

**'I hear and I forget,
I see and I remember,
I do and I understand'**

Down Syndrome Support in the Early Years and Beyond

A child's development is influenced by input and active social interaction over a period of time—it is **not** fixed at birth.

This is a booklet to provide advice to class teachers and support staff when working with children who have Down Syndrome, in Early Years settings and Key Stage 1. It has been written with reference to advice from Downs Syndrome Education International, who are 'an international charity that supports scientific research and delivers evidence-based advice and information to improve outcomes for children with Down Syndrome worldwide'. They have been carrying out international research and support for children with Down Syndrome for over 30 years. They provide online courses and resources for parents and education providers. For further information please follow the link to their website:

www.dseinternational.org

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Speech and Language

Speech and Language development is a **specific delay** in children with Down Syndrome (DS) however, they are generally good at communicating (gesture, sign, eye contact, show interest in faces etc.) and want to communicate. Learning vocabulary can be delayed and grammar and clear speech can be challenging.

Teaching spoken language is a priority for children with Down Syndrome.

How to help:

- Target speech and language development **as early as possible**; seek additional support from Speech and Language therapists;
- Teach spoken language explicitly;
- **Talk to the child** about the environment; the things you see and do, e.g.: 'I'm going to the kitchen, to begin to cook the dinner, tonight we are eating XXX, can you get a plate and a fork?'. **It matters greatly** and is important that one talks to the child. Children with DS are often talked to less;
- **Introduce books** early on—reading supports talking and language;
- Use **visual supports** to support language—signs, pictures, print;
- Allow the children to **demonstrate their understanding** of language by pointing, selecting, choosing;
- Understand the importance of **regular health care checks for vision and hearing**;
- Address **working memory** difficulties;
- Encourage motor development. Play games/sport, talk about the activity e.g.: 'it's my turn, it's your turn', 'I'm going to throw the ball, now you throw the ball'.

Learning to Talk

Early vocabulary development in children with DS is generally delayed, but their **ability to understand is stronger**. However, this can be varied in development and progress.

Quality and quantity of talk influences language progress for ALL children. Less language input means less opportunity for language learning.

Babies/Toddlers tend to 'talk' using pre linguistic daily skills such as eye contact, turn taking, imitation, gestures, joint attention e.g. 'look a ball!, look at the ball', wait for the child to look at the ball. Processing time is needed for a child with Down Syndrome to engage with joint attention.

Adult may need to model 'pre linguistic skills' for children with Down Syndrome – use pointing, showing, and requesting. If the child shows some form of gesture, adult should respond to it and talk about it.



Teaching Signs:

- **Children could learn a sign easier** than the spoken word, however, always continue to respond to the child's speech attempts. Spontaneous and unprompted use of signs/words may take some time – **BE PATIENT**;
- **ALWAYS say the word** as you sign it;
- Signing raises expectations;
- It **increases and supports** communication;
- Makaton is recommended – it includes sign, visual, and spoken word;
- It increases early vocabulary;
- Use signs **from 8/9 months of age**;
- Think of it as a 'bridge' to talking;
- May support verbal short-term memory.



Teaching first words

How to help:

Understanding of single words **comes before** expression of single words

- When teaching first words it is recommended to have 2 sets of targets – words they understand and words they can say/sign;
- Keep lists of words at home and in pre/school setting;
- Make them **visual** – real objects, pictures;
- Use them in daily, structured practice;
- Provide **opportunities** for extra practice during play activities;
- Begin with nouns then verbs;
- Talk about **everyday things** – perhaps label everyday items e.g.
 - **Washing body parts:** sink, water, tap, hot, cold, flannel, soap, hands, face, plug, towel, dry, wet etc;
 - **Going to the shops:** bus, bus stop, car, car park, seat belt, oyster card, bell, seat, press, door, wait, on, off, driver, passengers, people, shop, toys, food, in, out, lift, escalator etc;
- To teach 'words' use the '**match, select, name**' process (See and Learn kits available on Downs Ed website www.seeandlearn.org or STEPS Word UP). Begin with matching pictures or objects, then select e.g. 'show me the cat', finally name e.g. 'what is it?'. If the child says or signs 'cat' then they are demonstrating understanding.



Word Production


How to help:

- Begin with words that the child **already understands**;
- **Model/imitate**;
- Keep background noise to a minimum. **Speak clearly** and encourage **eye contact**. Minimise any distraction;
- Give the **child choices** e.g. 'Would you like milk or juice?', pause, wait..... let them try to speak. Then repeat their answer, if necessary, use a visual e.g. 'did you mean milk?' ...and show picture or item;
- **Respond to all** word attempts;
- Keep a **record** of progress;
- **Play games** such as using a feely bag. 'What's in the bag? Is it a cup or a spoon', then **show** the child and **pause**, wait ... **repeat** what the child says, **modelling correct speech**;
- Teach words in **categories** e.g. body parts, garden, playground, animals etc. Make simple books about different topics/themes e.g. going to the beach, going to the park;
- Extend **depth of meanings** of words e.g. 'ball', this could mean football, rugby ball, tennis ball, golf ball, etc;
- Begin to **categorise objects/pictures**. Use 2 boxes, or 2 hoops. Show child a picture of a 'cat', say 'Is this food or an animal?' Ask child to put the picture in the right box or hoop.

Sentences and Grammar

How to help:

- Child needs an **understanding of about 50-100 words** before they are able to begin to **string 2-3 words together**;
- Child needs about **300 words** to **start learning** and using grammar;
- Adults can help by **modelling, imitation and expansion**;
- Use signs, pictures, props;
- Make books e.g. single and plurals, 'one glove, two gloves';
- Use a pacing board – tap/point to each dot for each word in the sentence e.g. 'the boy is eating':


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- Use **personalised books** e.g. Billy at the park, Billy on the swing, Billy on the slide, Billy on the climbing frame etc;
- Make **conversation diaries** e.g. go to the park, take photos and make them into a book and put short sentences underneath each picture;
- Try to ask child '**open ended**' questions e.g. 'who was at the park?', 'what did you play on....?';
- **Respond** to the child's answers; take their key words and expand into the shortest correct sentence e.g. child: 'play sand', adult: 'I played in the sand';
- **Encourage** the playing of imaginative games, use the 'home corner' or construction areas in the preschool setting, e.g. 'shall we put the dolly on the chair?' or 'Let's drive the car into the garage';

Developing Speech and Verbal Short-Term memory

It **takes time** to practice words.

Encourage, Repeat, Practice – Help them improve

Speech Skills:

- A child needs to be able **to hear** the individual speech sounds;
- A child needs to be able **to make** the individual speech sounds;
- Speech is a **'motor' skill** to be learn;
- There is little evidence about the link between oral motor skills and speech skills;
- Children with DS will 'babble' and this may be for longer than other children, there will also be an inconsistency in speech production.

slow down

Speech Intervention

How to help:

- **Symbolic sounds** e.g. animal noises, transport noises 'choo choo' train ;
- **Sound cards** for the phonic sounds. Use vocabulary cards with pictures as prompts for sounds e.g. /a/ with a picture of an apple;
- Bear in mind – **consonants are more difficult** to produce;
- Support the child in **looking at your face**;
- Test to see if the child can **distinguish between sounds** e.g. show me 'b', show me 's' and get child to give correct sound/picture card;
- Begin with **'distant pairs'** – sounds that are completely different e.g. 'b' and 's';
- Then move on to **'minimal pairs'** e.g. 'b' and 'd';
- Ensure the child has **regular hearing screening**;
- Once they can say the target sound, make **'sound' books** with pictures beginning with that particular sound.



Resources for developing speech

DSE Checklist for speech.

It can be used to **assess** the child's current **progress**, to **set targets** and to keep an ongoing **record of progress**. The checklist contains instructions on how to use it.

<https://store.dseenterprises.org/collections/checklists>

See and Learn Speech.

See and Learn Speech comprises of a **graded programme** to ensure that children can **hear and discriminate between all the speech sounds** in English, **produce single sounds** clearly, **combine consonants and vowels** and then **move on to saying words clearly**. We recommend working on speech activities and language activities alongside each other. For details of the program, the evidence base and design see <https://www.seeandlearn.org/speech/>

Seek advice from your local Speech and Language Therapy service.

Memory

Supporting memory and attention:

- **All play** encourages attention;
- Children **learn to attend**;
- **Hiding games** such as Kim's game support memory;



- **Finding** objects/tidying up games;
- Think, remember, sequence and organise themselves.

Supporting Verbal short-term memory

These **factors** may **affect** verbal short-term memory:

- Hearing loss;
- Poor discrimination skills;
- Poor phonological representations;
- Slow development of speech;
- Less familiarity with words;
- Slow retrieval of phonological information;
- Slow organisation and production of words – unable to remember long lists;
- Lack of rehearsal strategies.

Memory Training: Make a card, see below; **cover each picture** and **only reveal the first one** and **say** the word e.g. 'pig'. Then **cover it again**. Next, **reveal the first picture** and **say 'pig'**, then continue to **reveal the second picture** and **say 'bus'** then **cover them both up again**. Continue to repeat the process.



Links to further information:

Gathercole, S.E. & Alloway, T.P (2007)

Understanding working memory: a classroom guide Useful booklet on working memory for teachers at

<http://www.mrccbu.cam.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/WMM-classroom-guide.pdf>

Social and Emotional Development

- Children need **close interaction** with their parents/carers/families/peers to support their development.
- The Social and Emotional needs of children with DS are **very much in line with** children of the same age. They will experience puberty, become teenagers, fall in love and form relationships at the around the same age as other children.
- Remember **all** children can display unwanted or difficult behaviour.
- The following influences on behaviour **are the same for all** children: health issues, tiredness, stress, poor routine. Ensure there is good home/school contact, prepare the child for changes, use visuals or personalised story books to aid change.

Behaviour	
	How to help/prevent unwanted behaviour
<p>Social Behaviours are learnt by experience.</p> <p>The children will benefit from playing with other children. It will support them making friends, learn social rules, behave in socially accepted ways and how to behave appropriately in different situations e.g. the park, shops, swimming, school, church'. They will also learn how to understand and manage their feelings.</p>	<p>Behaviour can be unlearned.</p> <p>Expect and teach positive behaviours, expect 'age appropriate' behaviours - Do not 'baby' a child with Down Syndrome</p> <p>If a child keeps repeating the unwanted behaviour – you are rewarding the behaviour</p> <p>Teach replacement behaviour Use an observation diary if necessary or ABC chart (antecedent/behaviour/consequence)</p>
Teach that adults set the rules and are in control.	Teach rules explicitly and reward positive behaviour
Have high expectations	Ensure they understand what they are expected to do.
Set boundaries . There are no excuses for poor behaviour.	<p>Ignore unwanted behaviour if it is safe to do so – if not, monitor and give minimum attention</p> <p>Show pictures of child 'doing the right thing'.</p>
Support with using visual timetables to aid routine.	<p>Use visuals, pictures, photos, social stories etc.</p> <p>Establish early routines. This helps to make life predictable, reduces anxiety and helps the child learn to wait.</p>
Children with Down Syndrome can use social behaviours to divert adult and succeed in avoiding the task required.	<p>Consider the level of task – is it too easy, too hard? Is it motivating? Is it too long, too supported by an adult – is it the same as their peers' tasks? Can they see the worksheet – is it big/clear enough?</p>
Communication is difficult. A child may use types of behaviour to communicate – throwing toys, pulling arms/hair	<p>Teach signs or establish a way of communicating with the child. Use a feelings chart Social stories Offer choice</p>
Children can be sensitive to negative emotional cues	<p>Use positive reminders of what you want the child to do. Provide positive support – 'we know you can do it' Praise for any effort made on the task – 'I really like the way you lined up with your friends, you're doing great colouring, what a great job of washing your hands...' Don't smile at unwanted behaviour.</p>
Be aware of other people's reactions	<p>Change adult behaviour and attitudes Provide whole school training for children and adults. See You Tube clip – 'Just like me'. Adapt the school behaviour policy where possible – it may need to reflect a more flexible approach Work as a team around the child</p>
Behaviour may deteriorate if the child suffers with broken sleep .	Good bedtime routine and sleep patterns will help support behaviour



Books and Reading

The advice is to **read to babies** from early weeks of life. Choose simple stories and read for fun. Have a selection of favourite books to read – include books that have a touch and feel element such as ‘pop up’ pictures, ‘lift the flap’ books, nursery rhyme books and books with clear pictures.

Many children with DS can learn to read printed words from 2 1/2 – 3years old.

How to help:

- Focus on words at child’s language level. Begin **teaching whole word reading** when the child understands at least 50 -100 words, and that they are able to match and select pictures;
- **Choose words** the child **understands** and follow the ‘matching, selecting, naming’ process;
- Follow **child’s lead**;
- Support to model, help them point to pictures/words;
- **Give time** for the child to respond;
- Model answer;
- **Provide** ‘errorless’ learning;
- **Prompt success**;
- Teach **small sight vocabulary words** and use in simple sentences;
- Use **personalised books**. Make books about the child’s own world – their family, home, activities and outings they like etc. Take lots of photos or use an iPad/tablet and make books using online apps such as Special Apps/Special Stories;
- Make **reading** and activities **fun**.



When to begin Teaching Phonics:

- **Phonics can be very hard** for some children with DS; some might only learn to read with **whole word reading**;
- Where appropriate, **begin phonics teaching** when the child has a **sight vocabulary** of 30-40 words (pre-school);
- **Include** child with the **rest of the class** phonic sessions. This will benefit their development of **speech sounds** and allow them to feel **socially included** – even if they are not yet accessing phonics;
- Use **Visual supports**;
- Be aware of difficulties with **phonological awareness** (hearing sounds in words). Focus on activities such as:
 - Listening games;
 - Rhyme (this can be difficult for children with DS);
 - Focus on phonemes – initial/end sounds;
 - Matching/sorting games;
 - Visuals – find words starting with ‘s’;
 - I spy;
 - Listen to spoken word pairs.

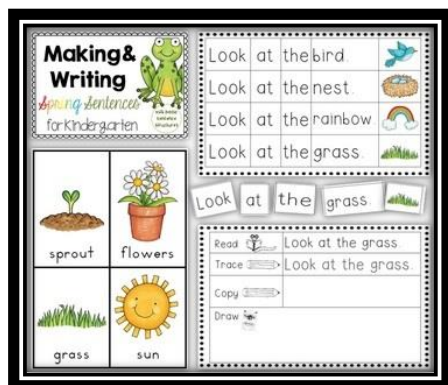


Letter-Sound correspondence

- Can start around the age of 4yrs;
- **Check** child **can hear** the letter sounds;
- Look for target letters in books;
- **Play** with plastic/magnetic **letters**. Match **words to pictures** then change one letter;
- Use phoneme frames;
- Use **flashcards** to sound out and blend (begin with VC/CVC words). However, blending can be difficult for children with DS;
- Downs Ed have produced a '**Reading and Language Intervention Programme**' which could be introduced to school age children with DS (age 5-6yrs). This intervention can be delivered daily, with a clear structure. It is arranged into 40 minute 1:1 sessions.

How to help reading Sentences:

- Use **personal books** to help sentence teaching
- Begin with:
 - **Matching key words** in sentences
 - **Matching all words** in sentences
 - **Order the words** in sentences
 - **Choosing words** to make own sentences
 - **Fill in the missing word** in the sentence
- Ensure that the child is **reading for meaning** – read the sentences and match to the correct



The girl	is eating
The boy	is sleeping
The dog	is running
The cat	is jumping
The horse	is walking

Links to further information:

- **See and Learn Language and Reading** - <https://www.seeandlearn.org/language-andreading/>

See and Learn Language and Reading First Phrases 1,2,3

See and Learn Language and Reading Sentences and Grammar 1,2,3

The kits and apps **provide all the guidance and materials needed to begin to teach children with Down syndrome to read and to use reading activities to develop spoken language**. They use matching, selecting and naming techniques as discussed in the module and activities to assess single word and phrase/sentence comprehension when reading. The materials ensure the child is reading at a language level that is simple and supports comprehension. The materials will give educators a model for developing more teaching materials and books for the student they are working with. They can also be used for the beginning stage of RLI.

- **A Reading and Language Intervention for children with Down Syndrome (RLI)** – designed for children from age 5 years.
- **STEPS Word Up programme** – please contact STEPS. A reading and language programme/approach based on the See and Learn programmes.

Developing Number and Math skills

Number is **more of a challenge** for children with DS, than learning to read. There has been very little research on how best to support children with DS with number.

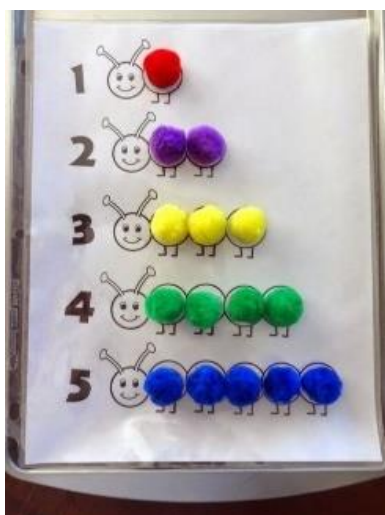
Number basics for all children:

A child needs to understand these concepts for the numbers 1-9 **before** moving on. It is recommended that a child learns these concepts for the **numbers 1-5 initially**.

- learn to **say** number names;
- learn to **use number names** to count objects (1:1 correspondence);
- **link** numbers with quantity;
- learn that the **last count** word tells you **'how many'** (Cardinal principle);
- understand cardinality – to be able to give a number of items from a set;
- To learn 'equinumerosity' – **same size sets** have the **same number of objects**;
- Understand 'ordinality' – each next number is **one more equal unit**;
- **Move on** from 'count all' to 'count on' (i.e. from a given number);
- Understand **'inverse'** operations e.g. $3 + 4 = 7$ - $4 + 3 = 7$;
- Understand that numbers always represent **fixed quantity**.

Linking quantity to numerals and numbers:

- Numerals represent quantity;
- Start with 1 & 2;
 - Put correct number of counters on each numeral card;
 - Thread beads on a straw;
 - Make a 'number 1' book, then a 'number 2' book e.g 2 eyes, 2 ears, 2 legs etc.



Learning to count and understand 'how many?'

- Learning 1:1 correspondence;
- Start in order;
- Reinforce;
- Use books;
- Ask 'how many' before and after counting.



How to help:

Don't go too fast!

- Use **visual practical** teaching materials;
- Provide lots of **'hands on'** experience;
- **Relate to interests;**
- Teach **language** for number e.g. more, less, same, equal, big, little;
- Discriminating and saying number names is difficult e.g. **thirty** and **thirteen**;
- **Number lines** are essential. Use ones with words and numbers;
- Provide **lots of** number **practice**;
- **Play** counting **games**, songs, number books;
- **Play** with sets of **identical objects**. Count sets, rearrange and count again. Count items in a line;
- Play **'give me'** games, or **'how many'** games;
- When teaching maths language use the **new word** as the **last word spoken** in a sentence e.g. the ball is **'red'**, Look at the balls, there are **'two'**;
- Introduce **Numicon** – helps the child understand that the shape represents quantity. It clearly shows that the next number is one more.



Links to further information:

Alton, S. et al (2003) **Education Support Pack for Schools, The UK Down's Syndrome Education Consortium, Down's Syndrome Association.**

Bird, G. & Buckley, S. (2000) **Number skills development for children with Down syndrome, Down's Syndrome Issues and Information, DownsEd Syndrome Educational Trust.**

See and Learn Numbers app/pack: <https://www.seeandlearn.org/en-gb/numbers/>

Numicon: <https://global.oup.com/education/content/primary/series/numicon/?region=uk>



Motor Development

Practice matters for progress

Have high expectations

Provide plenty of opportunity and experiences for active movement

Development of motor skills allows the child to:

- Progress to independence;
- Develop self-help skills;
- Engage in social interaction;
- Explore the physical world.

Health issues may affect energy and movement development.

How to Encourage movement in pre-school/school:

- encourage movement around the setting;
- **finger painting/mark making** with different objects e.g. chalk, brushes, different writing implements;
- encourage **mark making on different surfaces**;
- play with **jigsaws** with **large** wooden pieces with knobs on;
- explore toys that **encourage hand strength**;
- encourage **outdoor play** – make use of the outdoor equipment;
- **ball** games;
- promote toys that need **to be pushed** (they may need to be weighted to avoid tipping);
- encourage inclusion in PE, dance, drama, swimming.

How to help Handwriting/Drawing:

- Be **patient**, this takes time!
- Ensure the **seating is the right size**;
- **Sloping surface** may help;
- **Warm up** hands/fingers before mark making/writing;
- Encourage **colouring**;
- Teach **pre-writing shapes** initially
- Then move onto teaching **lower case letter formation** (See STEPS letter families sheet).



Letter families

For teaching letter formation

Letter family 1 <small>Down and off in another direction</small>	l i t j u y
Letter family 2 <small>Down and retrace upwards</small>	m n r b p h k
Letter family 3 <small>Anticlockwise round</small>	c a d o q g e f s
Letter family 4 <small>Zig-zag letters</small>	v w x z



Independence



How to help with Self-help and Independence Skills:

It is important for the child **to be seen as equal**, valued and have a sense of achievement. Give the children **jobs and responsibilities** around the setting.

It is important to **teach and support** the children as they learn to:

- Drink/eat;
- Dress themselves – teach buttons, zips, Velcro openings;
- Keeping clean and hygienic;
- Using the toilet.



Using adult support effectively:

- To help **facilitate social inclusion**;
- Try **not to provide too much support**. Stand back – take your lead from the child;
- **Observe the child** – see where help/support is needed either from an adult or peers;
- **Ensure** child is fully included;
- Use the other children, they are your **biggest resource!**
- The child with DS should **follow the class rules** – what are the other children expected to do?
- **Encourage child** to work **independently** - do you need to work alongside the child?
- Give the child **jobs to do** in the setting;
- **Be aware** of developing reliance on an adult;
- **Accept child's level** – their work may not always be 100% correct – this is OK!

'Working on my own' is about **how** the child is working **not** what they are producing!

"I am a working adult and I expect people to treat me the way that a 25-year-old man should be treated.

It is very important to not underestimate people with Down syndrome.

We are capable of many things."



-Paul S

cdss.ca

Supporting Play and Cognitive and Development

Children learn through play. Children with DS follow same developmental phases, however they are **less likely to request** or ask for help, explore new objects, or solve problems. They are less persistent.



How to help support play skills:

- **Play Partners** – more dependent on others to show them the next steps. Practice/repetition/consolidate learning;
- **Gross and Fine Motor skills** – needs support. Introduce different kinds of play, encourage child to move around the environment at home, outdoors and in their early years setting;
- Modelling and imitation – **see it, experience it, practice it over and over again;**
- **Social Strengths** – may try to ‘opt out’ of more difficult tasks; **Gently redirect**, provide support and modelling. Ignore ‘social invitation’ and draw child back to task. End task with ‘finished’, ‘all done’, praise!
- **Language and play** – role play/pretend play;
- **Developing attention skills** – notice child’s attention, look for preferences, use visuals to maintain attention, encourage reading books. Follow the child’s lead.

Mastery Motivation:

The **want to learn for the success** at succeeding in the task e.g. completing a puzzle.

- **Allow** them to explore;
- **Build up** their **confidence**. Show them **how** to do it, then **STAND BACK**;
- Teach and show – **DO NOT TEST**;
- **Allow time** and space, provide support when necessary;
- Know **when to STOP**;
- **Prepare** learning environment – not too many toys/distractions in the area, allow exploration, allow child to play with peers, give activities a purpose and a structure.

How to help support early play (first 2 years):

- **Sensory stimulation** activities;
- Explore **using hands/mouth**;
- Understand **object permanence** – cover toys with a cloth, remove cloth, toys are still there;
- **Discover** ‘means/end’ behaviour – pull a string that brings the toy to you;
- **Cause and effect** toys;
- **Building** bricks;
- **Posting** toys/nesting boxes/stacking rings – start with one piece at a time, simplify the task;
- Bubbles, balloons, wind-up toys.



Pretend play and Social play are very important

Pretend play **allows the child to copy actions** they see, then try them out themselves.

Home corner experiences allows for the **development of learning functions of objects**, make links with appropriate language and encourages sequencing.

It is important for the child with DS **to be included in social play alongside their peers**, staff may **need to show other children** how to interact with the child with DS.

Learning through play will **incorporate Maths** naturally e.g. size, colour, shapes, sorting, ordering, comparing etc

Links to further information:

Use your **Local Toy Library**

Contact **local playgroups**, provide information to parents about **playschemes** outside of school hours.



Effective Education and Inclusion

Education:

- Some children with DS **may need an EHC plan** to access the right level of support in their setting;
- Where a child does have an EHC plan, educational provision needs to be quantified and specified in the plan so **desired outcomes** and **steps towards outcomes** are **clear**;
- Continuous and flexible **review** of the EHC plan will be necessary;
- The **amount** and **type of support** required should be considered and **planned for**;
- **Staff training** needs to be provided;
- Some children may require **specialist support** from **external agencies**;
- Whole settings should have **specialist training** on teaching and including pupils with DS;
- Adaptation of assessments should be considered;
- Settings may monitor **progress** using the Early Years Developmental Journal (Downs ED website) – download 2 copies;
- Settings/Guidelines: Staff will already have **knowledge and skills** relating to the list below, they may require some adapting. Settings need to consider the **developmental level** of the child(ren) in question:
 - Named keyworker
 - Communication support
 - Language development
 - Signing/training/Makaton
 - Implement early reading/whole word teaching approach
 - Speech work development supported by SALT
 - Play and attention
 - Motor support – supported by advice from Physio
 - Sensory processing issues – supported by advice from OT
 - Specialist equipment and adaptations required
 - Toilet training
 - Self help skills/independence – does child need support with eating/drinking



Assess:	School Name and Logo	Plan:
Child Information	Child's Name DOB Year group	Child
Parent Information	Child Information What are the good things about school?	School
	Parent Information What do you think would help you in school? What do you want to be better at?	Parents





or



Over **85% of children** with DS attend an **inclusive mainstream setting** in the UK. All evidence/research shows that children with DS **should be in an inclusive mainstream school**.

The research suggests that inclusion in a mainstream setting can:

- **Improve** spoken language;
- Better literacy and maths skills;
- No difference in **self-help skills** to those who attend special schools;
- Better social inclusion;
- **Higher expectations**, good peer role models and more teaching on academics.

The above list will **only be achieved if the setting has:**

- **Positive attitudes** and beliefs by all staff;
- Every child is the **responsibility of the class teacher**;
- Every pupil is **valued**;
- Settings need to be **flexible**;
- Establish a **good parent partnership**.

Good Inclusive Practice:

- Presence – ‘you’re **the same as your peers**’;
- Participation – **contributing** to the school community;
- Dignity and respect – **valued** by peers and staff. Diversity is valued;
- Independence – being **given choices**, not over supporting;
- **Achievement** – child’s development and learning is not fixed at birth.



And finally...

On the whole, families with children with DS cope well.

There is support in place by way of Down Syndrome local support groups, websites with help lines, community groups, external agencies etc.

The UK has come a long way in supporting children with DS. Change has been brought about by parents, professionals and children. Children with DS were not even allowed the right to education and attend school until 1970 and now look at them!

Try and keep a balance. All children in the family are equally important. All families may benefit from small amounts of help each day, but also need space to do ordinary things.

Think about the child. What do they want in life? They will want, no doubt, to become a teenager, an adult and to live an 'ordinary life' just like other children. Children with DS need to be allowed to grow and become adults. As they grow up, milestones are the same as other children – puberty, relationships, interests, the need for independence, etc.

PRIORITIES:

- Think 'person' first;
- Think 'Chronological age' not 'mental age';
- Think 'self-esteem' and 'self-identity';
- Think 'social competence/social inclusion/full social immersion';
- Think 'behaviour control';
- Think 'communication';
- Think 'inclusion in education';
- Remember 'social strengths' – ALL human development is social.



References

- The information and advice in this booklet has been gathered from the following sources:
Downs Ed website www.dseinternational.com
'Supporting Early Development For children with Down Syndrome from birth to 5 years' – online training course provided by Down Syndrome Education International.

Additional reading and further information

- Down Syndrome: Good Practice Guidelines for Education 2012 includes a section on Early Years.
- Primary Education Support Pack – downloadable from: www.downs-syndrome.org.uk/for-families-and-carers/education/education-support-packs/
- Down Syndrome Association: www.down-syndrome.org.uk
- Numicon: www.numicon.co.nz, www.global.oup.com/education/content/primary/series/numicon
- Makaton: www.makaton.org, also there is a 'The Makaton Charity' page on Facebook.
- Cbeebies: 'Something Special' www.bbc.co.uk, then search 'Something Special' or 'Makaton'.

I hear, I forget
I see, I remember
I do, I understand

Chinese proverb

Referring to Outside Services

Early Years Inclusion Team Support

Referrals to the Early Years Inclusion Team (EYIT) for a child with Downs Syndrome by the child's Early Years Setting can be made via the Early Years Coordination Team (EYCT).

The EYIT will:

- Work closely with a child's Parents, Early Years Setting and other supporting service providers e.g. Speech Therapy, STEPS Team.
- Look at a child's interests and strengths and how we can use these to **support development**. We always consider the views of the child.
- Support the Early Years Setting in **adapting their curriculum and the activities** they offer to meet the needs of a child and support the settings to think about additional processes available to them .
- Work towards **implementing a graduated response of Assess, Plan, Do and Review** to support a child.
 - **Assess** – Collecting current developmental information from Parents, the Early Years Setting and other Service Providers involved regarding the child. Consider interventions, strategies and activities that are supportive for children who have Downs Syndrome e.g. visual learning.
 - **Plan** – Hold a TAC / Review meeting to clarify above, consider priorities for the family/ child and plan longer term outcomes and shorter-term next steps/ targets to work towards.
 - **Do** – Support the Early Years setting in carrying out agreed interventions via supplying resources where needed, offering training and demonstration with the child in the setting.
 - **Review** – After approx. 3 months a review will take place to review progress made, identify interventions that were particularly successful and again plan next steps / targets to work towards.
- **Support transitions** for a child who may be moving to another Early Years Setting or into Primary School so the move is well managed and a positive experience. The Support Team for Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (STEPS) are invited to the transition meetings to ensure continued support across the settings and outline further support offered by STEPS.

You can find out more about The Early Years Inclusion Team via the **Royal Greenwich Local Offer** – see link below:

<https://greenwichcommunitydirectory.org.uk/kb5/greenwich/directory/service.page?id=UsdudZ9fB28&localofferchannel=1>

Support Team for Education in Primary & Secondary Schools (STEPS)

Referrals to the STEPS service can be made using the Royal Borough of Greenwich SEND Services referral form (020 8921 3311).

An initial assessor will visit the school to do an initial observation and meet with the child alongside staff supporting the child. Following the observation, a meeting with the SENCO, parents, class teacher and support staff can be arranged to discuss the type of support that can be offered.

The setting's allocated **outreach worker** will then provide termly visits and ongoing support for the child and staff. Progress will be monitored, and targets and approaches may be adapted when needed. Our staff are willing to attend transition meetings and Annual Reviews.

STEPS can provide the following **training** for school staff:

- Including children with Down Syndrome;
- Working with children with complex needs;
- Using PIVATS for monitoring small steps of progress;
- STEPS Word Up programme (a whole word reading and language programme);
- Handwriting courses;
- Makaton courses;
- Storybox training – Storyboxes can be borrowed by schools once staff have received training, with the accompanying resources and a scheme of work. Story boxes help support literacy and speech and language development.

You can find out more about The Support Team for Primary and Secondary Schools (STEPS) via the **Royal Greenwich Local Offer** – see link below:

<https://greenwichcommunitydirectory.org.uk/kb5/greenwich/directory/service.page?id=PnuRr49WAe0>