



## PIVOTAL EDUCATION

BEHAVIOUR, SAFEGUARDING, TEACHING & LEARNING

Back Home: <http://www.pivotaleducation.com>

Back to Resource Area: <http://www.pivotaleducation.com/free-resources/>

Contact Us: [ellie@pivotaleducation.com](mailto:ellie@pivotaleducation.com)

### Characteristics of Dyspraxia

*Reproduced with kind permission of Barry Stay*

*Please note that this document is protected by copyright and may not be reproduced without permission. To seek permission to reproduce this document in any form, please email [ellie@pivotaleducation.com](mailto:ellie@pivotaleducation.com)*

#### **How does dyspraxia affect children?**

Dyspraxia is often described as a hidden problem, because children appear no different to those who do not have the condition. Whilst it is difficult to determine the specific causes of dyspraxia it is often recognised as being due to injuries of the brain which may result in cells not developing properly during a baby's development in the womb, or a lack of oxygen during birth. Indeed, it has been suggested by Weiss and Wilson (2004) that it is a result of poor development of neural pathways or minor brain injury.

Dyspraxia can affect a range of aspects of a child's life, including their intellectual, emotional, physical, language, social and sensory development and it may impact upon their normal processes of learning. Moreover, dyspraxia can also be associated with a child's language, perception and thoughts resulting in them not progressing as expected developmentally.

As a result, difficulties can arise in the process of forming ideas, motor planning and execution, since people with dyspraxia often have poor understanding of the messages their senses convey and difficulty relating those messages to actions. This means physical

Unit 6, Chiltern House, Waterside, Chesham, Buckinghamshire, HP5 1PS  
Tel: 0207 0001735 Fax: 0207 0224976

Email: [ask@pivotaleducation.com](mailto:ask@pivotaleducation.com) Website: [www.PivotalEducation.com](http://www.PivotalEducation.com)

activities are often hard to learn, difficult to retain, and often hesitant and awkward. Furthermore, children with dyspraxia tend to be poorly organised and may forget daily routines, lose items of clothing and struggle to remember what is expected of them.

Whilst there are many characteristics and difficulties that children with dyspraxia face, it is important to acknowledge that these children tend to be very capable and can excel in schooling and everyday living if they are provided with appropriate support and guidance. Indeed, many children with dyspraxia enter adulthood with the ability to hold down jobs and fulfil 'normal' expectations of adult life. **The essential ingredient to success is centred upon offering appropriate support, developing children's self esteem and confidence, and multi-disciplinary approaches to intervention.**

Dyspraxia can however affect children in many different ways, and at different stages of their development. Consequently, how an individual child is affected may be rather varied. The characteristics of children with dyspraxia may include delays in reaching milestones, not being able to run, hop or jump, when their friends can. In addition children may find it hard to walk up and down stairs, may not be able to dress easily, and their speech may be immature or unintelligible in their early years.

At school, a child with dyspraxia may have difficulty with maths and writing stories. They may also avoid games, be slow at dressing and unable to tie shoelaces, be poorly organised or have a short attention span. They often find it hard to remember and follow instructions, and poor handwriting is one of the most common symptoms. Adaptations to these difficulties may include visual organisers, allowing extra time for changing, slip on shoes, extra tuition in handwriting making use of chubby pens, alternative means of recording work and perhaps access to technology if handwriting is totally frustrating.

### **Gross motor skills**

- Poor balance including difficulty in riding a bicycle
- Poor posture and fatigue including difficulty in standing for a long time as a result of weak muscle tone.
- Poor integration of the two sides of the body
- Difficulty with some physical activities, including physical education at school
- Poor hand-eye co-ordination

- Clumsy gait and movement incorporating difficulty in changing direction, stopping and starting actions
- Exaggerated movements such as flapping arms when running
- A tendency to fall, trip, bump into things and people

**Fine motor skills**

- Lack of manual dexterity
- Poor at two-handed tasks
- Poor manipulative skills
- Poor pen grip in which they may press too hard when writing and have difficulty when writing along a line
- Difficulty with dressing and grooming activities
- Poorly established hand dominance