

# Notes for teachers about \_\_\_\_\_

This child has a diagnosis of a syndrome resulting from a specific chromosomal variation which affects their learning and health. These notes are intended for their teachers and classroom assistants.

This child's parents / guardians have chosen not to disclose the name of the syndrome, however they hope that these notes will assist in working with their child's school.

Many children with this syndrome go on to lead normal lives, and all can have a better experience of school if the appropriate conditions are in place. These children usually have a normal IQ and can achieve - with the right support. Research has shown that children with this syndrome are nearly twice as likely to have a poor experience of schooling, and around 20 times more likely to have education achievement disorders. **Appropriate intervention at the earliest stages** reduces problems, boosts achievement and leads to improved self-esteem. Adults can live happy, fulfilled lives. They can gain degrees and achieve in professional careers or thrive in vocational studies. However, children with this syndrome often slip through school with poor marks. Adults often find success in much later years and tell us they feel cast out by a system that is supposed to detect and address learning blocks. Many children leave school with low self-esteem feeling anger, failure, injustice, bullied and outcast.

**The education issues associated with this syndrome** arise from a number of factors, including:

- Language processing
- Bullying (especially during teenage years)
- Concentration and attention disorders
- Self esteem
- Auditory processing disorder

These problems interact and influence each other, so the child is increasingly likely to develop learning difficulties that are otherwise manageable.

**Specific Learning Difficulties** - the following problems are recognised in these children:

Characteristic	Notes / experiences / adjustments required
Delayed speech development; language delays are very common	<p>Probably the most common feature at school is <b>difficulty with language</b>. The child normally presents with an IQ in range 90-100%, but while they may be able to perform the task, they have difficulty in interpreting the question, and processing the response into something they can express. Often verbally far behind peers where otherwise equal to in most tasks</p> <p><u>What can help</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore supports associated with Speech &amp; Language / Auditory Processing difficulties</li> <li>• Support or extra timing in tests and exams can assist</li> <li>• Some respond to using computer aids rather than handwriting</li> <li>• Scaffold instructions – the more complex the instruction, the less likely it is to be followed. Long sentences become lost. Bullet-point lists are better. Short sequential steps are needed. Instructions need frequent repetition throughout the task.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use visual aids - a picture paints a thousand words. Often an astounding memory for visual data.</li> <li>• Interprets words literally. A commonly black-and-white view of life is reflected in the way words are used. This can lead to a breakdown in relationships, what is often said in fun is taken to heart. Jokes or sarcastic comments may be taken the wrong way.</li> <li>• Difficulty in conversation: dialog is comprised of short, one-word answers or blocks of silence where an answer is composed (silence is often filled by the other party, making communication even more one-sided).</li> <li>• Difficulty in expressing personal thoughts, opinions and needs. They will often say that a situation is “OK” when it clearly is not.</li> <li>• Essay writing becomes an extremely frustrating experience – vocabulary, grammar, verbal sequencing, word-finding, poor handwriting, arrhythmic verbal style and complex imagination leave the child not knowing where or how to start or continue.</li> <li>• Often shy and find it difficult to ask for assistance in class.</li> </ul>
Verbal cognitive deficits; language delays are very common. Lower verbal IQ occurs in around 47%	Poor word finding, syntactic deficiencies, weak narrative formation, structuring verbal expression. Can be misinterpreted as slow writer or lazy. Speak more slowly and pause to ensure the information has been absorbed
Reduced mathematical skills	However, can be an area of relative strength
Social challenges occur in up to 60%	Social anxiety is common. Psychological support benefits. Language delays mean that our children tend to be shy, reserved and young for their age. Sometimes an inability to express emotions leads to frustration and issues with anger management that requires support. Anxiety and depression are more common than in the general population, as are co-diagnosis with Autism Spectrum and other conditions. The specific nature of the syndrome, the medical care requirements, self-consciousness about learning and physical differences and other personal impacts of the condition are often linked to self-esteem issues. Teaching staff and school wellbeing community are asked to apply a high level of awareness and proactivity in supporting this student.
Poor gross motor co-ordination	Occupational therapy is beneficial
Athletic performance	Many love sport and participate in non-team events. Many dislike team or competitive events
Sensory challenges, sensitivity to background sound and noise, attention span issues	Short attention span – many struggle to listen for more than a few seconds. Quiet, relaxed classrooms reduce the likelihood of constant distraction, allowing an appropriate focus on the task in hand. Background noise is distracting, as is movement Try 1:1 time where possible. Explore funding for classroom aides. Even relatively short times of 1:1 followed by work in a peaceful, supportive and productive environment are shown to lead to a profound improvement in performance, and, more importantly, to raise self-esteem and a sense of capability and equality Some have sensory issues and struggle with itchy and rough clothing. If the parent asks for uniform adjustments this is to help the child focus

<p>Poor management of timed activities, planning, memory and Executive Function skills</p>	<p>Where found, can be severe.</p> <p>Can the student repeat back the list of what must be done? This is some measure, but problems with short term memory mean that these instructions will not be retained long. For younger children seek pictorial ways to express a task. Older children will respond well to exemplars of completed work or in stages of production.</p> <p>Memory devices – explore ways of helping the student remember lists and facts. Visual images, such as mind mapping, can significantly help, though they should be encouraged to develop systems for categorising importance or priority. Sometimes it is sufficient to remember that there are “five key facts” to a subject, but at other times a mnemonic may be necessary.</p> <p>Practice with specific skills and management techniques assist. Study skills will be needed throughout life and when well developed can help relieve the academic pressure. Develop the whole process from work organisation skills to research. Suggestions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to pack your bag to ensure everything is present</li> <li>• How to lay out your desk before stating work</li> <li>• Reading exam questions</li> <li>• Time management</li> <li>• Story writing</li> <li>• Essay structure and sub-structure</li> <li>• Note taking – the use of common symbols as substitutes for long words, headings, bulletpoints, tables</li> <li>• Research skills, particularly when to stop researching and move on to composing</li> <li>• Revision for exams</li> <li>• Managing criticism of work, editing, précis</li> <li>• Workshop diaries and laboratory reports</li> </ul>
<p>Data sourced from published, peer reviewed research, which cannot be identified as it discloses the details of the syndrome.</p>	

### Suggestions for teachers:

- These children are often very fond of routine and find change difficult. Support and encourage the establishment of clear routines. Warnings about change of routine are helpful – writing down today’s plan on the whiteboard will help the child understand what’s happening.
- If the student is expected to perform at home it is crucial to ensure that written instructions are clear to both parent and student.
- Many children have an obsession with detail and are unable to see the bigger picture. A story is likely to not progress beyond the opening scene. With expressive language being hard, the whole activity is quite likely to result in frustration and very little progress. For written work give guidelines for component parts that are not too prescriptive, for example “about half a page maximum” is better than “about 150 words”.
- Encourage the use of descriptive expression throughout the day, with sensitivity to the difficulty the child might experience.
- Teach priorities – many children are slower than their peers at completing tasks in the classroom. Try not to spell out the list of priorities to the student, but encourage them to

work through the whole process and draw up their own list. Teachers are encouraged to develop specific teaching objectives for such children as part of lesson planning.

- Time-out. Concentration will prove extremely tiring, this could lead to lack of concentration and short temper. They may well choose to go over to some quiet corner of the room to work - this is not a problem.
- Where an aptitude for technology is evident, this can be exploited to an almost infinite degree with the right teacher and management. Spreadsheets can offer a more visual pathway to managing numbers and the child can rapidly become adept at constructing formulas as well as logically laying out tables and lists. The rigid adherence to methods and disciplines can be a significant advantage in many technological skills
- Offer diagrammatic and pictorial expression and organisation. A quick drawing can frequently prevent a long and fruitless description. Flow diagrams can summarise tasks and processes.
- Work with ALL the pupils in the class at developing a culture of acceptance and inclusion. It is very easy for this child to be bullied and teased; a supportive peer group can grow a child with a radiant personality and sense of self-worth. Encourage a communicating environment where students can share ideas and experiences safely, where all viewpoints are equally valued and those who struggle to communicate are supported and not excluded.
- Assessment – construct methods that rely less heavily on essay style answers. Is there a practical way to demonstrate a skill? Could multiple choice or short-answer questions give similar results?
- Exams are an unavoidable part of the academic route. The student needs plenty of practice at these, both to gain familiarity with the style of questioning and to improve their sense of time-management. Extra time may be needed.

### **Positive effects of this syndrome**

Common traits in these children and in later life as adults tend to be high empathy, kindness, honesty and gentleness. You may grow very fond of this child and appreciate their sweet, shy personality.

### **More information**

The parents / guardians of this child have chosen not to diagnose the name of this syndrome, but they want to partner with you to create the best learning environment for their child and to ensure their child has a happy and positive school experience. Please ask them more about their child and which aspect of this paper seem most relevant to them.