

## Learning and Teaching for Teachers and Parents



A careful analysis of the child should be undertaken. Observe very closely and record any possible areas of concern.

For further information see the [Observations PDF for Teachers and SNAs](#) link on the Learning & Teaching for Teachers and Parents document of the Learning and Teaching section of our website

The analysis should include:

### Attention Span (short)

A child with Hydrocephalus may present with difficulties with attention e.g. may become restless and easily distracted. This can be attributed to a number of different reasons such as difficulties in other areas of learning e.g. visual perception, memory, motivation etc

For further information see the [Literacy & Thinking PDF for parents or Literacy & Thinking PDF for teachers'](#) links on the Learning & Teaching for Teachers and Parents document of the Learning and Teaching section of our website

### Short-term Memory

Child may appear forgetful and misses the point of questions and explanations. There may be difficulty in remembering instructions. Visual memory difficulties hinder copying from the blackboard successfully.

For further information see the [Literacy & Thinking PDF for parents or Literacy & Thinking PDF for teachers'](#) links on the Learning & Teaching for Teachers and Parents document of the Learning and Teaching section of our website

### Visual Perception

A child with Hydrocephalus may present with difficulties in visual-motor skills and visual spatial awareness.

For further information see the [Physical Abilities PDF](#) link on the Learning & Teaching for Teachers and Parents document of the Learning and Teaching section of our website

## Learning and Teaching for Teachers and Parents



### Motivation

The child may require a verbal prompt or stimulus to get started. Other innate difficulties e.g. poor hand function, short-term memory, poor hand-eye coordination, and poor eye-scanning ability may prevent successful achievement of tasks.

For further information see the [Literacy & Thinking PDF for parents](#) or [Literacy & Thinking PDF for teachers'](#) links on the Learning & Teaching for Teachers and Parents document of the Learning and Teaching section of our website

### Ability to Generalise

Difficulties in reasoning, affects a child's ability to form concepts and generalise. The child may be unable to use knowledge gained in one area and transfer it to another area e.g. translating mathematical concepts to concrete examples. A child with specific difficulties in sensory or motor organisation will display poor reasoning ability.

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### Sequencing

Due to Hydrocephalus, the brain can have difficulty processing information quickly, efficiently and in sequence. A child may have a difficulty in remembering a sequence of tasks; a number of instructions e.g. Get your pen and copy book out, turn to page 5 and count how many dogs there are on the page. The child may have difficulty in making prompt decisions. Comprehension may be poor due the child's inability to sequence what is said correctly.

For further information see the [Numeracy PDF for parents & Mathematics PDF for teachers'](#) links on the Learning & Teaching for Teachers and Parents document of the Learning and Teaching section of our website

### Concept of Time & Speed

Words like "yesterday", "tomorrow" or "hurry up" may hold no meaning to a child with Hydrocephalus. Because of this lack of understanding children may require more time to complete tasks and tests. *For further information click here (PDF)*

## Learning and Teaching for Teachers and Parents



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### Hand Skills

Children with Hydrocephalus may display poor manual dexterity and immature arm movements. As a result more practice and teaching will be required as hand function does not improve with age and will require assiduous teaching.

For further information see the [Literacy & Thinking PDF for parents](#) or [Literacy & Thinking PDF for teachers'](#) links on the Learning & Teaching for Teachers and Parents document of the Learning and Teaching section of our website

### Hand-Eye Coordination

Unlike their peers a child with Hydrocephalus may present with underdeveloped and underperformance in relation to pencil and paper tracing tasks, free-hand drawing and copying from the blackboard. Their work may resemble that of a considerably younger child and will benefit from focused training in this area.

For further information see the [Physical Abilities PDF](#) link on the Learning & Teaching for Teachers and Parents document of the Learning and Teaching section of our website

### Handwriting

Children with Hydrocephalus may have difficulty in acquiring good writing skills, this may be due to visuo-motor, visuo-perception and visuo-spatial difficulties such as wiring become a tedious task. Because of difficulties in making spatial judgements, letters may be too widely or narrowly placed in relation to each other. Letters may be badly formed, sometimes reversed. Spacing and size of words and letters are uneven and writing may be badly aligned. As such, a considerable amount of practice in letter formation will be required. Discourage "pattern copying" when teaching writing skills as transferring this skill to regular writing will hold its own difficulties particular if the child has difficulty in, their ability to generalise and with visual perception. As a number of children with Hydrocephalus are left-handed they may require a lot more guidance and support when learning to write. In order to help a child with poor handwriting, identify the underlying reason for the difficulty:

## Learning and Teaching for Teachers and Parents



(a) hand function (b) visual perception (c) poor memory, sense direction or sequencing (d) concentration.

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### Number Work

Children with Hydrocephalus can present with exceptional skills in certain aspects of number work and poor in other areas. Poor visuo-spatial ability can make it harder for them to arrange the figures in the appropriate columns or they may have difficulty in setting out written sums. Their ability may be affected by (a) visual perceptual difficulties (b) left to right discrimination (c) frequent hospitalisation (d) poor attention span (e) poor eye-scanning and (f) poor memory organisation (difficulty in identifying the correct digit on which to carry out computations). Progress in number work may also be hampered by reading and writing skills. It is important to identify the areas affected quickly so that appropriate preventative or remedial action can be taken.

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### Further Strategies to help with Classroom Learning

Early identification is the most important tool for overcoming learning disabilities. In the best-case scenario, the child with Hydrocephalus will have undergone comprehensive evaluation by an experienced neuropsychologist, preferably in the preschool years. In reality, however, many children receive only adequate to insufficient evaluation from a tester who is not experienced with Hydrocephalus or with the more complex issues involved.

Task analysis—breaking an activity into smaller, achievable steps—is an excellent strategy. Using strengths (especially verbal) and allowing alternate means of expression (such as a tape-recorder or a computer) can be very helpful. Motivation is also key.

Teachers and Parents can:

- Be sure to have the child's attention before telling or showing him or her something.

## Learning and Teaching for Teachers and Parents



- Give short assignments that can be done successfully.
- Use schedules and lists wherever possible.
- Provide an extra set of books for use at home.
- Allow verbal reporting as an acceptable alternative to writing.
- Provide additional time to complete timed tasks such as tests and assignments.
- Provide a separate room for taking exams, away from distractions.
- Decrease the required quantity of written work.
- Break down tasks and instructions into small, clear steps.
- Allow the use of calculators for math problems and tests.
- Allow the student to use a computer and email for homework assignments.
- Communicate with parents early and frequently.

With their teachers' and parents help, students can:

- Obtain a set of notes from the teacher, or have a peer make a copy of their notes.
- Use a timer or a watch with an alarm.
- Reduce clutter in work area.
- Position desk close to the blackboard or where distractions are reduced.
- Use a homework book, organizer or notebook to keep track of homework assignments.
- Use graph paper for math assignments, to keep columns aligned and numbers organised.

*"Lee loves math, but he works more slowly, and completing homework assignments can take him a very long time. So instead of asking him to complete all ten problems in a homework assignment, his teacher allows Lee to do, say, five of the problems—which demonstrates his understanding but doesn't monopolise his evening."*

### Behaviour

Physical disability may affect behavioural and emotional development. Children may appear less mature and anxieties, tensions and frustrations are often concealed. Children may react to such emotions by appearing "passive" in nature.

Children with Hydrocephalus often exhibit behaviours that are mistakenly attributed to disruptive tendencies. If the child's behaviour deteriorates rapidly, think shunt; if the onset is insidious, it is likely to be due to the problematic behaviour caused by the Hydrocephalus.

## Learning and Teaching for Teachers and Parents



For further information see the [Behaviour PDF for parents](#) & [Behaviour PDF for teachers](#) links on the *Learning & Teaching for Teachers and Parents* document of the *Learning and Teaching* section of our website

### Social & Emotional Issues

Most social learning is done automatically, by seeing, copying and conditioning. Social skills are usually learned incidentally, without formal instruction. However, many children with Hydrocephalus may have learning difficulties which make it difficult or nearly impossible to pick up the verbal and nonverbal cues necessary for the acquisition of social skills.

Children with poor social skills often have difficulty processing nonverbal and spatial information. As a result, they frequently misinterpret subtle social cues like facial expressions, gestures and tones of voice.

For further information see the [Social Skills PDF](#) link on the *Learning & Teaching for Teachers and Parents* document of the *Learning and Teaching* section of our website

### Further Strategies to help with Behaviour, Social and Emotional Issues

It is extremely important for the social and emotional issues simply to be acknowledged. They can then be better defined through testing and included in the child's IEP. Early intervention is absolutely crucial. Even if a child does more or less catch up with her peers, it will probably happen over time and some skills may always be missing. The first step is a neuropsychological evaluation by an experienced neuropsychologist, which can pinpoint areas of deficiency and identify the necessary strategies.

Parent & Teachers can:

- Assume you have to tell the child everything—he or she cannot simply observe and learn.
- Verbally teach strategies for conversation, such as give and take, beginnings and endings of a conversation, how and when to change the subject, formal versus informal speech and tone of voice.
- Verbally teach strategies for assessing body language (facial expressions, correct social distance, etc.).
- Talk through situations in order to give the child a verbal view of someone else's internal speech process. Help the child develop a sequence of steps for self-monitoring, verbalizing each step.

## Learning and Teaching for Teachers and Parents



- Verbally point out distinctions between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour; group the child with good role models.

### **Practice Makes Perfect**

Parents and teachers can help children with Hydrocephalus learn more effective social skills by talking about social rules and playing games in which children guess the feelings that go with facial expressions and tones of voice, and figure out appropriate responses.

For some children, it may help to write out scenes describing new—or even everyday—social interactions, so that they can learn what is expected of them. In rehearsing these scenarios, they can also learn what kinds of phrases and emotional responses are expected of them.

### **Precocious Puberty**

Some children with Hydrocephalus may develop early puberty. It is seen more often in girls than in boys. Preparation of the child for the onset of periods and sexual development needs to be handled sensitively.

For further information see the [Precocious Puberty PDF](#) link on the Learning & Teaching for Teachers and Parents document of the Learning and Teaching section of our website

### **Sports**

Many parents and teachers worry that, if a child with Hydrocephalus joins in with the games and sports that their friends enjoy, damage to the shunt is likely to follow. Shunts are, in fact, difficult to break or dislodge and most sports - with few exceptions - should be encouraged.

For further information see the [Hydrocephalus and Sport PDF](#) link on the Learning & Teaching for Teachers and Parents document of the Learning and Teaching section of our website

### **Physical Disabilities**

If a child has a physical disability associated with paralysis and skin sensitivity, please be vigilant with the following in the classroom and school environment.

## Learning and Teaching for Teachers and Parents



Children with paralysis will not feel pain in the area of their paralysis and therefore should not sit next to a radiator as this may burn them and because of paralysis they will not feel their skin burning. Likewise if a child falls and breaks a bone, again this may not be felt and should be assessed by medical personnel or first-aid staff to ensure no break has occurred. Hot items such as laptops left on laps can also cause skin damage and severe burns if left for long periods.

Common sense should prevail and children with a physical disability should not be discriminated against or treated differently because of their paralysis. It is the responsibility of school personnel to ensure the safety of their pupils in a way that does not exclude them.

Learning and Teaching for  
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