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## Practical Advice for Teachers:

### The child with co-ordination difficulties in the classroom

#### Modify your teaching strategies

- Ensure that the child is grouped according to his educational ability and not his lack of motor skills. This child may be average or above in oral skills and understanding of concepts.
- Pair the child with a more co-ordinated friend for activities with a practical or written element. Encourage group working to assist with social interaction.
- Provide opportunities for success and protect the child from a public display of their problems. Publicly praise effort whenever possible.
- Praise the child for trying even if he has not been successful with a task. Remember that he is having to work twice as hard as the average child; maintaining his confidence and self-esteem will assist with motivation in the classroom.
- Give the child prior warning when there is to be a change in routine or activity. The more structure the child has, the less stressful they will find it.
- The child may tire more quickly than his peers. If he is obviously tired and having difficulty concentrating, allow him to have time out to look at a book or play quietly to prevent 'flash points' or accidents.
- When giving instructions/new information, break it down into small, manageable chunks and repeat each step, making eye contact with the child to ensure he is listening. Ask the class to repeat the information back to you. Write key words on the board as a prompt.
- Be consistent – the more guidance the child has, the easier it is for him to cope.
- Allocate 'important jobs' to the child e.g. taking the register to the office, handing out materials in class. This helps to increase self-esteem.
- Break up periods of concentration with movement opportunities, stretches, 'wake up' exercises etc to aid attention control.
- Teach how to use equipment, especially in P.E (i.e. rules of games, grip/movements required). Even things that seem self-explanatory may not be to a child with co-ordination difficulties. Teach the task to the class by demonstrating first with the child with co-ordination difficulties, using hand on hand instruction. This allows the child to 'feel' the movement required whilst receiving 1:1 practise. Then allow the class plenty of practise attempts.





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- Give parents prior warning of the term's P.E curriculum so that they can practise the skills at home with the child.
- Be available to assist/intervene if a child is clearly having difficulty, but always stand back for long enough to enable him to try problem solving for himself.
- Teach and periodically review with the class, how to organise their desk/tray. Schedule a weekly desk/tray tidying slot. This will help the child to find the things he needs quickly and independently.
- Evaluate the amount of output that you actually require to assess the child's understanding.
- Encourage creativity and individuality rather than always focusing on end products. Mark content rather than presentation.
- Use positive terminology with the child e.g. alert/interested, helpful enthusiastic, kind. This will help to foster a more positive self-image and raise self-esteem.
- Encourage the child to seek out information in his own areas of interest and share this with the class. Allow him to become an 'expert' on a particular topic which will help to raise his standing with his peers.
- Ensure that any homework is written down correctly and the child understands the task(s) to be completed.
- Fidgeting, although annoying/distracting, may be difficult for the child to control. If it aids concentration, provide the child with a piece of blue-tac or something to occupy their hands. 'Wobble' cushions can also be helpful for some children.
- Explicitly teach letter formation using a multi-sensory approach and allow time for regular practise and consolidation. Group the letters taught according to the motor movements required to form them e.g. c a d g q – all start at the same point with the same movement.



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## Modify the Environment

- Allocate a coat peg/tray/locker at the end of a row. This will make it easier for the child to find.
- Place the child near the front of the classroom facing the board. As well as allowing good eye contact with you, positioning the child so that they do not have to turn the head/body to see the board will prevent unnecessary movement and assist with concentration.
- Reduce distractions for the child by seating them away from the window and the main thoroughfare of traffic within the classroom.
- Ensure the child's table and chair are of the correct height. The child should be able to sit with his back supported and his feet flat on the floor for support, hips and knees at 90°. Without this stable position, the child will find it difficult to produce controlled work with their hands/pencil.
- Ensure the child is positioned close to the waste bin and has easy access to communal supplies of pencils/rulers etc to reduce the amount of journeys that he has to make within the classroom.
- Secure communal pencil/scissor containers to the table with blu-tac, to prevent them being knocked over.
- Provide a selection of different pencils, rulers, scissors on each table, to enable the child to select the type that makes things easiest for him, without drawing attention to this.

- e.g
- pencils with varying barrel diameters
  - rulers with handles, strip of dycem (non-slip) stuck onto standard ruler etc.
  - scissors – standard, easi-grip, long loop



- Where children provide their own pens/pencils etc, encourage the children to use a clear pencil case so that they can quickly and easily find the items they need.

- Laminate a small checklist (with pictures, if required) and attach it securely onto the inside of the child's school bag as a reminder to ensure the child collects all his possessions at the end of the school day e.g. lunchbox, sweatshirt, glasses P.E kit. Encourage him to check this before leaving class. Scan this QR code for an example.



- During carpet time, allow the child to sit by a wall, furniture, or your chair to enable them to support himself adequately and prevent him from leaning on other children. Unsupported sitting may be difficult for the child to sustain.
- Have set places within the classroom for storage of regularly used items. Colour code items e.g. blue labels for any maths materials/blue math books etc.
- Mark any changes in floor level/steps within the classroom environment with yellow hazard tape.



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## Modify the Task

- Provide pre-prepared worksheets/charts/graphs wherever possible, to reduce the amount of organisation and writing involved.
- Avoid unnecessary writing e.g. date, learning objective as this will simply slow the child down even further. Create a balance between written, oral and pictorial responses to enable the child to demonstrate what he has learnt.
- Allow extra time for completion of tasks or allow the child to complete less within the time frame allocated; make your expectations clear to the child. Try not to keep the child in at break-time to finish work as this may be perceived as a punishment. The child needs his break-time to 'let off steam', in order to maintain concentration during lesson time.
- With an older child, if the goal is to promote speed, accept a less accurate product and vice versa.
- When handwriting is not the focus, reduce the amount of written work required. Introduce keyboard skills (scan the QR code for BBC's DanceMat typing) and allow dedicated time for practise. Allow the child to use the computer for extended writing/work to be displayed etc.
- When changing for P.E, teach the children to turn their clothes the right way and pile them up in the order that they took them off e.g. first item at the bottom of the pile. They should then be in the correct order to sequence putting them back on.
- Use balloons or foam balls instead of standard balls in P.E, to reduce the 'fear-factor'.



This information is compiled from a variety of sources.