

## Essay about Down Syndrome:

The result of an oddity of genes in the 21 chromosome. Children with this syndrome usually have a slow rate of learning & other physical symptoms. Children are usually very lovable persons and, therefore, they are sometimes referred to as the 'children of heaven'. In order for the learner with Down's syndrome to be successfully included in school activities, the following characteristics will need to be given consideration by all staff members involved in the day-to-day management:

### Motor skills' challenges are common.

#### Poor manipulation due to:

- Hypotonia in arms and hands.
- Shorter limbs and digits.
- Reduced stamina.

#### Implications of motor skills' challenges are that:

- Handwriting may be oversized or undersized and light / sketchy.
- Manual skills such as cutting, using concrete materials & equipment may be less accurate & completed more slowly.

### Visual Perception:

- Difficulty ordering a sequence
- Reversal of images
- Random visual scanning

#### Implications of visual perception difficulties are:

- Difficulty in perceiving and predicting a pattern/sequence
- Unable to reliably read a number e.g. 43 becomes 34, 6 for 8.
- Will miss information when presented in a cluttered or random manner.

### Cognitive characteristics include:

- Learners exhibit a wide range of abilities
- Comprehension/interpretation of verbal and written instructions appear to be more advanced than actual ability/level.
- Abstract thinking is limited
- Learners are unable to transfer knowledge to a new situation
- Learners are unable to separate pieces of information and form links

#### Implications of cognitive characteristics are:

- Asynchrony across subject areas i.e. may be more skilled in reading than in mathematics.
- A learner with Down syndrome varies in her/his abilities and skills compared to her/his peers.
- Comparisons are difficult
- Working pace is usually slow due in part to intellectual disability and poor motor skills.
- Appears to understand/confirm he/she understands but fails to comprehend the activity.
- The learner will misinterpret words with more than one meaning e.g. light can relate weight or illumination
- Unable to interpret and complete tasks

### Memory

- Short term & long term memory is poor.
- Difficulty recalling and following the sequence e.g. using a calculator.

#### Implications of limited memory are that learners may:

- Be unable to store information long enough to process and respond to it.
- Use incorrect responses to previously known skills.
- Experience difficulty getting started as they are unsure of the sequence.

#### Attending skills

- Learner's work is incomplete
- Adult intervention is frequently required to keep the learners on the task
- Learners will exhibit a range of problem behaviours.
- They may not follow the whole class verbal instructions.
- They tend to complete the last section of the activity.

#### Support Strategies (motor skill problems experienced by learners with Down Syndrome):

- Use alternative tasks for recording e.g. cut and paste, multiple choice, etc.
- Use large/adapted equipment (ruler with ridge for gripping, blackboard compass)
- Reduce the amount of activities/ work expected.
- Provide proformas in a large size with some information already recorded.

## Essay about Autism:

Over recent year it has, however, become evident that autism has a biological origin. Therefore, professionals, including teachers, should refrain from suggesting that parents' manner in handling a child may be the cause of his or her strange behaviour and social isolation.

Teachers in pre-school classes and teaching in the Foundation Phase play a very important role in identifying that a young learner could possibly have a social interpersonal problem related to autism. The detection of learners with autism in their formative years is vital. However, never ever tell parents, guardians or caregivers that a child is autistic, but help them to seek advice from professionals. It is only professional people who will really be able to tell whether a child has autism or not. It is, therefore, important that you, as a teacher, know the symptoms, which can indicate that a young person suffers from autism. Keep the contact details of societies and schools for autism (and other forms of impairments, with which you were provided in your study guide) where professional help can be sought.

Autism or Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a lifelong, complex, pervasive developmental impairment, which appears to have a genetic predisposition and stems from a multi-faceted origin, causing disturbances in brain development and functioning. It is found to occur in four times as many boys as girls and the incidence of ASD seems to be on the increase.

The onset of autism is from birth or before the age of three years. Various subgroups are referred to within the autistic spectrum disorder, the best of which are childhood autism, early infantile autism and Asperger Syndrome. Asperger Syndrome presents with a more subtle display of difficulties, but has enough distinct features to be classified separately.

Learners with ASD often have accompanying learning difficulties, and the range of intellectual abilities amongst learners with ASD is vast. The presence of additional impairments such as epilepsy, sensory impairments and intellectual impairments can co-exist with ASD.

Learners with ASD present with many different levels of severity. They also display a wide range of individual characteristics, as they are all affected by what is known as the 'triad of impairments'. The triad is typically associated with a narrow, repetitive pattern of activities and resistance to change in things, which may directly affect the individual person. It manifests with an impairment in the quality of development in the following areas

### **Social interaction:**

- Little awareness of the existence of others or their feelings.
- A poor or absent ability to make appropriate social contact
- The repetition of words, questions, phrases and/or sentences over and over again.
- Words and phrases may be used incorrectly.
- The production of speech may be unusual.
- They have difficulty in initiating or taking part in conversations.

### **Behaviour and imagination:**

- Imaginative play may be limited or poor; they cannot play with a wooden block as if it is a toy car.
- They may display a limited range of imaginative activities, which a teacher may well find have actually been copied off the television or elsewhere.
- They pursue activities repetitively and cannot be influenced by suggestions of change.
- Unusual habits such as rocking, spinning, finger-flicking, continual fiddling with objects, spinning objects, tapping and scratching on objects, or arranging objects in lines or patterns.
- Inappropriate use of toys in play.
- Tantrums may occur for no reason.
- Interests and range of activities may be limited; for example, they are only interested in puzzles.

### **The following features may be observed:**

- Little or no eye contact.
- No real fear of danger.
- Abnormalities in the development of cognitive skills.
- Abnormalities of posture and motor behaviour such as poor balance.
- Poor gross and fine motor skills in some learners.
- Bizarre eat / sleep patterns.
- High pain threshold.
- Crying or laughing for no apparent reason.