

"The voice of Special Needs at Sprowston High"

IT'S GLOBAL! WE'RE STILL LEARNING, AND IT CAN BE DIFFICULT

GLOBAL LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

This term is used to describe childhood development that is significantly behind that of the peer group. Developmental milestones may be used for guidance. Many children have a learning disability in a wide range of cognitive needs.

The impairment may be seen on its own or with additional problems such as hearing or vision impairment, epilepsy, or physical movement difficulties. A learning disability is a lifelong condition but much can be done to maximise the child's potential. In the early years the child may be described as showing global delay (wide ranging learning difficulties), or developmental delay, or having special needs.

Some children are recognised very early on as being likely to have a learning disability because they have the signs of a particular syndrome (such as Down's Syndrome) which is known to affect global development and learning skills. Prader-Willi Syndrome and Fragile-X Syndrome are also associated with communication difficulties. For many, however, the cause of the learning disability is unknown. As learning disability persists throughout a person's life, communication problems may also occur for adults.

Treating children as individuals

Many feel the biggest plus of having children with

special needs is associated with seeing children as individuals generally, especially within school:

'All children are individuals; a school with lots of SEN pupils has to recognise this, which is good. As long as the school also does well for the other children then it's good for children to learn to live with people from all walks of life.'

'If they can deal with children with all kinds of learning problems, imagine what they can do for kids who have no trouble learning.'

'If staff work closely with those who have special needs, surely it follows that they will recognise the needs of other individuals and respond to them. If they can care for a special child, an able child should be no problem.'

'Many schools are very inclusive and find having children with special needs adds a positive dimension to school life.'

Some go one step further, believing:

'Every child has a special need. It is the educator's job to identify that need in order that all children reach their full potential. Some needs might not be as obvious as others but the very nature of children is complex and diverse. They cannot all be the same, pressed into an unrealistic mould of who they should be. This does untold damage to our young people, far more than an acceptance of self and others for who they are and freedom to become all they should be.'

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.....further embedding SEN within the fabric of the school

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Children with Global Learning Difficulties have a general developmental delay. They have difficulties with learning across all areas of the school curriculum.

Children with GLD comprise the largest group of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools. Many of these children have a delay of up to three years and consequently need a high level of support within the mainstream classroom.

Many children with GLD might also be suffering from low levels of self-esteem and motivation. They may become resentful and refuse to attempt new work as they perceive themselves to be likely to fail before they start. It is likely that they will become very reliant on LSA's to help them with tasks and they will need much encouragement and praise to persuade them to attempt new challenges which are within their capability and develop greater independence.

Children with GLD may:

- have immature listening/attention skills
- have immature social skills
- rely on a teaching assistant to direct them within the class situation
- have a poor auditory memory
- have a poor visual memory
- have difficulty acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills
- have difficulties with comprehension skills
- need a high level of support with investigation and problem-solving activities
- have poor verbal and non-verbal reasoning skills
- have difficulties with applying what they know to other situations
- have some motor coordination difficulties.

Support strategies you could include..

- trust the LSA; who should support the child, but also encourage them to work independently whenever possible
- ensure that learning activities are broken down into small steps and are clearly focused
- simplify, differentiate or abbreviate class tasks
- provide a multi sensory approach to learning
- provide activities to develop motor skills
- use visual and concrete materials to aid understanding
- keep language simple and familiar in group work

- make use of songs, rhymes and rhythm to aid learning sequences
- keep instructions short and concise
- ask children to repeat instructions in order to clarify understanding
- provide alternative methods of recording e.g. labelled pictures, diagrams, flow charts
- ensure repetition and reinforcement within a variety of contexts
- allow extra time to complete a task
- monitor and record progress so that each small achievement is recognised
- organise activities to develop listening and attention skills
- practise a range of sequencing activities e.g. pictorial activity or story sequences/ word and sentence sequences
- develop role play and drama activities
- help children organise their written work by using writing frames

And most importantly;

praise every effort and successful achievement of new skills

'Basically, what matters is that the child has their needs met in the best way possible; that positive dialogue exists between home, school, teachers, LA and specialists to ensure each child with special needs has the best possible chances.'

"In the world of SEN, it's the people that matter - not the numbers. Thank-you for all of your support." Chris

