

Practical strategies/solutions for working with pupils with Developmental Coordination Difficulties (DCD)



Highland Council ECS and NHS Highland
and HDCD Working Group

January 2008



Practical Strategies

This booklet was produced by the multi-agency DCD Working Group, which has been in existence since 2002 and produced the DCD guidelines which were widely distributed in 2002.

The following guidance is part of the set of booklets put together to support schools and parents to help children and young people with developmental coordination difficulties.

Every child with DCD has his/her own set of difficulties and so it is necessary to look at individual strategies and solutions for each child. This booklet offers a range of options which may be suitable over all ages and stages of development. In the Transitions booklet which is part of this pack you will find documentation to help plan solutions for individuals. The DCD Information booklet contains links, books, and contact addresses for organisations which can be additional sources of advice and support.

Collaborative practice with schools, parents, pupils, and professionals is the most positive way forward when supporting pupils with DCD. The maintenance of strategies is essential especially at the point of any transitions in the pupil's education (between teachers, classes, schools, colleges, and work place).

All reports and advice given on an individual should be passed on at the time of any transition in order to ensure that consistency of support is maintained.

The DCD Working Group consists of:

- ❖ Representatives of NHS Highland
- ❖ Representatives of the Highland Council Education Culture and Sport Service
- ❖ Representatives of HDCD organisation

Organisational Strategies/Solutions



Time keeping

- ❖ It is important to teach time-awareness. It can be useful to use an analogue clock to teach time awareness and a digital clock is more useful for time keeping.
- ❖ Breakdown parts of the day with colour coding on the timetable.
- ❖ A calendar showing events throughout the year with visual prompts to show progression, key events etc.
- ❖ Talk through the routine of the day. A visual daily plan is the most valuable support (either on blackboard or most commonly on a sheet of paper for the individual).
- ❖ Give clear short instructions one step at a time, and go back and reinforce or ask the child to repeat instructions.
- ❖ Egg timers, alarm clocks, digital timers can be useful for demonstrating passing time and as prompts.
- ❖ Vibrating mobile phones can be a good prompt.
- ❖ Reinforce what the time is throughout the day.
- ❖ Give an equivalent to time lengths e.g. "you have 15 minutes left to work – that's the same length of time as break time." Make time meaningful, concrete, and in context. This is an ongoing activity and will need constant reinforcement and repetition.
- ❖ Use a cardboard clock as a visual prompt to remind the child of the time.
- ❖ Put blu-tack on a wall clock to highlight how much time a child has left to complete work.
- ❖ Provide the pupil with more than one copy of the timetable.
- ❖ Pupils should be allowed to highlight and mark the timetable for visual clarity.
- ❖ Glossary of abbreviations should be provided.

- ❖ Orientation of layout to suit pupil e.g. top/bottom left/right.
- ❖ Mark where equipment is needed on timetable or on prompt card.
- ❖ Copy of timetable for home.
- ❖ The timetable will require to be reinforced and maintained by an adult.
- ❖ Pupils with DCD will require support with time-tabling throughout their school career.
- ❖ Times should be marked on timetable.
- ❖ Buddy system could be in place to support timetable.
- ❖ Colour code labels in school to match subjects on timetable.
- ❖ Any changes given in written form in advance.
- ❖ Teach time management e.g. exams, homework.
- ❖ Alternative strategies for managing time should be used if time is a problem for pupil.
- ❖ Key worker to maintain corrections to timetable and discuss difficulties.
- ❖ Monitor punctuality to see if there is a difficulty.
- ❖ Be flexible with timing e.g. extra time to change after PE.
- ❖ Buddy system for breaks and lunchtime to alert them of things.



Homework

- ❖ Discussion between home and school on the management of a homework diary.
- ❖ Ensure the parents and pupils know the homework timetable.
- ❖ Advice from parents should be sort on the amount of work the pupil is managing.
- ❖ Homework should be recorded in written form. Staff should ensure that the pupil has this in a complete and accurate form.
- ❖ There should be a balance between written and oral production of work expected from the child.
- ❖ Parents should be allowed to scribe homework.
- ❖ Homework should be given on a worksheet, working towards a diary format.
- ❖ Plan of homework for week with time scales and amounts of work required for each task. Hand in dates given in written form. For some pupils limit homework given to daily rather that weekly amount.
- ❖ Clear uncluttered page of instructions with a few clear examples.
- ❖ A page at the back of the homework diary with a glossary of signs e.g. (+ -) and an explanation, number line etc. to refer to when necessary.
- ❖ Look at paper and font size that pupil is using. Clarity of layout, same font.
- ❖ Darker lines on clear page helps to keep writing on line.
- ❖ Using a dark pen to write with, gel pen or roller ball gives more feedback.
- ❖ Utilise weight pen or pen grip.
- ❖ Agree a time limit for work and stick to it even if work is not completed.
- ❖ Duplicate copies of texts for home should be considered.
- ❖ Copy of texts pupil can highlight should be available.
- ❖ Phone buddy contact for homework problems.
- ❖ Glossary questions, forms and how questions should be answered.

Homework can be a very fraught issue, which can impact on both home and school. Consideration should be given to homework being completed in school time.



Recording information

- ❖ Use alternative paper, style, font size (keep font same and large), and layout to match child's needs.
- ❖ Use digital recorder or a mobile phone.
- ❖ Utilise technology e.g. e-mails, text, typing.
- ❖ Scribing.
- ❖ Demonstrate what is required for oral work.
- ❖ Indicate start and finish points on page (e.g. mark with traffic lights), working left to right etc.
- ❖ Process signs in maths, colour-coded to make task clearer.
- ❖ Task prompt card.
- ❖ Present framework for activity.
- ❖ Accept less written work.
- ❖ Group work gives non-recording role to DCD pupil.
- ❖ Buddy system to support pupil. Pupils with DCD can model their work if they have a good model to copy.
- ❖ Give clear instructions, one step at a time and go back to reinforce or ask child to repeat instructions.
- ❖ Give clear time guidance for task so pupil gets to finish task within allocated time.
- ❖ Give shorter tasks which can realistically be completed for that individual child to boost self-esteem and for pupil to understand completion.
- ❖ Do not assume that pupil is able to recall which pieces of work they have completed.
- ❖ Do not assume work has been copied accurately, an adult should check.
- ❖ Copying from the blackboard or white board is a common difficulty. If this has been identified as a problem present work in another way.
- ❖ Expect fewer worked examples.
- ❖ Present written questions on worksheets. Do not expect pupils to be able to write both questions and answers.

- ❖ Letter formation, spacing, size of letters, needs to be re-taught and reinforced throughout schooling. The rules of handwriting need to be taught and reinforced. Please note that joined up/cursive writing makes it easier to space words out.
- ❖ Formulate tables kept available on card or back of workbook.
- ❖ Mind map syllabus/pieces of work.
- ❖ Review previous lesson at the start of each lesson.
- ❖ Photocopy notes of another pupil.
- ❖ Safety/equipment usage guidance as preparation for practical subject.
- ❖ Timing of practical/written sequenced plan of practical activity and a practical demonstration is essential to support practical task.
- ❖ Presentation styles of different staff and their expectations for pupils need to be explained and supported.
- ❖ Highlighters available for work.
- ❖ Post-Its and note labels used to mark important information, unfinished work, place in text.
- ❖ Filofax or life file used to keep all-important information in one place.



Routines

- ❖ Record all changes to plan in advance, e.g. visual timetable, written notes.
- ❖ Written messages home.
- ❖ Daily/weekly timetable.
- ❖ Key person to discuss routines on daily basis.
- ❖ Home routines, homework, bedtime, timetable for weekends.
- ❖ Plan the following day, the night before.
- ❖ Time limit leisure activities e.g. computer, video.
- ❖ Prompt card for packing school bag with visual clues.
- ❖ Wall calendar at home and school.
- ❖ Visual prompt cards to work through routines e.g. dressing after PE, lunchtime.
- ❖ Mark child's peg, drawer, lunch box, and diary for clarity. Pupils can find it difficult to locate their possessions amongst others.
- ❖ Place child's peg and drawer/locker at the end of a row to make it easier to find.
- ❖ If classroom layout is changed, show pupil changes.
- ❖ Clear labelling and signage throughout school.



Differentiation

- ❖ Analyse task you are asking the pupil to complete. Break it down into easier steps if necessary.
- ❖ Is pace and amount of work differentiated as well as the content.
- ❖ Recognise and reinforce child's strengths and utilise them.
- ❖ Look at how work is presented, e.g. simplify it or add visual clues.
- ❖ Be aware that the pupil will become physically tired.
- ❖ Offer individual fitness programme in PE instead of team games if appropriate.
- ❖ Differentiate tasks for content, pace, amount of work pupil is expected to produce.
- ❖ Allow time for breaks, to move about, stretch etc.
- ❖ Look at seating for example; be aware sitting on a stool for a double period will require a lot of physical effort.
- ❖ The pupil should be encouraged to take water breaks.
- ❖ If different support staff are with the pupil they should have a notebook so they can record how the previous lesson has gone.
- ❖ Pupils could be encouraged to monitor their stress levels in lessons, and ways to deal with excessive stress clearly agreed with all concerned.
- ❖ See section on recording information.
- ❖ See section on time keeping.



Transitions

- ❖ Involve pupils and parents in all discussions on transitions.
- ❖ Prepare well in advance.
- ❖ In school transitions, make visits to next class.
- ❖ All information should be passed on to new teacher.
- ❖ All strategies should be maintained in new class.
- ❖ It would be desirable for new teacher to work with pupil in current class.
- ❖ Plan positioning of pupil in class, re layout, board, desk etc.
- ❖ Secondary School transition should follow the Highland Council's guidance on transition. Receiving school should be alerted:
 - 3 years in advance for building adaptations
 - 2 years in advance for staffing implications
 - 1 year in advance for training implications
- ❖ New staff should be encouraged to work with pupil in current setting.
- ❖ Plan move well in advance.
- ❖ A series of visits to new school at different times of the day.
- ❖ All strategies should be maintained.
- ❖ All information should be passed on.
- ❖ Plan positioning of pupil in classes.
- ❖ Give pupil map of school, names of staff, timetable well in advance of starting date.
- ❖ Ensure you have access to any relevant reports and advice from other professionals, e.g. educational psychologists, occupational therapists etc.
- ❖ Early involvement of career service.
- ❖ Learning styles passport should be produced.
- ❖ Flexible and supported work experience.
- ❖ Support for college applications.

See DCD Transitions Pack and Highland Council Guidance on Transitions for further information.

Further Information

- ❖ Discovery Centre
- ❖ Dyspraxia Foundation
- ❖ www.dotolearn.com
- ❖ Resources section in both Transitions and Information booklets with this pack