



## Lawns Park Primary School and Nursery **A Quick Guide to Speed of**

### **Processing Difficulties**

#### What are 'Speed of Processing difficulties'?

Processing speed is a cognitive ability that could be defined as the time it takes a person to do a mental task. It is related to the speed in which a person can understand and react to the information they receive, whether it be visual (letters and numbers), auditory (language), or movement. In other words, processing speed is the time between receiving and responding to a stimulus.

It is not directly related to a pupil's underlying ability, but it can be a significant barrier to learning and outcomes. Pupils with processing speed difficulties can take a lot longer than their peers to complete a range of tasks in, and outside of, school.

Slow processing speed means that some determined tasks may be more difficult than others, like reading, maths, listening and taking notes, or holding conversations. It may also interfere with executive functions, as a person with slow processing speed may have a harder time planning, setting goals, making decisions, starting tasks, paying attention, etc.

#### Implications for a pupil

Pupils with processing speed difficulties may:

- Give an incorrect response as still processing the previous question.
- Not actively engage in classroom discussions. Difficulty keeping up or may know the answer but by the time it has come to them, someone else has beaten them to it.
- Tend not to perform well in mental maths, quick-fire tests or tests that are timed.
- Find homework takes them a lot longer than other pupils.
- Find it difficult to listen and keep track of what the teacher is saying.
- Read and write slowly.

- Appears anxious / frustrated / tired as the day goes on.
- Find solving simple maths problems in their head tricky.
- Take a long time to complete multi-step maths problems.
- Struggle to keep up with conversations.
- Answers can appear to be 'at the tip of the tongue' but they have difficulty finding the correct word / answer.
- Word finding difficulties – e.g., 'you know erm thingy'.
- Have trouble following instructions, especially if there is more than one step to remember.
- Will say 'I've forgotten' frequently.

#### How to help – top tips

Pupils may benefit from:

1. More time to make decisions, give answers and complete tasks.
2. Offer choices to reduce amount to be processed; 'is it X or is it y?'
3. Pre-teaching e.g., read key texts/vocabulary before a lesson. Explore/discuss the key concepts.
4. The opportunity to read information more than once for comprehension.
5. Differentiated outcomes e.g., Aim to complete 4 answers (then gradually increase).
6. Timetabled 'finishing-off time' to make sure they can do a piece of work justice and take pride in their outcomes (not in break or lunch).
7. Extra time in tests.
8. Assistive technology or other writing supports (e.g. writing frames).
9. Instructions and information presented in 'steps' or 'chunks'.
10. Task boards and written instructions alongside verbal instructions.

#### Further advice and support

##### **Reading:**

Article 'Supporting Children with Processing Issues' (Sep 2020)

<https://senmagazine.co.uk/behavioural-emotional-and-social-difficulties-besd/11926/supporting-children-with-processing-issues/>