

Education in Noonan Syndrome

BACKGROUND

Much of this information is by courtesy of Sheila Laverick. Sheila is a parent of a Noonan Syndrome son and is also a Special Needs teacher. In 2002 Sheila analysed a survey which was sent to parents by BDF Newlife regarding their experiences with Noonan Syndrome and education. Therefore this fact sheet is split into 3 sections.

SECTION 1

The following information is an extract from an article by Sheila Laverick published in SNIP (Special Needs Information Press) Newsletter issued May 2003.

WAYS FORWARD IN THE EARLY YEARS SETTING

Specific attention is likely to be required to enhance abilities in motor development. Problems may be experienced in achieving toileting skills, dressing and undressing and using implements such as pencils, felt pens, paint brushes, scissors etc. Manipulative play, such as threading beads, construction and moulding, will need to be supported in order to reduce frustration, with attention paid to levels of difficulty to ensure success. Imaginative play may also be restricted, but could be encouraged with such devices as the use of peer and adult modelling, role play and puppets. Plans need to be developed that identify the small steps needed to gradually achieve competence. Liaison with home regarding reducing threats to success by the revision of clothes and shoes that do not have button and laces can be helpful. Occupational Therapists (OT) can be useful in identifying/providing suitable motor programmes and resources to help support developing skills.

KEY STAGE 1 AND 2

Poor sitting posture and difficulties in balancing may present difficulties, so attention to provision of appropriate seating and positioning needs to be paid. Again, observation and advice from the OT or Physiotherapist would be useful here. Pencil and implement skills will remain weak, so any activity that requires good hand-eye control such as writing, drawing and painting may present difficulties. Provision of appropriate resources such as thicker pencils, grips and a sloping surface may help pupils to achieve success. Consider physical education (PE) - this needs to focus

upon identifying and achieving gross and fine motor skills through the gaining and recognition of individual competencies. Classroom issues such as supporting the ability to be responsible for organising self, by ensuring that storage is at an appropriate height, need to be considered. Regarding learning competencies - individual strengths and weaknesses need to be identified in order to encourage success. Particular attention needs to be paid to ways of supporting the recording of work - copying from the board, for example, is likely to present significant challenges and devices such as providing word frames would be useful. Improving literacy and numeracy abilities should take into account, learning style and utilise many of the strategies suggested for those who indicate dyslexia, e.g. over-teaching, the continued use of concrete apparatus, multi-sensory programmes and the identification of software resources to provide high levels of rehearsal.

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