

DYSPRAXIA – SECONDARY CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

Writing: Strategies for secondary school

Concern	Explanation	Strategies & accommodations
Poorly formed letters & illegibility	Hasn't developed memory for movements needed to form letters Difficulty manipulating pen Difficulty moving arm across page Difficulty controlling force/extent of movements so letters are unevenly sized Paper moves when writing	Consider alternatives to writing – word processors, Dictaphones, scribe Teach touch typing Allow individual to use the pen that works best for them and look at the texture of the paper used Don't sit too close to peers Provide non slip mat
Poor organisation of work/ diagrams	Poor visual motor integration Poor spatial relationships	Prepare diagrams for individual to label Allow individual to use templates
Writing deteriorates over short period	Low postural tone Poor shoulder stability, Excessive grip strength or pen pressure Uses whole arm movements	Encourage individual to self-monitor sitting position Provide a sloping desk/file to lean on Work with individual on shoulder strength activities, possibly with PE tutor Consider alternatives to writing
Doesn't write enough in lessons	As above Distractible – produces much better work at home than in class Difficulty combining thoughts with physical aspect of writing Hasn't understood the task	Position individual away from busy thoroughfares Allow individual extra time to complete work, with motor breaks when needed (don't keep in at break time) Provide part-prepared handouts or photocopied sheets to reduce unnecessary writing Provide lists of key concepts or vocab. spellings Check the individual knows what to do
Difficulty copying from the board	As above Difficulty coordinating eye tracking and head movements Perceptual difficulties – “sees” diagrams differently if looking at them from the side Difficulty locating work to be copied	Provide handouts Try a book rest for text books/handouts Ensure individual is facing the board Write instructions on the board – use different colours for each line, or to indicate instructions for different students
Poor organisation of ideas	Extra concentration required for the physical writing process means individuals lose thread of arguments/story	Blank pages can be threatening Provide templates with headings to help individuals work through an activity Teach mind-maps, spider diagrams, lists

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Social Skills: Strategies for secondary school

Concern	Reason	Strategies & accommodations
Doesn't seem to have many friends	Difficulty picking up non-verbal cues so appears tactless to peers Dislikes being touched Poor personal hygiene Communication difficulties Difficulties understanding humour and sarcasm Have unusual interests & sometimes use mature language	Social skills training Sensitively raise self-awareness of personal hygiene issues Raise awareness among staff/students about dyspraxia & other learning differences Celebrate individuality Share examples of good communication Encourage individuals to participate in lunch activities that match their interests, such as chess or drum lessons
Difficulty working in groups	Difficulty listening & focusing on individual voices Sensitivity to noise, light, temperature Short attention span Tendency to opt out when things are too difficult	Place within smaller groups Allow the group to work in a quieter environment Allow the individual to move around while working Support the group Provide positive feedback to the individual
Difficulty adapting to new situations	Stress increases emotional responses, such as fears, emotional outbursts, obsessions Individual is slow to pick up social cues or unwritten rules of a group/teacher	Allow the individual time to settle Don't ask them to do something that is challenging too early Clarify rules and expectations, using unambiguous language Provide written reminders of routines etc. Recognise different learning styles and respond to these Provide a buddy or mentor to help during periods of change
Immature behaviour	When stressed, individuals can be over-emotional. They may find it easier to relate to younger children	Be sensitive and anticipate stressful situations Encourage small group activities with peers who have a common interest Offer relaxation groups and training

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Organisation: Strategies for secondary school

Concern	Reasons	Strategies & accommodations
Individual struggles with timetable, is late for lessons and misses special appointments	Struggles to recall the time of day so is unaware of what should happen next Can't tell the time Is easily distracted Can't retain verbal instructions Difficulty navigating busy corridors, or gets lost easily	Provide a mini laminated timetable Use colour and symbols on the timetable Encourage them to wear a watch they can read with an alarm set just before the end of break/lunch Write down instructions if plans change from the norm (and make sure the special instructions are removed the next day so they aren't carried out again!) Provide a pass so the person can go to lunch on the bell Allow the individual to leave lessons early Provide a buddy to help get around school Encourage use of a mini tape recorder or recording pen for short messages about routine changes Use coloured post-it notes put into planner for special messages Develop a "daily procedures" book to reinforce routines
Doesn't have equipment needed for lessons	Is disorganised Loses equipment Wants to avoid participating in certain lessons	Encourage the individual to make an equipment timetable to list what is needed each day for school Allow time for the person to pack their equipment away safely at the end of the lesson Provide a locker for the individual to keep their PE kit/ instruments in, or to hold equipment that the individual usually carries around Keep a spare set of equipment at school
Work space is disorganised	Needs to get all equipment out to remind them to do all parts of the task Worries that won't be able to find something in their bag quickly if needed Isn't aware that too much equipment is out	Encourage the individual to use a clear pencil case so everything can be seen Encourage the person to get out only necessary equipment onto the desk
Loses work	Rushes to leave at the end of lessons & leaves stuff behind Poor filing skills	Allow to pack up a bit early Encourage use of colour-coded plastic wallets or a concertina file to hold loose papers Teach the individual how to file papers

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Physical Education: Strategies for secondary school

Concern	Reasons	Strategies & accommodations
Slow to change for PE	Has physical difficulty managing clothes, fastenings, tight socks etc. Can't tie laces tight enough Has difficulty concentrating in a crowded changing room Wants to avoid the lesson	Allow the individual to start getting ready before the other students Find a quieter area of the changing room for them to use Check laces are tied correctly before starting lesson
Forgets kit	Avoidance Poor memory and organisation	Provide a locker for PE kit within the PE area Be aware of lack of confidence and provide opportunities for the individual to succeed
Slow to follow instructions	Poor auditory processing – may have only just processed one instruction while the next has already been given Poor motor planning skills	Don't ask this person to go first as they will often pick up cues from the others about what to do Pair the individual up with someone who is sensitive and knows what they are doing Use hand-over-hand methods to demonstrate how to handle equipment, or ask a sensitive peer to help demonstrate/guide
Can't manage team games	Difficulty judging speed and distance Difficulty making quick alterations to own body position Difficulty adjusting position of body in response to changes in environment Poor spatial awareness Lacks ball skills Poor understanding of rules and strategies	Look for alternative physical activities, particularly individual sports such as golf, running, ice skating, climbing, cycling, yoga, dancing and martial arts.
Movements appear awkward & effortful	Tendency to "lock" joints so can't stabilise some joints while moving others purposefully Random contraction/relaxation of muscles so seems to be constantly moving Poor control of force/extent of movements	Don't draw attention to awkwardness of movements Break down activities into component parts and teach these separately Be aware that these individuals take longer to reach increasing skill levels compared to other children
Tires quickly	Low muscle tone affects stamina, balance and ability to hold positions against gravity	Offer graded motor activities that gradually increase stamina over time, e.g. number of lengths swum Be aware that performance will deteriorate during the lesson

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Personal presentation: Strategies for secondary school

Concern	Reasons	Strategies & accommodations
Looks different to his/her peers	<p>The individual can only tolerate certain fabrics and clothing styles because of the way they feel on their body</p> <p>Individual can't manage shoe laces, buttons etc. so clothing choices are limited</p>	<p>Review school uniform policy to see if it can be more flexible. Polo shirts are easier to manage than buttoned shirts, especially on PE days</p> <p>Find out why a person prefers a particular clothing style. Explore issues of fabric sensitivity etc. within tutor groups to increase tolerance by peers.</p> <p>Work with parents to identify strategies to help such as sewing on cuff buttons with elastic.</p> <p>Accept individuality.</p>
Concerns about personal hygiene	<p>Individual has difficulty using a shower or bath at home</p> <p>Stress increases perspiration</p> <p>Individual may be reluctant to use school toilets because of intimidation</p> <p>Individual may have difficulty with the practicalities of toileting and cleaning</p>	<p>Talk sensitively to the individual about how it's necessary to shower more frequently during adolescence. Find out if there are practical reasons why washing is difficult and contact the OT for advice if necessary</p> <p>Minimise stress and offer relaxation sessions</p> <p>Find out if there are reasons why a person won't use the toilets. Arrange for them to use other loos if appropriate.</p> <p>OTs can offer advice about self-care issues such as toileting, dressing etc. Suggest you can make a referral to help an individual to develop their independence skills.</p>

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Handling equipment: Strategies for secondary school

Concern	Reason	Strategies & accommodations
Can't draw straight lines	Difficulty holding ruler steady with one hand	Suggest use of ridged rulers or those with a cork backing Provide "labelling templates" with measured spaces to help centre underlining
Holds pen in upright position	Hasn't developed in-hand manipulative skills Poor hand strength	Try a Stabilo 'S Move pen Try writing on a sloping surface
Can't control a computer mouse well	Poor isolation of fingers to click buttons Delayed responses so holds button down for too long Poor control of extent of movements	Try a range of alternatives including smaller models, left hand models, roller balls etc. Adjust the repeat button speed
Difficulty pouring, measuring etc. during technology and science. Health and safety concerns	Poor control of force/extent of movements Tendency to lean forward over the table for extra stability affects fluency of arm movements Poor balance means some people struggle when sitting on high stools	Pair individuals with a buddy who will pour, move and measure Make sure groups are not working too close together Provide stools with foot rests and arms or allow the individual to stand up when handling equipment Secure equipment to the desk if possible
Using scissors, compass etc	Difficulty with activities requiring use of both hands together Can't remember how to use equipment	Allow and encourage the individual to use special equipment they find helpful e.g. looped scissors, circle scribe compass etc Provide clear instructions about how to use equipment if needed
Difficulty using woodwork tools	Difficulty stabilising materials with one hand whilst using equipment with the other Noise of sawing is overwhelming	Secure materials where possible Watch for signs of stress due to noise and allow time out

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Homework & messages home: strategies for secondary school

Concern	Reasons	Strategies & accommodations
Homework isn't handed in	Individual hasn't written homework requirements down correctly Forgets to hand homework in Doesn't know where to hand homework in	Give homework at the start of the lesson Write homework requirements on a slip of paper for individual to stick into their planner Put a sticker on planners to indicate people who need help to note their homework down. Write it in as you walk round the class. Collect the planners of people who need help at the start of the lesson and write homework down for them Make sure the individual knows the system for handing in homework Encourage form tutors to prompt individuals to hand in homework as part of a regular routine Help the individual to set up a timetable to show when homework should be handed in Work with parents to set up a system at home so the individual can plan ahead, particularly for project work Before giving a detention for missing homework try to find out why homework hasn't been completed.
Homework is of a higher standard than class work	Individual is less distracted at home so finds it easier to focus Parents provide support with planning and organisation of work	Find out what support parents are providing at home – it is likely to be with the practical aspects of the task which allows the individual to concentrate on the content Find out how much time an individual is spending on homework. Suggest suitable time limits.
Messages don't reach home	Individual loses pieces of paper Forgets to hand papers to parents	For important messages, contact parents directly Help the individual to use their planner effectively Encourage individuals to put messages and letters into a clear plastic wallet Work with parents to use the planner as an effective means of communication

Lunch times: Strategies for secondary school

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Concern	Reasons	Strategies & accommodations
Individual misses lunch & gets headaches later in the day	Doesn't remember when to go for lunch if there are different times for different groups Doesn't like the noise and bustle of the canteen so avoids going there	Provide an early lunch pass so the individual always goes to the first sitting Provide a quieter area for eating lunch
Eats a limited range of foods	Can't manage different food textures Can't chew quickly and is worried about being late for next lesson Only buys things that he/she knows of the price of, or which use particular coins	Check there is a range of food available that the individual likes Allow the individual to go for an early lunch so he/she has more time to eat Work on money handling, or encourage a pre-payment system
Is likely to drop tray	Can't organise school stuff and tray Trips over bags on floor or bumps into things	Allow the individual to have an early lunch while the canteen is less busy Provide a pass to skip the queue Provide a place where bags can be left safely in the canteen so the individual doesn't have to manage their bag and tray