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NEEDS &

DISABILITIES

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS & DISABILITIES

This toolkit is designed to equip you with an awareness to working with children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Relevant information about specific needs, disabilities or how best to support participating children will be shared with you by the Learning team or school staff, where possible.

However, sometimes 'statements' or 'labels' can lead to limiting the experience for certain children, so entering with an open mind and being responsive to their needs in-the-moment is important.

Remember

- All children are different.
- All children have strengths and things they find challenging.
- All children require different kinds of support.



TERMINOLOGY

SEND

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is an umbrella term for a number of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Those that have SEND have barriers to learning or interacting with the world so are entitled to additional support and have rights.

Learning Difficulty

Someone with a learning difficulty may store, process or analyse information in an entirely different way. This may affect reading, writing or maths for example. Some learning difficulties can improve with specialist support or strategies to overcome challenges.

Learning difficulties include:

- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia
- Dyscalculia
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Learning Disability

A learning disability is lifelong and varies from person to person. 'Someone with a learning disability might take longer to learn new things or understand complex information. They may learn in a different way, or need information presented to them in lots of different ways.'¹ The disability is likely to affect all areas of life and not just education.

Neurodiversity includes everyone! It's the 'concept that all humans vary in terms of our neurocognitive ability. Everyone has both talents and things they struggle with'.²

Neurotypical

'Describes someone who thinks and processes information in ways that are typical within their culture. They tend to learn skills and reach developmental milestones around the same time as their peers'.³

Neurodivergent

Is a term describing people whose brains develop or work differently. 'This means the person has different strengths and struggles from people whose brains develop or work more typically'.⁴

Physical and Medical Disabilities

Can include challenges with large motor skills like walking, or small motor skills like holding objects and using scissors. A child may also have a medical disability that limits their ability to be physically active, such as a heart or breathing issue. Physical disabilities may be present from birth, or may develop at any point during a person's lifetime⁵.

- Fibromyalgia
- Asthma
- Tourette's syndrome
- Multiple sclerosis



ART & SEND

Art can be a valuable tool for children with SEND to express themselves, build their self-esteem, support mental health and as an alternative way to communicate.

How does creativity support SEND?

- Inspires the imagination
- Promotes confidence
- Builds motivation to succeed
- Develops problem solving skills
- Develops fine motor skills
- Provides a positive environment for conversations on challenging topics
- Enables communication and expression of feelings.⁵



It can be easy to focus on the challenges of children with SEND but forget to ask about their strengths! In order to fully support a child with SEND it's important to see them as a whole person, who has struggles, strengths, personal preferences and passions.

A child with ADHD can be:

- Curious
- Highly engaged in-the-moment
- Energetic
- Creative
- Persistent
- Adventurous
- Able to think about the big picture or outside the box
- Good at dealing with unpredictability

A child with autism can be:

- Logical
- Able to recall details from their long-term memory
- Un-swayed by peer pressure
- Reliable, loyal, honest
- Non judgemental
- A visual learner
- Able to hyper focus
- Able to think outside the box

A child with dyslexia can be:

- A visual thinker
- Creative and good at making connections
- Able to think about the big picture
- Able to recognise patterns
- A narrative reasoner
- Good at verbal communication
- Great at reading people⁶

MAKING A SPACE ACCESSIBLE

Before beginning a workshop it's important to consider:

- Can all children see and hear what is being shared?
- Are the children physically comfortable?
- Does the furniture arrangement support children to engage?
- Is the lighting too bright or too dark?
- Might anyone need noise cancelling headphones if the energy is high?
- Is the space, furniture and equipment accessible for all needs, including those with wheelchairs or physical impairments.
- If displaying text, is it big enough to be read by all?



MAKING A WORKSHOP INCLUSIVE

- Be an active listener, give genuine praise and be aware of your own biases.
- Give children time to process information and to explore.
- Don't take over their art making for them!
- Be flexible and adapt activities to suit the needs of specific children.
- 'Encourage a culture of experimentation with no right way to do something'.⁶
- Celebrate difference and individual responses.
- Try presenting information in a visual format to refer back to, like a visual timeline.
- Allow movement, concentration breaks or energy releases when needed.



Remember!

- No size fits all. Think about each child's needs, strengths and interests.
- All children benefit from accessible language and translating art-speak into simple terms.
- Try to be concise, clear, and engaging!
- Physical disabilities can make holding materials and tools difficult so may affect a child's sense of control with materials. This has the potential to be a source of frustration, so choice of materials needs to be carefully considered.
- Visual differences can impact how children perceive their own artwork and that of others.
- Sensitivity to touch can impact a child's enjoyment of different materials and processes.
- Learning disabilities may impact a child's ability to understand vocabulary or processes.⁷
- Don't worry – everyone is learning together. You won't have all the answers, but the best approach is to be responsive!



AUTISM

'Autism affects the way a person experiences their environment and the way they communicate. People with autism often experience their senses more intensely, meaning the world can feel overwhelming at times.

There are many skills associated with Autism such as honesty and directness, attention to detail, an ability to find or create patterns, processing information and memory'.⁷

Every child with autism is different but how can I support?

- Use their name when speaking to them
- Explain with short and concise instructions
- Maintaining personal space boundaries
- Don't ask too many questions
- Avoid rhetorical or metaphorical questions
- Pause between phrases to give them time to process
- Use specific key words
- Build a relationship with them
- Don't worry if they don't respond verbally

Visual Timeline

- A timeline can be words, drawings, symbols, or objects placed in order to help children understand a process or the flow of the session.
- It is a great way to make information digestible for EVERYONE!
- Helps children with autism understand what is expected and what will happen next, making them feel secure and support them through transitions.

SENSORY PROCESSING

'Sensory processing disorder is a condition that affects how your brain processes the senses': sight, sound, smell, taste and touch.⁸

This can lead children to feel overstimulated by the senses (hypersensitive) and or be under stimulated by the senses (hyposensitive).

Hypersensitive

- Dislike of particular clothes or fabrics, too itchy or too tight.
- Feels overwhelmed by specific sounds.
- Finds it difficult to tolerate bright lights.
- Dislike of specific food textures.
- Overwhelmed by sudden movement or loud noises.

Hyposensitive

- Finds it hard to sit still.
- Seeks thrills by spinning, jumping etc.
- Doesn't respond to all voices.
- Stares at bright lights.
- May not feel pain or feel it at a reduced level.
- May not notice a surface being extremely hot or cold.

Auditory Processing Disorder (APD) Is when a child has difficulty understanding sounds.

A Child with APD may find it difficult to understand when:

- People talk in noisy places
- Words sound similar
- People speak quickly
- Instructions are spoken

How can I support:

- Use visual cues.
- Emphasise key words.
- Sequencing phrases e.g., Saying First, Second, Next...
- Don't speak too fast or too slowly.
- Speak in clear and concise sentences.
- Seating the child away from environmental distractions like a window or noisy fan.
- Get the group's attention before relaying instructions - 'Are we ready?' 'Can you hear me?' 'Put your hands up if you can hear me'

DYSLEXIA

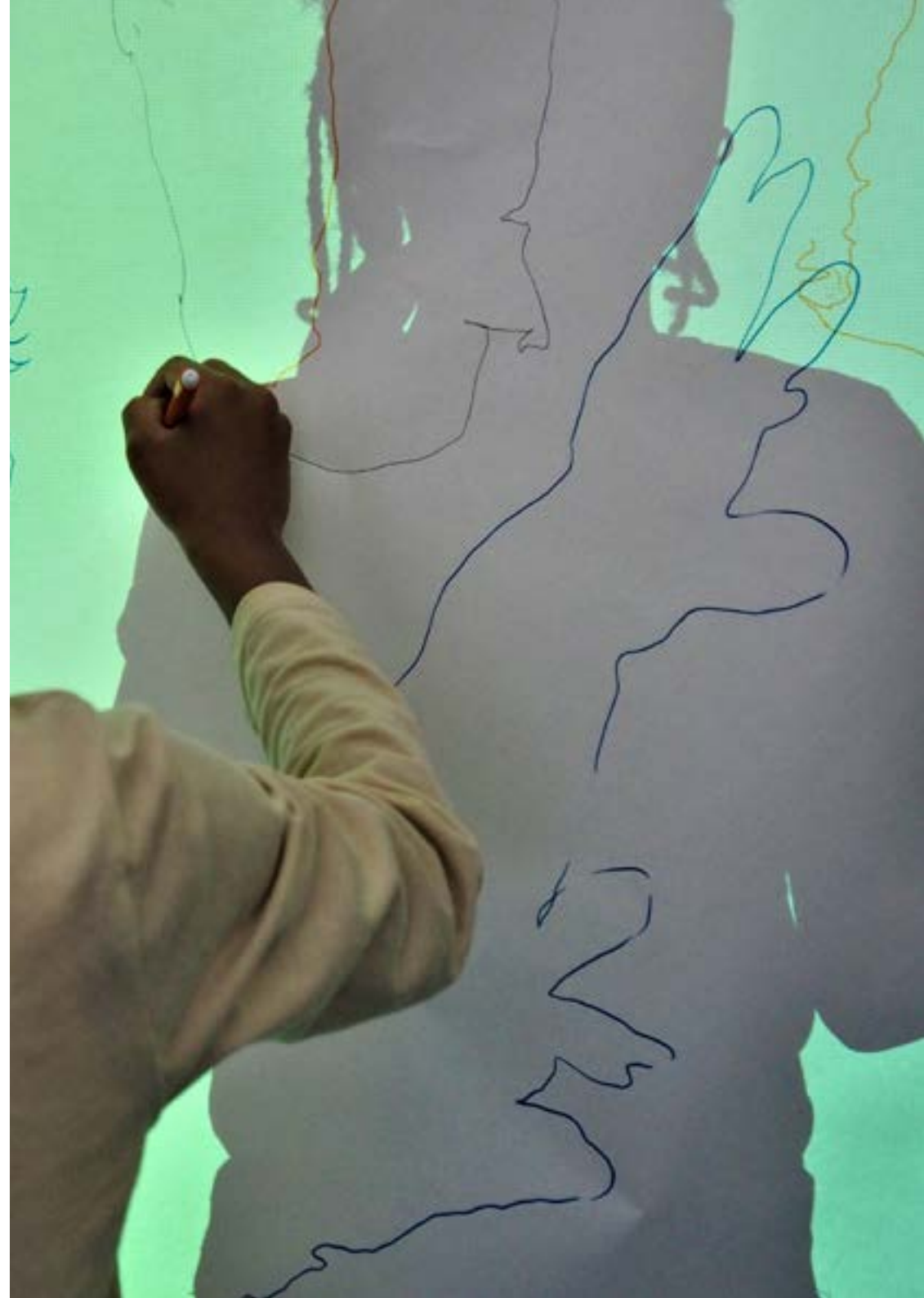
The literal definition is 'difficulties with words'. It is estimated that 10% of the British population are dyslexic and a high proportion of those with dyslexia gravitate towards the arts!

Some children with dyslexia may:

- Have difficulties with reading, writing and spelling
- Take longer than others to complete a task
- Confuse directions (left/right)
- Find holding instructions in their head difficult

What could I do?

- Provide a visual timeline of the workshop
- Keep workshop open ended
- Build relationship with them
- Provide plenty of time to complete activities
- Art is often a place where dyslexic's thrive support/ nurture their creativity.



SAFEGUARDING

Please refer to Drawing Room's Safeguarding Policy for further information or ask if you are unsure of anything.

Children with a disability are at a greater risk of abuse and/or less able to speak out if something isn't right.

They may be more vulnerable because they:

- Have additional communication needs
- They do not understand that what is happening to them is abuse
- Need intimate care or are isolated from others
- Are dependent on adults for care.

Safeguarding processes and action plans need to specifically respond to the SEND needs of any child.

Report to the Safeguarding Lead and share any knowledge on SEND requirements alongside anything you have seen or heard which is of concern.

Every child deserves to be safe and secure.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

REFERENCES

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- Understanding Autism Course, Learning Curve, Level 2
- Behaviour that Challenges in Children (RQF) TQUK Level 2
- Improving Children's Learning Through Play, Educare, CPD
- Children's Perspectives on Play, Open University, CPD
- The Gentle Discipline Book: How to raise co-operative, polite and helpful children, Sarah Ockwell-Smith, Piatkus
- Reflections on Children's Mental Health - A ROCK PAPER SCISSORS Artist Forum with Matilde Rahtz, NHS Mental Health Nurse and Kate Tidman, Occupational Therapist, October 2021
- Play/Work! - A ROCK PAPER SCISSORS Artist Forum with Playworker Penny Wilson, December 2022

Footnotes

1. Conditions, impairments and disabilities, Learning disabilities, Sense
2. What is Neurodiversity, Genius Within
3. What does neurotypical mean?, Medical News Today
4. Neurodivergent, Cleveland Clinic
5. Physical disabilities and childcare, Extension Alliance for better childcare
6. Enabling Art and Design for Learners with SEND, Twinkl
7. Enabling Art and Design for Learners with SEND, Twinkl
8. The Inclusive Classroom, Daniel Sobel, Sara Alston
9. What is autism, National Autistic Society
10. What is Hyposensitivity, Goally

Drawing in its simplest form — leaving a mark on a surface — is direct and instinctive. ROCK PAPER SCISSORS puts children at the centre and explores with them, their teachers, schools and families, what drawing can be and uncovers ideas through the act of drawing. This extensive programme spans afterschool clubs, in-school projects, teachers' assemblies, family studios and holiday clubs — working holistically across different structures within children's lives.

This toolkit has been put together in response to our experience of ROCK PAPER SCISSORS, to better equip ourselves and the team with approaches to support children. It has arrived out of conversation, research and training however training is an ongoing learning curve alongside all those we work with. We thank all children, teachers, teaching assistants, artists, workshop assistants and parents who we have met through ROCK PAPER SCISSORS for coming together and sharing knowledge.

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DRAWING ROOM

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