



CHILDREN WITH DIVERSE LEARNING NEEDS – A PARENT GUIDE

The Australian Education Development Index was completed as part of the census in 2009 and again in 2012. The information regarding development was gathered on 5 years olds attending school. For north-west, inner Brisbane, *Overall there are 18.1 per cent of children developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains of the AEDI and 7.8 per cent are developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains.* The domains included physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills (school based), communication skills and general knowledge.

<https://www.aedc.gov.au/data/data-explorer?id=45377>

SHOULD I BE WORRIED?

Children develop at very different rates but usually along the same pathway. So you would expect a child to roll, sit, crawl and walk but they may develop this at their own rate. However, if you feel your child is a lot slower at meeting the same stages as their peers or your child is doing different things to their peers, it is worth getting further advice. Sometimes there is a societal response that it is best to “wait and see” and the child will “grow out it”. However, in most cases where there is a high level of parental concern, the parent often comments, “I wish that I had started to access help sooner” so I could have put things in place earlier. Often there are long waiting lists to see specialists and the assessment process can also take time. If you are worried, it is better to seek professional advice sooner rather than later.

WHO SHOULD I SPEAK TO?

1. Access red flags guide for 0-5 years and then speak to your child health nurse or GP
http://www.health.qld.gov.au/rch/professionals/brochures/red_flag.pdf
2. Refer to raising children for a guide on developmental stages and useful resources
<http://raisingchildren.net.au/>
3. Book a parent-teacher interview and speak to your teacher about your concerns

HOW DO I UNDERSTAND MY CHILD’S STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES?

In order to understand your child’s strengths and challenges, an assessment process usually occurs. The process usually involves:

1. Gathering information about the child’s early history, family environment and participation at school
2. Using tools that require the child to listen, point, match, talk, move and/or demonstrate. Most tools are designed for children across a large age range so your child will complete tasks that they might find hard as they are for a child of an older age. This point can be explained to your child so they know if they get items incorrect they are not worried.
3. The professional will analyse the results. They will compare your child’s results against the performance of a large group of children.

4. The professional will then discuss the results with you as the primary caregivers.

HOW CAN I GET AN ASSESSMENT?

Education Queensland

All children attending an Education Queensland school can access a speech language pathologist and/or Guidance Officer for an assessment regarding their language and learning. As this is a limited resource, a referral from your teacher is required. Waiting times may be significant as children are prioritised to access the assessment based on educational need. In order to access this service:

1. Speak to your child's teacher
2. Concerns raised at special needs meeting
3. Referral made to guidance officer and/or speech language pathologist

Support by Education Queensland professionals will be required to support the process for an Education Adjustment Program (EAP). However, information from professionals from Private options or Queensland Health will be incorporated into this process if applicable to your child. At Oakleigh State School less than 2% of children are on an EAP.

Private Options

You may choose to access private options in order to enable assessment. Vision and hearing testing are recommended as the first point to start.

1. Vision: vision screening available at any optometrist
2. Hearing: hearing screening available through child health nurses 1300 366 039 or through an audiologist (GP referral recommended)
3. Speech and Language Pathologist – Communication is essential for learning, literacy and numeracy development, interacting with others, participation in all class and school activities, and positive self-esteem. A speech pathologist can provide assessment to understand how your child uses and understands language in oral and written forms.

Find a speech pathologist on: <http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au/information-for-the-community/find-a-speech-pathologist>

4. Occupational Therapist aim to enhance your child's participation in their daily activities. This can include self care skills like toileting, eating and dressing. They can also assist with fine motor skills (handwriting, pencil grip, cutting), attention and concentration, visual perception (making sense of what they see – doing puzzles, learning letters), social skills and self organisation
<http://www.otaus.com.au/find-an-occupational-therapist>
 5. Physiotherapists are experts in movement and function. They can help a child who may be clumsy, have poor balance, runs awkwardly, has difficulties with gross motor activities such as jumping, hopping, and skipping.
<http://www.physiotherapy.asn.au/APAWCM/Controls/FindaPhysio.aspx>
 6. Psychologists (educational and developmental) are experts in brain, learning and behaviour. They can help with problems with transition; School avoidance; Learning difficulties; Poor peer relationships; Low self esteem; Problems with behaviour; Family relationships.
<http://www.psychology.org.au/FindaPsychologist/Default.aspx?ID=1204>
- SPELD QLD also has options of preferred professionals

(Including psychologists) that can assist in the field of learning difficulties. Ph: 07 3394 2566

7. Developmental Paediatricians are skilled in the development of children: how they grow, how they acquire knowledge and skills, how they learn to behave and socialise. They use their training to understand children from a medical point of view, in order to determine the reasons for different problems of development and behaviour. <http://cd.net.au/otherpaeds>

Choosing a private therapist

You may ask questions regarding:

1. Service location
 - a. Where are they located? Is this easily accessible?
 - b. Do they do school/home visits?
2. Referral method
 - a. Is a doctor's referral required?
 - b. Do they require information from the school?
3. Cost of service
 - a. Do they provide rebate on private health fund?
 - b. Can you claim Medicare rebate or use a Medicare chronic disease plan as part of the funding (Must be completed by GP)
<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-medicare-allied-health-brochure.htm>
 - c. Do they have a cancellation policy or fee?
 - d. Does the assessment fee include a written report?
4. Philosophy of practice
 - a. Do they work with other health professionals?
 - b. Do they use a play based approach or structured approach?
 - c. What is the expectation of the involvement of the primary caregiver?
 - d. Does the therapist have a special interest area?

Queensland Health

Queensland Health provides the following services:

1. General Paediatrics at The Prince Charles Hospital or Royal Children's Hospital. Referral usually made by your GP. They will support children with medically complex conditions. They can also provide support for children presenting with characteristics of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.
2. Child Development Service, Keperra. Will assess children who present with concerns regarding their development in 3 or more domains. Waiting lists of 10-12 months apply. Referral required from your GP. Call 3335 8888
3. Child Youth and Mental Health Service (North West CYMHS - 07 3335 8888 or 07 3646 9027) for children with emotional and behavioural disorders that are severe or complex or at risk of becoming so.

University Clinics

Some universities run student clinics for school aged children at a reduced fee.

University Of Queensland

Speech Pathology: <http://www.shrs.uq.edu.au/speech-pathology-clinic> 3365 1798

Occupational Therapy: <http://www.shrs.uq.edu.au/child-life-clinic> 3365 2232

Physiotherapy: <http://www.shrs.uq.edu.au/dev-paed-clinic> 3365 2232 / 3365 2497

Psychology and counselling

QUT Health Clinics: 3138 0999 healthclinic.qut.edu.au

ACU Brisbane Psychology and Counselling Clinic: 3623 7453 www.acu.edu.au

DIAGNOSIS AND UNDERSTANDING

The assessment process can lead to a diagnosis which can be helpful in accessing:

1. Funding for specific conditions
 - <http://www.betterstart.net.au/>
 - http://www.autism.net.au/FaHCSIA_Funding.htm
 - <http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/carer-allowance>
2. Education Adjustment Program (EAP) is a process for identifying and responding to the educational needs of students with disability who require significant education adjustments related to the specific impairment areas of: Autism Spectrum Disorder; Hearing Impairment; Intellectual Disability; Physical Impairment; Speech-Language Impairment; Vision Impairment.
3. Information related to the child's presentation
 - <http://education.qld.gov.au/schools/disability/resources.html>
 - <http://www.info4carers.com/>
 - <http://raisingchildren.net.au/>

However, a diagnosis is not the key to helping your child. A full understanding of:

- What your child's strengths and difficulties are
- How is it likely to change over the course of their life
- What might be factors that could change your child's developmental presentation
- Who should you be accessing for support and advice
- When do you access certain professions and why

This will enable you to help your child within their family, their school and their community overtime.

There are also many great links in understanding your child's presentation including:

<http://education.qld.gov.au/schools/disability/resources.html>

<http://www.info4carers.com/>

<http://raisingchildren.net.au/>

WHAT HELP CAN MY SCHOOL PROVIDE?

In addition to the initial assessment, Education Queensland has a range of supports for children with diverse needs. (See following links)

<http://education.qld.gov.au/schools/disability/index.html>

Education Queensland ensures Inclusive education. Inclusive education means that every day in every classroom, every state school student is learning and achieving in a safe, supportive, inclusive and disciplined learning environment.

In order to support children with diverse learning needs, a number of factors are put in place.

<http://education.qld.gov.au/curriculum/framework/p-12/docs/supporting-info-diverse-needs.pdf>

These include specialised learning plans to enhance participation in the classroom and supported assessment procedures.

Learning Plans:

| | Name | |
|-----|--------------------------------|---|
| ICP | Individual Curriculum Plan | A document which records decisions regarding the provision of a different year level curriculum and achievement standard (than the students' age cohort) in one or more learning areas. This applies to children who are accelerated ahead a year or children who are not showing "emerging" skills at their grade level. |
| EAP | Educational Adjustment Program | A document to record the educational adjustment provided to meet teaching and learning needs of children who meet the criteria for the EAP disability categories (see diagnosis and understanding) |
| IEP | Individual Education Plan | Required only for children with a disability up to the age of 5 This is still developed as a useful document in collaboration with parents. |

At Oakleigh State School the above applies including a range of support programs to ensure all students are progressing in their learning.

1. Support by Guidance Officer (Lex) and Speech Language Pathologist (Kirsty)
<https://oakleighss.eq.edu.au/Supportandresources/Studentservicesandsupportprograms/Pages/Studentservicesandsupportprograms.aspx>
2. Great results guarantee
 - a. <http://education.qld.gov.au/schools/grants/state/targeted/great-results.html>
 - b. <https://oakleighss.eq.edu.au/Supportandresources/Formsanddocuments/Documents/Oakleigh-SS-great-results-guarantee-2015.pdf>
3. Great results guarantee combined with P&C funding has enabled employment of staff to provide [identified programs](#) (Read it Again, TAP, CARS and STARS, U2B, Minilit, QUEST, Maths Mastery)
4. Parent support through other parents with children with similar needs.

An example of how students access support is identified in the flowchart opposite. Parents should always discuss problems with their child's teacher first. If they want additional information, contact the Deputy Principal, Principal or Head of Curriculum. School administrators will always confer with a child's teacher before offering additional advice to parents.

