one of two ways:

Either

you should take your child to see your GP, who may then refer on to a paediatrician. This may result in input from a physiotherapist and/or an occupational therapist.

Or

your child's teacher or SENCo (with your permission) will involve the school nurse, who may then refer on to a paediatrician.

What can the school do to support my child?

The health professionals will advise both you and the teachers on the best ways to help your child. Some teachers may have received training on DCD and have experience of supporting children with these difficulties.

Teachers regularly assess a child's progress to help them plan new work. If they are concerned about a child's progress the teacher will look at how they can adapt their teaching to help the child learn. This may include making small changes to the way the lesson is taught, the materials that are used and equipment provided, or the support given to a child or group during normal teaching.

A small number of children need even more support, see section on "SEN Support" overleaf.

SEN Support

If your child's difficulties are such that they are placed on SEN Support, the school will follow the Assess, Plan, Do, Review process and set up an individual learning plan. You, and your child, will be involved in this. Outside agencies and specialist support may also be asked to give their advice. Your child's progress will then be regularly monitored and reviewed.

A booklet explaining SEN Support in greater detail is available from SEND Family Partnership by telephoning 01785 356921 or emailing sfps@staffordshire.gov.uk

It is also on the website at www.staffordshire.gov.uk/sfps

If your child is meeting their targets and making good progress, it may be possible to reduce the support. If not, the school may make a referral to the Physical Disability Support Service.

The Physical Disability Support Service (PDSS) is commissioned by Staffordshire County Council to support the inclusion of children and young people with a range of physical and medical needs and associated learning and sensory impairment in mainstream schools.

It is currently provided by four Staffordshire special schools: Blackfriars, Greenhall Nursery, Horton Lodge and Saxon Hill.

The PDSS provides outreach support to mainstream schools to assist the inclusion of children with disabilities, complex medical conditions and associated learning disabilities. The service provides assessments of need, advice to staff on inclusive practice, and assists with multi agency liaison between the local authority, school, health services and parents.

Although PDSS do not work 1-1 with pupils, they may model strategies or the use of equipment to staff in school. They provide training for staff in inclusive practices such as the use of assistive technology, specialist equipment and mobility, fine and gross motor development and management of health and personal care.

PDSS is a school based service; referrals are made by individual school SENCos.

The PDSS can be contacted via:

Blackfriars School – covering Newcastle, Staffordshire Moorlands and South Staffs:
Email: office@bcfederation.co.uk
Tel: 01782 297780

Greenhall Nursery – covering Stafford and Cannock Chase
Email: office@greenhall.staffs.sch.uk
Tel: 01785 246159

Horton Lodge School – covering East Staffs and Staffordshire Moorlands
Email: office@hortonlodge.staffs.sch.uk
Tel: 01538 306214

Saxon Hill School – covering Cannock Chase, Lichfield and Tamworth
Email: office@saxonhill.staffs.sch.uk
Tel: 01543 510615

Helping your child at home

All the professionals involved will work with you so that you can help your child. For example, the physiotherapist or occupational therapist may provide some exercises which your child can practise at home, or give ideas to help with daily living skills such as washing, dressing or feeding.

There are some helpful books that you may find useful, as they give many tips on activities to help a child at home. These include:

“Developmental Coordination Disorder – Hints and Tips for the Activities of Daily Living” by Morven F Ball (published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London)

“Dyspraxia – The Hidden Handicap” by Dr Amanda Kirby (published by Souvenir Press [Educational and Academic] Ltd, London)

“The Adolescent with Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD)” by Dr Amanda Kirby (published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London)

“Hands On’ Dyspraxia: Supporting Children & Young People With Sensory & Motor Learning Challenges” by Jill Christmas (published by Speechmark Publishers)

You may also find the following book particularly interesting, as it was written by a 16-year old girl who has dyspraxia:

“Caged in Chaos – A Dyspraxic Guide to Breaking Free” by Victoria Biggs (published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London)

Other sources of help

There is currently a dyspraxia support group in Tamworth in Staffordshire:

Tamworth Dyspraxia Support Group;

contact Keely on 01827 702511 or email keelybrammer@yahoo.co.uk

Nationally there are two centres which provide support for children with DCD and their families. This includes running courses for parents and professionals and providing advice and resources:

The Dyspraxia Foundation

8 West Alley, Hitchin, Herts SG5 1EG

Tel: 01462 454986 (Mon. – Fri. 9.00 – 5.00)

www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk

email: dyspraxia@dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk

The Dyspraxia Foundation has support groups and runs social events for parents and children.

The Dyscovery Centre

Felthorpe House, Caerleon Campus, Lodge Road, Caerleon, Newport NP18 3QR

Tel: 01633 432330

www.dyscovery.research.southwales.ac.uk

The Dyscovery Centre runs a message board on its website where parents can share experiences and ask for comments and advice. They also have a "box of ideas" website as a one stop shop for 1000s of ideas, guidance and information on everything from early years to employment: www.boxofideas.org

Resources

Many of the resources available for children with other forms of disability are sometimes very suitable for those with DCD. Many can be bought online:

Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre
Views of a dyslexic child/dyslexia resources
Literacy aid
RNIB – online shop
Advice on choosing books
Crossbow Education (games & resources)
LDA (resources and games)
Barrington Stoke (secondary age reading material)
Teenagers with dyspraxia

www.arkellcentre.org.uk
www.iamdyslexic.com
www.penfriend.biz
www.rnib.org.uk
www.bookmark.org.uk
www.crossboweducation.com
www.ldalearning.com
www.barringtonstoke.co.uk
www.dyspraxichteens.org.uk

Other Resources

Multi-Sensory Learning Ltd
www.msl-online.net
Earlstree Court, Earlstree Road
Corby, Northants
NN17 4HH Tel: 01536 399017
email: msl@school.co.uk

Smart Kids (UK) Ltd
www.smartkids.co.uk
5 Station Road, Hungerford
Berkshire
RG17 0DY Tel: 01488 644644
email: sales@smartkids.co.uk

Toe by Toe
www.toe-by-toe.co.uk
8 Green Road, Baildon
Shipley, W Yorks
BD17 5HL Tel: 01274 598807
info@toe-by-toe.co.uk

Learning Materials Ltd
www.learningmaterials.co.uk
Dixon Street, Wolverhampton
WV2 2BX Tel: 01902 454026
email: info@learningmaterials.co.uk

For ICT (Computer) equipment

Enabling Technology Ltd
www.enablingtechnology.net
Castlefields, Stafford
ST16 1BU Tel: 01785 24311
email: into@enablingtechnology.com

Inclusive Technology Ltd
www.inclusive.co.uk
Unit 8 Riverside Court
Huddersfield
OL3 5BZ Tel: 01457 819790
email: inclusive@inclusive.co.uk

REM
www.r-e-m.co.uk
Unit 7 Dunbell Industrial
Estate
Bridgwater, Somerset
TA8 4TP Tel: 0845 3754475

Crick Software Ltd
www.cricksoft.com
Crick House, Boarden Close
Moulton Park, Northampton
NN3 6LF Tel: 01604 671691
email: into@cricksoft.com

Iansyst Ltd
www.iansyst.co.uk
Fen House, Fen Road
Cambridge
CB4 1UN Tel: 01223 420101
email: info@iansyst.co.uk

SEMERC
www.semERC.com
Angel House, Sherston
Malmesbury, Wilts
SN16 0LH Tel: 01666 843293
email: sales@semERC.com

The law and further reading

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her.

A child or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she:

- Has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of other children the same age, or
- Has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-guide-for-parents-and-carers

Disabled children and young people

A child or young person has a disability under the Equality Act 2010 if they have:

“a physical or mental impairment which has a long-term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”

“Long term” is defined as “a year or more” and “substantial” is defined as “more than minor or trivial”.

The Equality Act 2010 sets out the legal obligations that schools and other education providers have towards disabled children and young people;

- They must not discriminate in relation to admission
- They must not directly or indirectly discriminate against, harass or victimise in the way it provides services
- They must make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled children and young people are not at a substantial disadvantage compared with their peers.



Staffordshire SEND Family Partnership is funded by Staffordshire County Council. It operates independently as a confidential service for parents and carers of children and young people (0 -25) with special educational needs and disabilities.

To contact the SEND Family Partnership (Staffordshire's Information, Advice and Support Service):

Tel: 01785 356921

Email: sfps@staffordshire.gov.uk

Facebook: Staffs SEND Family Partnership

**You can find out more information at:
[www. www.staffordshire.gov.uk/sfps](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/sfps)**



SENDFP

If you, or someone you know, would like a copy of this booklet in large print, Braille, on audio tape or in languages other than English, please contact SEND Family Partnership on 01785 356921 or email: sfps@staffordshire.gov.uk

