

## **Norfolk Community Health and Care**

### **Children's Community Occupational Therapy**

#### **Referral guidance for school age children who have difficulties with coordination, general fine motor skills or functional activities**

This advice has been developed to support school age children at home and school who are having difficulties with coordination, general fine motor skills or functional activities to show whether a referral to the children's Occupational Therapy team is needed.

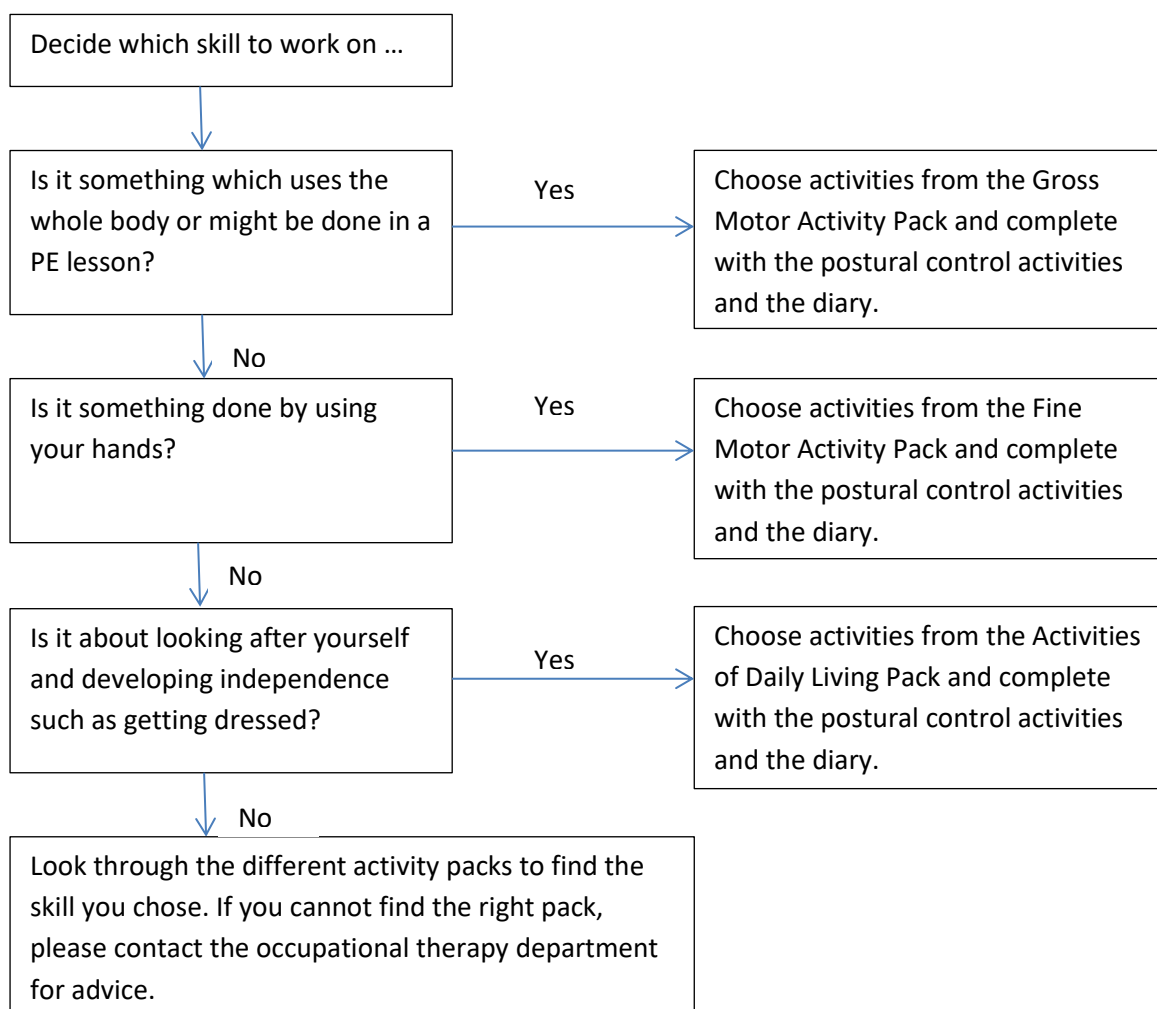
These activity and problem solving sheets are designed to be used at home and school and should be used for at least 30 minutes per day (or two 15 minute sessions per day), 5 days a week for 12 weeks before deciding if a referral to the children's Occupational Therapy team is necessary.

Children all learn at different rates and some will need a lot more practise than others to learn new skills. By practising little and often children make more progress than in longer weekly sessions and by following the ideas provided some children will master things they were finding difficult and no longer need to be seen by an Occupational Therapist (OT). Other children who still need a referral to occupational therapy will have spent a good length of time working on their skills and we will be able to target treatment to support their needs better.

Remember, everyone learns better when they are enjoying themselves so incorporate the ideas into things they are doing anyway and keep the sessions fun. Reward children for their effort, not results.

## How to use the information sheets

Look at the decision tree to help you decide which activity sheets to use. If there are lots of concerns around a child's skills, try to pick one or 2 initially to work on. Children learn through movement and develop gross motor skills before developing their fine motor skills. This is useful to remember if you have concerns about both these areas as it will be beneficial to work on the gross motor activities before tackling the fine motor skills. Whatever you are working on, you should also complete activities from the postural control activities as these will help warm up for the other activities and are essential skills for both fine and gross motor activities.



Any web links in this document were correct at the time of writing but no guarantee is given over the content of any external website or organisation.

**Norfolk Community Health and Care**  
**Children's Community Occupational Therapy**  
**Postural Control Activity Pack**

Having good core stability is essential to our ability to control our movements for both gross motor activities such as walking and fine motor activities such as doing up buttons.

Imagine sitting on a large gym ball without your feet on the floor and think how difficult it would be to then write your name neatly or concentrate on what the teacher is saying. When children have to put effort into controlling the muscles around their trunk, hips and shoulders to maintain a good posture, it has a knock on effect on everything else they try to do. Building postural control is the foundation for developing gross and fine motor skills.

The following activities and ideas are all ways to develop these underlying skills and are a great way to warm up before completing other therapy activities. Choose 2 or 3 for each activity session, don't always choose the same activities but do try them regularly so that the child can improve them. Write down what you have done on the activity diary with any comments about how the child managed them. Some of the activities listed are more suitable for gross motor sessions (e.g. playing at the park) whilst others are more convenient, stand-alone activities, if you are about to do an indoor desk based activity (e.g. press-ups or human ball).

**Press-ups**

These can be made easier by doing them against a wall, then on the floor on hands and knees and then most difficult on hands and toes with a straight body. This is an activity that engages a large amount of muscles, so the benefits for this one activity are enormous. Whichever way you try them, make sure the child does them as properly as possible as a few good ones are better than lots of bad ones. Try to increase difficulty over time.

**Wheelbarrow walking**

This fun activity is great for developing strength around the shoulders as well and the trunk muscles. The child becomes the wheelbarrow by walking on their hands whilst you hold their legs. Make it easier by holding them at their hips and increase the difficulty by holding further and further down their legs until you get to their ankles. Have races with friends doing this where you collect bean bags and bring them back to the start line. Try to increase difficulty over time.

**Unstable surfaces**

Walking and climbing over unstable surfaces requires a lot of effort and increases overall body strength. Try making a mountain of large cushions and pillows or playing at a soft play centre.

### **Obstacle course**

Create an obstacle course of things to climb over, under and through. Try including crawling activities as well as rolling and any other ideas included here.

### **Playground climbing and swinging**

Go to the local park and play on the climbing frames and slides etc. These are all great for developing muscle strength around your shoulders. Play on monkey bars and try a chin up or 2 or swinging without being pushed.

### **Swimming**

This is a whole body activity that will help build strength and endurance as the child is constantly working against a small amount of resistance in the water. This is particularly good for children with very bendy joints as the water helps to support the joints and prevents them from hyperextending.

### **Animal walks**

Think about how animals move and try to copy them. Try crabs, frogs, bears or worms and any others you can think of.

### **High Kneeling**

This position is great for developing hip stability as well as trunk control. To get into this position, kneel on the floor but then lift your bottom off your feet so that your body is upright and your knees are at right angles to the floor. This position can be used at coffee table for playing or when playing computer console games in front of the television! Alternatively, as a warm up activity, it can be used for throwing and catching games or playing knee football with friends.

### **Crawling**

Play games and activities that need the child to crawl.

### **Balloon tennis**

This activity will use the muscles of the shoulder and develop endurance as the child is forced to hit the balloon above shoulder height repeatedly.

### **Superman Pose**

Become a superhero - lie on your tummy and lift arms and legs. Try to keep as straight as possible and count how long you can hold the position.

### **Human ball**

Lie on your back on the floor and hug your knees to your chest, crossing your ankles. Place your arms over your knee's holding them tightly in place. Try and lift your head off the floor and touch your nose against your knees. Try and hold this position without rocking to the side or letting go of your knees. See if you can hold this position for 10 seconds. If this is too

easy see if you can hold it for 20 seconds or 30 seconds... Try and hold it for longer every time you do it.

### **Build a Bridge**

Back Bridge - Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Lift your bottom up off the floor and hold it to make a bridge, keeping shoulders on the floor. Ask someone to roll a ball underneath the bridge as many times as they can before your bridge collapses. Keep your bottom off the floor for as long as you can. To make this harder, try using a bigger ball to roll under the bridge. See if you can beat your record for the number of times the ball rolls under your bridge.

### **Windmills**

Stand with your feet slightly apart and your arms stretched out to your side. Keeping your arms very straight move them slowly in small circles like a windmill. Slowly make the circles bigger and bigger until they are as big as you can get them. Now slowly make them small again. See if you can do 20 circles whilst keeping your arms straight. To make this harder, see if you can do this whilst holding a small water bottle in each hand.

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**Gross Motor Activity Pack**

Gross motor activities are those involving large movements such as walking running, jumping, climbing or swimming. Gross motor co-ordination is the ability to perform large movements with fluency, accuracy and precision. To do this, children will need to have developed skills in mobility, balance, body awareness and motor planning. Children develop gross motor skills before fine motor skills.

These activities should be completed regularly to increase skill level but don't always choose the same activities. Write down what you have done on the activity diary with any comments about how the child managed them.

**Obstacle course**

Create an obstacle course of things to climb over, under and through. Try including crawling activities as well as rolling and any other ideas included here.

**Playground climbing and swinging**

Go to the local park and play on the climbing frames and slides etc. These are all great for developing muscle strength around your shoulders. Play on monkey bars and try a chin up or 2 or swinging without being pushed.

**Swimming**

This is a whole body activity that will help build strength and endurance as the child is constantly working against a small amount of resistance in the water. This is particularly good for children with very bendy joints as the water helps to support the joints and prevents them from hyperextending.

**Games with balls**

Remember bean bags are easier to catch than balls; big balls are easier to catch than small balls.

*Skittles* – try rolling the ball lying down, kneeling, high kneeling (2 knees, bottom up off feet), half kneeling (balancing on one knee and one foot, bottom not sitting back on other foot) and standing. Increasing the distance to the skittles or decreasing the ball size will also make this activity harder.

*Sending and receiving* –Start at 1m apart and increase the distance to make catching more difficult. Try different postures such as lying, kneeling, high kneeling, half kneeling, sitting on a large gym ball and standing to vary the game and difficulty with any of these activities. Try

pushing along the floor, bouncing, throwing and kicking the ball to send it. Try catching with 2 hands then one hand, batting with a small flat bat with 2 hands then one hand so that the other person can catch it, or stopping it with a foot. Roll or kick a ball into a goal, decrease goal size down to a single point to hit with the ball. Throw a ball against a wall and catch it

*Ball bounce* – bounce a ball on the spot. Start by throwing and catching it with 2 hands, progress to 1 hand and then to patting it with one hand to dribble on the spot.

### **Games with hoops**

Lay hoops out to jump in, try jumping 2 feet together. Call out the colour of the hoop to jump to next. Increase the space between hoops to increase difficulty.

Lay hoops out to throw bean bags into. Increase distance or decrease hoop size to make it more difficult.

### **Ideas with lines on the floor**

Practise walking along the line on tip toes and heel to toe – like a tight rope. Also try blindfolded, backwards or with a bean bag on your head.

### **Ideas with school benches**

Lie on the bench and pull yourself along it only using your hands.

Practise walking along the bench on tip toes and heel to toe – like a tight rope. Also try walking backwards or with a bean bag on your head, balanced on a bat or holding an 'egg and spoon'.

Stand on the bench with 2 feet and practise jumping off it, landing on 2 feet without falling over.

Hold either side of the bench with both hands and bunny hop your feet to one side of the bench and then both back to the other side. See how many you can manage.

### **Ideas with a rope**

*Skipping* – with a long rope and 2 adults, start by wriggling the rope on the floor for child to jump over, progress to swinging it backwards and forwards and then to turning it over their head for them to jump.

*Climbing the floor* – attach a rope at floor level at one end of the room. The child lies on their tummy and pulls themselves along the floor using the rope. If the floor is carpeted, they could lie on a scooter board (like a skateboard) to pull themselves along on.

### **Star jumps and jumping jacks**

Practise star jumps where arms move out to the side, level with shoulders, at the same time as feet jump apart. Then jump feet back together and arms back down by sides. Repeat several times, counting how many accurate jumps are made.

Jumping jacks are more difficult. Start in a crouched position, jump up with arms and legs spread out in a similar position to star jumps but return to the crouched position.

**Statues**

Child takes up a position in lying, kneeling or standing and tries not to move when gently pushed by an adult.

**Rolling**

Child lies on the floor, arms stretched above their head and rolls over and over. Try to keep straight and move in the straight line along the floor.

**Hopping**

Practise hopping on the favourite leg and progress to the least favourite leg. Try giving commands such as 'go', 'stop', 'left' and 'right'. Mark boxes on the floor and practise hopping accurately in them or play hopscotch.

**Standing on one leg**

Practise on the favourite leg and progress to the least favourite leg. Try timing how long you stay there. Vary the activity by doing it with your eyes shut or standing on a soft or moving surface such a mattress, gym mat or wobble board.

**Stepping stones**

Lay a selection of different coloured pieces of paper. Ask the child to get to the other side by only standing on a specific colour of paper. Vary this activity by increasing the space between stepping stones or giving verbal directions.

**Simon Says**

Play 'Simon Says' where the child has to follow the instruction or copy a posture when the adult begins with 'Simon Says...'. If the adult does not say 'Simon Says' then the child should not move (if the adult says 'Simon Says touch your nose with your right hand' the child should do it, if the adult just says 'touch your nose with your right hand' the child should not move).

**Trampette**

Start by holding the child's hands whilst they bounce. Progress to them bouncing without holding on to you whilst trying to stay in the middle of the trampette. Try jumping off and landing on 2 feet without falling over.



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**Fine Motor Activity Pack**

Fine motor activities are those involving precise, accurate movements of the hands such as building Lego, doing up buttons, putting coins in a money box or using tools such as cutlery, a toothbrush or a pencil. These take time to develop and become more refined as children get older. Remember, if you have poor postural stability or the muscles around your shoulders are not very strong, it is hard to have complete control over your hands to carry out intricate tasks.

These activities should be completed regularly to increase skill level but don't always choose the same activities. Write down what you have done on the activity diary with any comments about how the child managed them.

**Playdough**

There are lots of different things you can do with Playdough which will help develop hand skills. Try using 2 hands to roll it into a ball or sausage shape, roll it flat using a rolling pin, use cookie cutters, make models or pots (try pinch pots – make a ball, put thumbs in the middle and pinch the sides to create the pot, or a coil pot – make a long thin sausage of Playdough and coil it round to make the pot). Use thumb and index finger to pinch along the back of a sausage shape to turn it into a dinosaur. Playdough is also great for practising cutlery skills – make play food then cut up with a knife and fork but make sure the child is practising correctly. An online search for 'theraputty exercise sheets' will find exercises you could try to improve hand strength.

**Theraputty**

This comes in different strengths and offers more resistance than Playdough. It is widely available to buy online and an online search for 'theraputty exercise sheets' will find exercises you could try to improve hand strength.

**Clothes Pegs**

Peg the pegs around the top of a shoe box or container, make a washing line and peg dolls clothes on it or decorate paper t-shirt shapes and peg them on the line. Have a cardboard hedgehog shape and peg the pegs onto it to become the spines, peg around a paper plate and turn it into a lion or a sun. Try using each hand separately and try timing activities so that you can see improvement over time.

### **Tongs**

Tongs are a good way to practise pre-scissor skills. Hold them so that the thumb is on top, as you would hold scissors. Practise picking up a variety of different things and transferring them to another container e.g. cotton wool balls, lego, cornflakes. Try different sized tongs such as BBQ tongs, kitchen tongs or tweezers. Some children's games use tongs or tweezers such as 'Operation' or 'Bed Bugs'. 'Cleverstix' chop sticks are also good.

### **Scissors**

Scissor skills sheets can be found online with a search for 'scissor skills' and on websites such as [www.twinkl.co.uk](http://www.twinkl.co.uk). If the child is finding scissors very difficult they will probably benefit from using self-opening scissors such as those from <https://peta-uk.com>. They come in left and right handed versions so make sure you buy the correct ones. The Easi-grip series are easier to use than the self-opening ones.

### **Baking**

To improve fine motor skills try recipes that need you to rub the fat into flour using your fingers such as pastry or shortbread. You can then roll out with a rolling pin and use cookie cutters. Lots of other aspects of cooking also require good fine motor skills so try to think of other things you could make, perhaps cheese straws, apple crumble or bread!

### **Posting**

Practise posting coins, beads, dried beans etc into a plastic bottle or a box with a small hole cut in the top. If your child likes to put things in their mouth, try posting raisins or Cheerios so that it doesn't matter if the odd one goes into their mouth. After posting 1 at a time, try holding 2 or 3 or more in the palm of the hand and posting 1 at a time so that you need to move them from the palm to the finger tips.

### **Paper clips**

Practise linking them together and unlinking them again. See how many you can do in a set time or time how long it takes to do a set number. This can be done as individual games or as races.

### **Threading**

Progress from larger to smaller beads and from sticks to string. As well as beads, you could try threading dried pasta tubes, Cheerios or pieces of drinking straw (which the child has snipped themselves whilst practising scissor skills!).

### **Finger Rhymes**

Nursery rhymes and songs are a good way to develop awareness of the hands and finger isolation. Try '1,2,3,4,5, once I caught a fish alive', 'Tommy Thumb', 'this little piggy...'

## **Crafts**

Cutting and sticking, collage pictures, scrunching pieces of tissue paper as small as possible, sprinkling glitter, 'Aquabeads', 'Hama Beads' (different sizes are available to make it easier or more difficult), pottery, painting, finger painting, drawing around hands, colouring-in, junk modelling, origami in fact almost any craft you can think of...

## **Puzzles**

From insert puzzles with a variety of different handles to hold onto (bigger grips are easier than smaller ones) to floor puzzles and traditional jigsaws – all puzzles will help develop fine motor skills as well as visual perceptual skills (understanding visual information) as the pieces need to be manipulated and positioned correctly to fit.

## **Hand Gym**

A 'hand gym' is a shoe box or biscuit tin full of small toys and objects which work on fine motor skills. Ideas include pegs, beads, scissors, crayons, wind-up toys, paper clips, a set of coins and money box, a flower press, a mini spinning top, pocket money toys or cracker toys. This is an easy way to fill five minutes with beneficial activities, perhaps at registration time, at the end of a lesson or in the car. Some items, such as pegs, would need you to give the child a task to do with them e.g. peg them around the edge of the box whilst others are just for playing with e.g. wind-up toys.

## **Feely Games**

Have 2 sets of identical objects, 1 set on a tray and 1 in a bag, pillow case or mixed up in a bowl of uncooked rice or lentils. Try to identify the objects without looking at what is in the hand. You can also do this with 1 set of objects and naming it without the visual clue on the tray. Try to identify things such as coins, pencils, cutlery, small toys, building blocks and brushes.

## **Construction**

Use building blocks, Lego, Duplo or Megabloks to create towers, buildings and vehicles. Create your own ideas or follow the plans which come with a set. Other good construction toys include K'nex, Meccano, Brio building sets and magnetic sets. Easier sets have larger blocks or don't need tools. Sets needing tools are more difficult to use but there are a variety available aimed at children of all ages.

## **Pencil Skills**

### *Pencil grip development*

Pencil grip can be developed by using short, fat crayons or mushroom or egg shaped crayons or chinks and they are a good way to develop an interest in mark making. Crayola and Early Learning Centre ([www.elc.co.uk](http://www.elc.co.uk)) usually have suitable ones.

The way a pencil is held can be refined by using a moulded pencil grip. The 'Ultra Grip', also known as 'The Pencil Grip', suits a lot of children and comes in 2 sizes. The larger ones often

suit younger children who are moving on from egg shaped or similar crayons. See [www.taskmasteronline.co.uk](http://www.taskmasteronline.co.uk) or [www.specialdirect.com](http://www.specialdirect.com) or a general internet search for a wide range of different pencil grips. Practise drawing and writing on vertical surfaces such as easels, whiteboards, blackboards or paper stuck to the wall as this encourages the correct wrist position to develop.

### *Posture*

Ensure that the child / young person is sitting on a chair, with their back touching the back, their feet firmly on the floor and their hips at 90°. The table should be at elbow height. If this is not the case, provide an alternative chair or table of the correct size. Having a range of chair and table heights available for flexible use within the school is useful. Height adjustable tables and chairs are available. There are a number of suppliers.

If a child is using a chair which is a bit too high for them and their feet do not touch the floor a step for the child to put their feet on will help with their position and increase their stability. It may be that an upturned tray or box will be sufficient alternatively there are a number of adjustable steps available. See [www.smirthwaite.co.uk](http://www.smirthwaite.co.uk) or <http://www.nrs-uk.co.uk>.

If the seat depth is too long, the child will either be unable to sit back against the back rest or slouches in order to reach it. A foam back cushion, in order to reduce the seat depth will be useful. Cushions specifically made to fit the back of the chair and be the correct depth can be manufactured. A supplier is: Able 2 [www.able2.eu](http://www.able2.eu).

If the seat height is too low the child's knees are above their hips. They can either be sat on a higher chair or have a cushion. Ensure the desk is the correct height. Suppliers of seat cushions are the same as above.

If the child tends to lean forward and "slouch" and the seat depth is correct, a wedge cushion and/or a writing slope can encourage them to sit more upright. There are many suppliers of wedge cushions. Angled writing surfaces are available from a number of suppliers including [www.nrs-uk.co.uk](http://www.nrs-uk.co.uk) and [www.backinaction.co.uk](http://www.backinaction.co.uk) (see posture pack which is easy to carry around). An alternative wedge cushion is the Move n'Sit cushion which can also help improve concentration. If adding a cushion to the chair, ensure the table is the correct height.

### *Pencil Control*

Ensure posture is good and work on shoulder and core stability (postural control) before working on pencil control. Things to practice include dot to dots, colouring in, mazes etc. Websites such as [www.sparklebox.co.uk](http://www.sparklebox.co.uk) and [www.twinkl.co.uk](http://www.twinkl.co.uk) have free printable pencil skills activity booklets. A formal programme for developing pencil control and handwriting is '**Write from the Start**' by Teodorescu which is widely available online.

### *Handwriting Programmes*

There are many different handwriting programmes to buy but ones we have tried and seen good results with are '**Write Dance**' by Ragnhild Oussoren and '**Speed Up**' by Lois Addy. Write Dance has different programmes aimed at different ages. Both programmes work on the movements needed for fluent handwriting but do not work on letter formation. Both programmes are designed to be used by school staff and are widely available online.

### *Letter Formation*

Practise letter formation separately from other work. Practise in a variety of different ways e.g. a finger or tool (paintbrush) in a sand tray or in paint or shaving foam, large letters on the playground using chalk or a squeeze bottle of water. See [www.sparklebox.co.uk](http://www.sparklebox.co.uk) or [www.twinkl.co.uk](http://www.twinkl.co.uk) for printable sheets and ideas. Apps on tablets can also be used with a finger or stylus and there are many available. 'Hairy Letters' was recommended to us by parents but an internet search for apps for letter formation will find plenty to choose from.

### *Alternative methods of recording*

Some children find it very discouraging to always be the last to finish a piece of work or to always produce scruffy work which looks nothing like they would like it to look. These children benefit from alternative ways to record their work whilst separately working on handwriting to make it as good as it can be. Alternative ways to record work can be having someone write down the child's words, the child using a voice recorder and handing that in, the child making a video presentation of their answers or ideas, using a computer or tablet to type work, word prediction software can increase speed or software such as Clicker uses word banks of words they are likely to need. These can all help improve self-esteem and prevent frustration.

### *Exams*

Pupils are allowed to use their 'usual method of recording' in exams so if a child is using a computer to type almost all of their work, they would be expected to use this in exams. Likewise, if they normally have a scribe write their work down for them, they would be expected to use a scribe in exams. These concessions, along with extra time and rest breaks, are arranged by the school and do not need an occupational therapist to be involved. If school need evidence of writing speed to justify alternative methods of writing they can complete the 'Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting' (DASH) from [www.pearsonclinical.co.uk](http://www.pearsonclinical.co.uk).

***Fine Motor and Handwriting Development  
Trouble Shooting for Common problems.***

Problem	Possible Causes	Things to Try
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor Posture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low tone</li> <li>• Incorrect furniture heights</li> <li>• Poor eyesight</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjust height of furniture</li> <li>• Ensure feet are flat on the ground and back is straight</li> <li>• Try using a sloped surface to write on</li> <li>• Have eyes tested</li> <li>• Sit child closer to the front of the classroom</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loose Grip</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor muscle strength</li> <li>• Low tone</li> <li>• Poor proprioception</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening exercises in PE especially those against resistance</li> <li>• Regular physical breaks</li> <li>• Hand warm up games and exercises</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overtight Grip</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low tone (Over compensate)</li> <li>• Poor proprioception</li> <li>• Anxiety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hand warm up games and exercises</li> <li>• Pencil grip, to put on pencil/pen</li> <li>• More time to complete task</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Left handedness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not a problem provided child uses left handed techniques to adapt tasks to their dominance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not in itself a problem</li> <li>• Employ left handed techniques e.g. paper slant towards left hand side.</li> <li>• If the child is sharing a desk position to the right of a right handed child.</li> <li>• Sloped writing surface</li> <li>• Hold pencil 2.5-3.5cm from point.</li> <li>• Specialist resources are available, search online for 'left handed' to find shops selling items designed for left handers.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concentration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitive to visual/auditory distractions</li> <li>• Poor comprehension: unable to follow instruction and participate.</li> <li>• Being physically uncomfortable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May concentrate better if given something to hold and manipulate to filter out unwanted movements – e.g. fiddling with blue tac etc.</li> <li>• Minimise distractions in the classroom</li> <li>• If particularly distracted by noise, position at the back of the classroom so that they are not constantly turning round and looking behind them.</li> <li>• Keep instructions simple – give step by step instructions and accompany with demonstrations if necessary.</li> <li>• If the child's reading ability permits, write down the instructions so that they can go back to them.</li> <li>• Check seating position – are their feet</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor page layout</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficulty with spatial relations</li> <li>Planning difficulties</li> <li>Visual difficulties</li> <li>Pages not lined and margins not indicated</li> </ul>	<p>flat on the floor or are they unable to make contact with the ground? Is the table the correct height? Are they sitting in an area where there is a lot of traffic from other children?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow to listen to gentle classical music through headphones</li> <li>Sit child on a move n'sit cushion</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use exercise books or paper with margins and lines</li> <li>If necessary use paper with raised lines so that they get some tactile input as well.</li> <li>Place a smiley face/stamp/picture in the margin as the cue to where they should start the work.</li> </ul> <table border="1" data-bbox="959 848 1402 1021"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">😊</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teach them to place a finger on the line after each word before starting a new word so that they leave adequate spaces between words – this works for right handed students. Alternatives include using a piece of card or a button to push between words and can be used by left handed children too.</li> <li>Have their vision checked</li> <li>Make sure they are wearing their glasses if these have been prescribed</li> <li>Provide an example of page layout for them to be able to refer to e.g. example on card front can be laminated and referred to when necessary</li> </ul>	😊									
😊												
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writing on line</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor spatial relations</li> <li>Poor visual motor integration</li> <li>Poor eye hand co-ordination</li> <li>Poor vision</li> <li>Lines not clear enough</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Try using paper with raised lines</li> <li>Make sure lines are very clear and eye catching not pale</li> <li>Have their vision checked</li> <li>Make sure they are wearing their glasses if these have been prescribed</li> <li>Give them opportunities to engage in activities that improve eye-hand co-ordination both in PE and craft activities</li> <li>If you think it is a perception in space problem give them activities to develop this skill e.g. lots of obstacle courses in PE. Opportunities to crawl under</li> </ul>										

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No spaces between words</li> <li>• Writing too big/too small</li> <li>• Fidgeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor spatial relations</li> <li>• Poor vision</li> <li>• Child not yet able to appreciate the relationship between letters and words ∴ copying the letter only</li> <li>• Poor motor control</li> <li>• Poor pencil grip</li> <li>• Habit</li> <li>• Often too small if tense and anxious</li> <li>• Often too big if impulsive and not concentrating</li> <li>• Low toned</li> <li>• Uncomfortable</li> <li>• Need the loo</li> <li>• Finding task too difficult</li> </ul>	<p>things/over/through/between/behind/in front etc. and provide opportunities in craft/free play e.g. Lego/traffic jam etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the techniques described above</li> <li>• Use block/graph paper for left handers so that they can be taught to leave 2 or 3 blocks open before starting the next word.</li> <li>• Establish if the child understands that letters in certain combinations form words – word recognition.</li> <li>• Work on improving pencil control. Re-visit pre-writing activities such as tramline activities/colouring in/joining the dots and overwriting</li> <li>• Trial pencil grips and different shape pens. If lack of control, revert to a pencil which offers more resistance than gel or ball point pens</li> <li>• If too small use lined paper that encourages them to fill the line with the body of the letter and the line with the ascender/descender whichever is appropriate</li> <li>• Verbal reminders</li> <li>• Positive feedback and support for anxious children. Eliminate any tangible cases of their anxiety in the classroom if possible. Reduce time pressures</li> <li>• Form boundaries for the impulsive child e.g. copy sentence 1 only. Explicit instructions, present work bit by bit to help them attend to each section.</li> <li>• Concentration to be addressed as described as above.</li> <li>• Allow regular breaks where the child can get up and move and in so doing activate his muscle tone or at intervals do 2 minutes of desk based exercise to achieve the same.</li> <li>• Tie theraband to the desk leg so that they can pull it unobtrusively a few times when they feel drowsy/restless, this may be useful for concentration also</li> <li>• Check seating posture and physical comfort – they may need a foot box or an angled surface. Occasionally a</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor pressure – spidery writing</li> <li>Presses very hard when writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor proprioception</li> <li>Poor pencil grip</li> <li>Poor motor control</li> <li>Under confident</li> <li>Poor proprioception</li> <li>Poor motor control</li> <li>Poor pencil grip</li> </ul>	<p>wedged cushion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Find out if they need the toilet. This may be an opting out behaviour but equally they may have poor bladder/sphincter control</li> <li>Do they understand what they are being asked to do?</li> <li>Do they need the instructions repeated, delivered in a different way or a demonstration? Do they need someone to start them off? Do they need written instructions? Do they simply need an easier task?</li> <li>Use a pencil rather than a pen as this gives more resistance against paper and more feedback.</li> <li>Soft pencils make marks on the paper more easily and may produce clearer letters.</li> <li>Try pencil grips and/or different shaped pencils/pens</li> <li>Opportunities to improve motor control as outline in (9)</li> <li>Shoulder strengthening exercises in PE</li> <li>Warm up exercises for the hands – can be done with the whole class prior to doing any written work</li> <li>Use carbon paper between pieces of paper and encourage the child to press hard enough to make a copy</li> <li>Boost confidence</li> <li>Try pencil grips – enlarged pencils/pens will give additional feedback to children with poor proprioception.</li> <li>Improve motor control as described above</li> <li>Use a pencil rather than a pen as this gives more resistance against paper and more feedback</li> <li>Use carbon paper in the reverse – the aim is not to create a duplicate. Start with 5 sheets and gradually reduce to one so that only one copy is made.</li> <li>Do warm up exercises for the hands prior to doing any written work</li> <li>Encourage children to self-regulate and to stop occasionally to rest their hand by shaking it out.</li> <li>Soft pencils make marks easier and may encourage less pressure to be used whilst still getting visible results.</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbally competent but unable to transfer to paper</li> <li>• Un-established dominance</li> <li>• Poor pencil grip</li> <li>• Difficulty opening and closing scissors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor planning</li> <li>• Writing too difficult and awkward - too slow. Therefore frustrating</li> <li>• Immaturity of the nervous system</li> <li>• Immaturity</li> <li>• Low tone</li> <li>• Poor muscle strength</li> <li>• Poor proprioception</li> <li>• Immature grip not corrected early on.</li> <li>• Lack of experience</li> <li>• Poor muscle strength</li> <li>• Poor proprioception</li> <li>• Immature in-hand manipulation</li> <li>• Lack of co-ordination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use mind maps to help them get their thoughts down on paper.</li> <li>• Alternatives to handwriting – IT recording/typing.</li> <li>• If writing is difficult photocopy instructions, do not expect child to copy instructions into book and complete work.</li> <li>• Always present objects/tasks/activities in the child’s midline so that their choice of hand is not biased in any way</li> <li>• Incorporate activities that promote bilateral co-ordination into PE sessions</li> <li>• Use brain gym exercises with the class daily especially those that involve crossing over from side to side</li> <li>• Demonstrate, reinforce with regularity with verbal prompts, repeat demonstrations and help in placing fingers accurately</li> <li>• Do warm up exercises of the hands prior to any written work</li> <li>• Incorporate upper limb and shoulder strengthening exercises into PE</li> <li>• Try using pencil grips or writing tools with thicker shafts</li> <li>• Start with snipping, use narrow strips of card with thick lines and progress to cutting across wider strips of card. Later introduce shapes with curves rather than sharp angles. As skill develops change from card to paper.</li> <li>• Shoulder and hand strengthening exercises including pre-scissor skill activities e.g. games with tongs/tweezers/playdough</li> <li>• Self-opening scissors</li> <li>• Warm up exercises for the hands prior to embarking on cutting to bring attention to the hands and stimulate muscles</li> <li>• Demonstration and active teaching of correct grip</li> <li>• Brain gym and other exercises that promote co-ordination of left and right sides of the body</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor accuracy when cutting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of co-ordination</li> <li>• Task too difficult for current skill level</li> <li>• Poor eye-hand co-ordination</li> <li>• Snipping instead of cutting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use narrow strips of card with thick lines and progress to cutting across wider strips of card. Later introduce shapes with curves rather than sharp angles. As skills develop change from card to paper</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tearing paper when trying to cut</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pushing scissors through paper rather than operating properly to cut.</li> <li>• Holding paper too tightly with supporting hand.</li> <li>• Pulling paper with supporting hand.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use thicker paper</li> <li>• Practice open and closing action or use self-opening scissors</li> <li>• Demonstrate – do hand over hand if possible</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor copying from board</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor visual memory</li> <li>• Poor visual motor integration</li> <li>• Poor tracking</li> <li>• Poor quick visual localization</li> <li>• Poor vision</li> <li>• Poor concentration</li> <li>• Position in classroom not conducive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have vision checked</li> <li>• Make sure they are wearing glasses if prescribed</li> <li>• Check concentration</li> <li>• Position closer to the board</li> <li>• If they have poor pencil control and a poor grasp of letter formation copying from the board, maybe too demanding as they still have to concentrate so hard on letter formation that they have difficulties remembering content – give them information on a piece of paper on their desk for easier reference</li> </ul>

## Norfolk Community Health and Care

### Children's Community Occupational Therapy

#### Activities of Daily Living Ideas and Activity Pack

Activities of Daily Living are those skills we need to do in everyday life to look after ourselves and do everything we need to do. This could include getting dressed, eating a meal, packing a school bag or cleaning our teeth.

These strategies and activities should be completed regularly to increase skill level. If you are helping the child learn a skill, for example, how to dress themselves, always follow the same pattern every time they get dressed so that you do not confuse them. Write down what you have done on the activity diary with any comments about how the child managed them.

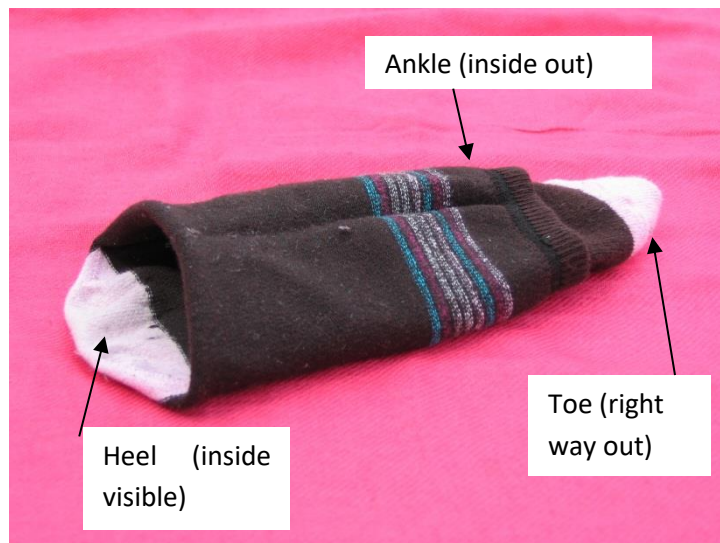
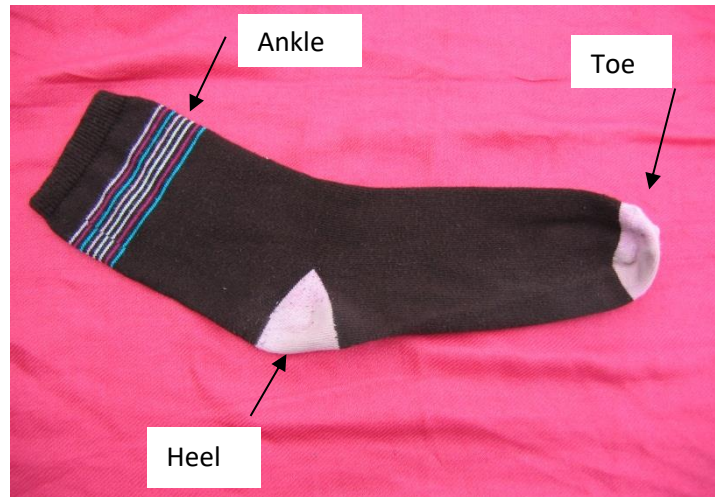
#### **Dressing**

A lot of children who find coordination tricky will often put clothes on the inside out or back to front. There is no quick fix but it does get easier with practise. Here are some tips to help with getting clothes the right way:

- Wear clothes with a picture/ logo on the front; school jumpers are often a good example of this! When putting on this item of clothing, prompt the child with phrases such as 'where's the picture?' Over time they should learn that the picture has to be at the front.
- Get the child to lay the clothes out prior to putting them on. It is a good idea to encourage the child to sit down to get dressed either on a little chair or bench, or up against the side of their bed, as this reduces the level of balance required.
- Practice turning the clothes the right way out; such as helping to sort washing. Again, use prompts such as 'where's the picture?' to find the front of clothes. This can be turned into a game by having a race to turn the clothes the right way out. Always enable the child to succeed at the tasks; start by just asking them to pull a sleeve the right way out when the rest of the jumper is ok.
- Dressing up is a good, fun way of practising dressing skills. Try using clothes that are too big to make it easier for the child to pull them on themselves i.e. big shirts etc.
- Once the child is dressed, encourage them to look in a full length mirror so that they can work out if they have got their clothes on correctly or if anything needs changing e.g. untucking a collar. You could have a photograph of the child correctly dressed in their school uniform to compare themselves to.
- Use picture cue cards to help get the order right when dressing. See [www.visualaidsforlearning.com](http://www.visualaidsforlearning.com) for ready-made printable cue cards for a variety of ages.

## Socks

Socks can be difficult to get on properly. This way of folding them can make it easier to get them on right 1<sup>st</sup> time. Socks can either be left folded like this for children to put on themselves or, with practise, children can learn to fold them like this before putting them on.



- Start with a sock the right way out (Top Picture).
- Fold the ankle (striped part of sock in picture) back on itself so that it would be around the middle of your foot if you were wearing it.
- Pull the heel out of the folded sock; it will stick out further than the top of the foot which means you know where your heel goes.
- You can now slide your foot into the sock.
- Pull the ankle of the sock up around your ankle.

## **Shoes**

To help put shoes on the right feet it is important for the child to know their left and right. To learn the left hand ask the child to hold their left hand up in front of them with fingers together but thumb open, which makes a 'L' shape, on the right hand this is the wrong way round, therefore not the Left!

- Once left and right are learnt you could put stickers in the shoes with 'L' and 'R' written on, or mark a label with a permanent pen.
- If the shoes have buckles/Velcro/ logo, explain to the child where these should be when put on e.g. the buckle should always be on the outside of feet.
- Alternatively, you can buy pairs of stickers which each have half the picture on and you have to line the shoes up in the right place to build the picture. Search online for 'Shoeezooz' or 'Right Foot Labels'.

## **Shoe Laces**

There are many alternatives to conventional style shoe laces that mean 'lace up' shoes can be worn without the worry of laces undoing or needing to be done up. Different types of 'locks' prevent the need for tying the laces in a bow and having elasticated laces means that the shoes can be slipped on and off as necessary. Conventional looking laces can be left permanently tied and some laces don't need tying at all and just coil up to hold the shoe in place. Laces are available in many different colours. A quick internet search for 'elastic laces' will produce many places you can buy these laces online and many local pharmacies and mobility shops often stock elastic laces.

To learn how to tie shoe laces, look online for a video you like which takes you through all the steps. Some children find the 'bunny ear' method easier to manage.

## **Cutlery**

Using cutlery is a challenge for different people for different reasons. Often cutlery with a moulded handle can make all the difference to enabling people to successfully use cutlery. Many different styles are available and an internet search for 'adapted cutlery' will find many different places you can buy it. A simple yet effective design for many people is 'Caring Cutlery' or 'Kura Care Cutlery'. Both are available in junior and adult sizes and are widely available online or from [www.fledglings.org.uk](http://www.fledglings.org.uk). These makes of cutlery have shaped handles with dimples showing you where to put your index fingers. Take time to practise cutting correctly away from mealtimes with Playdough or cookie dough as this reduces the stress involved in learning to use cutlery correctly. If the plate tends to slide around, put a piece of non-slip mat underneath it.

Other things to practise include spooning dried rice, marbles, beads or water from one container to another.

## Hygiene

### *Washing*

Strategies to try:

- Encourage your child to help organise the items required for having a bath/shower. This teaches them the importance of planning ahead.
- Talk about the task i.e. which sponge/flannel they are going to use and when, where and how it is used.
- Teach your child a routine for washing and practice the task.
- Ask your child to give a plastic toy a wash so they can practice their washing and grooming skills.
- Encourage your child to wash themselves while singing the name of the body part out loud. Create an entire song by adding more body parts.
- Use a checklist/picture chart to remind them of their routine for washing. See [www.visualaidsforlearning.com](http://www.visualaidsforlearning.com) for ready-made printable cue cards for a variety of ages.
- Use an egg timer in the bathroom to help your child stay on task.

### *Tooth brushing*

Some children struggle to combine the up/down and around the mouth movements needed for teeth cleaning. These children often benefit from using an electric toothbrush as this removes a lot of the movements needed. See if they can visualise their teeth so they clean each tooth in turn, a picture may help with this. Some toothpaste can be very strong in flavour; e.g. some children do not tolerate mint flavours, so try strawberry or even flavourless toothpastes available from [www.fledglings.org.uk](http://www.fledglings.org.uk).

### *Toileting*

When helping your child begin to learn to wipe their own bottom, do most of it for them and then let them do the last wipe, gradually increase the amount they do until they do it all and you just check them if needed. Using moist toilet wipes can help some children be more successful and independent than with just dry tissue. Some children are helped by being prompted to remember the feel of a 'proper' wipe and trying to match it when they wipe. Some children do not wipe properly because they are in a hurry to do something else. Visual cue cards and reward systems may encourage these children to bother wiping. Printable instruction sheets and cue cards are readily available online.

### *Hand washing*

Hand washing is essential for good health. There are lots of online resources including <http://www.washyourhandsofthem.com> from NHS Scotland which has downloadable resources and reward charts and [www.visualaidsforlearning.com](http://www.visualaidsforlearning.com) which has step by step instructions to follow.

## Memory

*"I packed my bag and in it I put..."*

Sit a small group in a circle, pick someone to start by saying 'I packed my bag and in it I put...' stating something they would like to take on holiday e.g. a swimming costume. The next person in the circle repeats the first person's item and adds their own e.g. 'I packed my bag and in it I put a swimming costume *and sunglasses*'. This continues around the circle until you have a long list of things in the bag. Other members of the group can prompt by miming the item if anyone falls into difficulty. Your child would benefit from initially starting near to the beginning, and gradually build this up to improve memory.

### *Matching pairs*

Using pictorial cards, or placing household objects under paper cups (E.g. Buttons, coins etc.) shuffle and spread all the cards (or cups) out face down on a table. Your child may find it easier to remember where cards or cups are placed if cards are laid out in a grid form, as he improves begin to use a random arrangement. Players take it in turns to turn over 2 cards to find the pairs. The object of the game is to find the matching pairs.

### *The tray game ("Kim's Game")*

Find a selection of interesting small objects and arrange them on a tray, covered with a tea-towel. Uncover the tray for a certain amount of time to memorise the contents of the tray, then cover it up again. Ask your child to say or write all the objects that he can remember. Start by using a small number of objects and gradually increase as memory improves.

## Organisation

*Reading timetable and remembering items:*

- **Transfer information**, regarding e.g. sports kit, library book, musical instruments onto a weekly planner;
- **Use pictures/symbols** to remind pupil to take specific items to school e.g. sports kit, library book, musical instruments;
- **Use a colour coding system** to organise belongings;
- **Use checklists or post-its** on bedroom wall;
- **Duplicate timetables or plans** e.g. bedroom/kitchen/desk/locker door.

*Packing school bag:*

Pupils with poor self-organization often carry everything with them to ease their anxiety.

- **Encourage pupil to empty bag at end of each day.** Set up an organized storage system at home, e.g. filing trays, drawer/box file, colour coded to correspond with 'colour' of subjects; have storage space for large pieces of equipment, e.g. kit, musical instruments;
- **Encourage pupil to pack bag the night before** to reduce stress and anxiety in the morning;
- **Use a checklist** and cross-check with timetable/planner;



- **Purchase a school bag** suitable for student's requirements. Consider size, type, style, number and accessibility of pockets (enough to assist with organization but remember, too many cause confusion).

#### *Organization within the school day*

- **Self and belongings** – consider provision of a designated place (box in Learning Support, locker) for pupil to leave specific equipment, e.g. musical instrument, laptop, PE kit, books.
- **Lockers or a designated place** will be useful for pupils who prefer to carry everything everywhere. Carrying heavy bags will place excessive strain on the spine/joints of pupils who are already at risk, due to physical disabilities or co-ordination difficulties.
- **When working on loose sheets of paper** encourage pupil to write name, subject, date and number on top of each page.
- **Encourage pupil to file sheets at end of each lesson** by using:
  - (a) coloured plastic pocket files;
  - (b) exercise books covered in coloured plastic book covers;
  - (c) A4 ring file with dividers coloured for each subject;
  - (d) Triangular cardboard pocket inserted into back of exercise book to slot work in and keep in order.
- **Ensure workplace is uncluttered.** Return equipment to correct place after use.
- **Lunch breaks** – raise staff awareness of need to support student with management of money, tray, lunch box etc.

#### *Remembering important information*

- **Use rough book/small pocket-sized notebook** to jot down important things to remember.
- **Make lists of things to do** and cross things off when they are done.
- **Keep post-it notes in bag/working file** to write notes to yourself. Decide on a consistent place to stick/write messages.
- **Leave clear space on timetables** for adding reminders.
- **Use transparent pencil cases** for ease of visual checking.
- **Simple check lists in 'link book'** to remind pupil of items they regularly need to take home e.g. blazer, laptop, PE kit, musical instrument.

#### *Following the instructions of a task*

- **Encourage pupil to read directions aloud** twice to ensure pupil has understood them.
- **Highlight directions** with a marker
- **Check off each step as it is completed.**

# ASSESSMENT REQUEST FORM

**Referral form for school age children who have difficulties with coordination, general fine motor skills or functional activities**

Name of Child:

Date of Birth:

Parent / Carers Names:

Home Address:

Contact telephone numbers:

School and name of school contact person (if relevant):

Child's Diagnosis if any:

**What are the current difficulties your child is having which you would like the Occupational Therapy team to assess?** (Please note we are unable to accept referrals for handwriting or sensory processing difficulties)

**How would you like the Occupational Therapy team to help if possible?**

Parent/Carer Signature:

Date:

Please return this form with copies of all the diary sheets to:

**Single Point of Referral Office  
The Children's Centre  
Norwich Community Hospital  
Bowthorpe Road  
Norwich  
NR2 3TU**

### **Information about our referral criteria**

- Children must be registered with a GP in Norwich CCG, North Norfolk CCG or South Norfolk CCGs (children registered with Thetford GP practices are covered by the OT team at Bury St Edmunds). Children with West Norfolk CCG GPs are only seen if they have coordination difficulties and would meet the diagnostic criteria for Developmental Coordination Disorder. Other children with West Norfolk CCG GPs are seen by the OT team at The Queen Elizabeth Hospital, King's Lynn.
- Referrals for coordination difficulties are accepted for children aged 4 – 8 or in the academic year before transition to high school (year 6). If we have sent you this pack and the child turns 9 during the 12 weeks you are working on their difficulties, we would accept the referral for assessment if they have not made progress after 12 weeks despite.
- Referrals for children who have a functional difficulty related to a physical need, rather than a learning disability, are accepted for children 0-18yrs. Children who have skills in line with their learning disability are seen by the children's learning disability team (Starfish).

**DIARY SHEET**

**Childrens Occupational Therapy**

Norwich Community Hospital  
 Bowthorpe Road  
 Norwich  
 NR2 3TU

Tel: 01603 506535

Fax: 01603 506575

Website: [www.norfolkcommunityhealthandcare.nhs.uk](http://www.norfolkcommunityhealthandcare.nhs.uk)

Diary Sheet for Pre-Occupational Therapy Activity Programmes	
Name of Child:	
Date of Birth:	

PLEASE USE ONE SHEET FOR EACH DIFFICULTY YOU WORK ON.  
 If the child improves a skill, there is no need to continue working on it for the full 12 weeks.

<b>Identified Difficulty:</b> _____					
<b>Ability at start:</b>	Not Close to Completing	Able to do parts of Activity	Able to do most of Activity	Able to do the activity	
<b>Ability at end:</b>	Not Close to Completing	Able to do parts of Activity	Able to do most of Activity	Able to do the activity	
Week beginning	Activities completed in different sessions with observations of how well the child has done				
	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Session 5

