



# **SUPPORTING NEURODIVERSITY IN SCHOOLS**

with The Owl Centre



The  
**Owl Centre**



## INTRODUCTION

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**At The Owl Centre, we are committed to supporting schools in creating inclusive environments where Neurodivergent students can thrive.**

This brochure offers practical strategies and insights to help educators understand and support the diverse needs of Neurodivergent learners, including those with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD), Dyslexia, ADHD and Autistic individuals.

## UNDERSTANDING NEURODIVERSITY

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**Neurodiversity celebrates the unique ways in which brains work. Every student brings their own strengths, challenges, and perspectives to the classroom.**

By embracing Neurodiversity, schools can foster a more inclusive and dynamic learning environment.

Below are some examples of some types of Neurodivergence:

- **DLD:** Impacts language understanding and use, speech and pragmatics of language.
- **DYSLEXIA:** Involves challenges with reading, writing, and spelling, often paired with creative problem-solving skills.
- **ADHD:** Marked by difficulties with attention, impulse control, and hyperactivity.
- **AUTISM:** Often characterised by differences in communication, sensory processing, and social interaction.

# CREATING AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

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## UNDERSTAND INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

- Use tools such as one-page profiles or Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to gather key information about each student
- Regularly liaise with families and involve professionals

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## PROVIDE CLEAR AND CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION

- Use simple, concise language
- Pair verbal instructions with visual aids or written prompts
- Repeat and check understanding without singling out students

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## SUPPORT SENSORY NEEDS

- Create quiet, low-stimulation areas in the classroom
- Allow movement breaks and fidget tools where appropriate
- Be mindful of sensory triggers like noise, lighting, or strong smells

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## FOSTER EMOTIONAL REGULATION

- Teach and model emotional regulation strategies (e.g. breathing exercises, “zones of regulation”)
- Create predictable routines to reduce anxiety
- Provide a “safe space” for students to calm down when overwhelmed

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## ENCOURAGE STRENGTH-BASED LEARNING

- Highlight and build upon students’ talents, and interests
- Use multi-sensory teaching methods to cater to various learning styles
- Celebrate achievements, big and small



## WHAT'S THE ROLE OF A SPEECH THERAPIST?

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**Speech and language therapists (SLTs) play a vital role in supporting neurodivergent students by:**

- **Developing Communication Skills:** Helping students build expressive and receptive language skills.
- **Supporting Social Interaction:** Teaching strategies for self-advocacy, perspective taking, and understanding social cues.
- **Adapting Classroom Communication:** Training staff on inclusive communication strategies.
- **Creating Tailored Interventions:** Designing group or one-to-one sessions focused on individual goals.



**Our speech and language therapist conducted a whole school audit looking at how we support our children and from this we set some targets to improve... the outcomes were measured and we can now celebrate the success of our hard work.**

## WORKING TOGETHER

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**Collaboration between schools and Speech and Language Therapists is essential for success.**

Here's how we can work together:



### TRAINING FOR STAFF

Workshops on Neurodiversity, communication strategies, and sensory needs.



### CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Identifying barriers and recommending practical solutions.



### RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Providing visual aids, social stories, and tailored materials.



### REGULAR REVIEWS

Monitoring progress and adapting approaches as needed.



## PRACTICAL TOOLS & RESOURCES

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Here are some ideas to get you started, to help support neurodivergent students:



### VISUAL SCHEDULES

Help students understand routines and transitions.



### SOCIAL STORIES

Teach new skills and prepare for changes.



### COMMUNICATION BOARDS

Support non-verbal or minimally verbal students.



### APPS & TECHNOLOGY

Use assistive tech to enhance learning and communication.

## TOP TIPS FOR SUPPORTING NEURODIVERSITY IN SCHOOL

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**Collaboration between schools and Speech and Language Therapists is essential for success.**

**Respect Individual Language Preferences:** Use person-first language (e.g. “student with autism”) or identity-first language (e.g. autistic student”) based on the individual’s or their family’s preference. When in doubt, ask!

**Create Inclusive Learning Environments:** Offer flexible seating, sensory tools, and quiet spaces. Avoid a one-size-fits-all approach to learning – embrace Neurodivergent ways of thinking and problem-solving.

**Communicate Clearly and Kindly:** Use straightforward, concrete language and allow extra processing time. Check understanding without pressure by asking, “Can I explain that another way?”

**Support Emotional Regulation:** Teach and model self-regulation strategies like deep breathing or using fidgets. Validate emotions instead of dismissing them, and avoid labelling students as “naughty” for behaviours tied to sensory or emotional challenges.

**Raising Awareness and reflection of adult language use:** For example reducing use of questions and negatives, simplifying language, awareness of vocabulary used.

**Include all staff:** including reception, bus escorts, lunch time supervisors.



**Identifying and sharing what works throughout the school provides a culture of success for staff and children.”**

“

I've noticed a big difference in my son's speech. He is starting to use more words and is wanting to communicate more with us.”



To discover more about Supporting **Neurodiversity in Schools** and to find out how we can help you, get in touch with The Owl Centre today.

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