

DEVELOPMENTAL LANGUAGE DISORDER

DLD

A COMMON FORM OF NEURODIVERSITY MOST PEOPLE HAVE NEVER HEARD OF

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) is a common but often overlooked or misunderstood aspect of neurodiversity. DLD means a child may experience significant differences in how they use and/or understand language. It's estimated that around two children in every classroom have DLD.¹ These differences can influence literacy, learning, friendships, and emotional wellbeing.

With the right understanding and support, children with DLD can thrive and fully participate in school and social life. However, DLD is often unrecognised or misunderstood, which can make it harder for children to access the support they need.

CHILDREN WITH DLD MAY EXPERIENCE DIFFERENCES IN:

- Paying attention and listening to others
- Learning new words and remembering words they already know
- Using communication successfully to build friendships and keep up in a conversation
- Following instructions
- Learning to read and write²
- Answering questions and putting words in the right order

These experiences can overlap with other neurodevelopmental differences such as dyslexia or autism which sometimes leads to DLD being misidentified. Some children may also mask their differences, which can be mistaken for behaviour challenges, inattentiveness, shyness, or other types of difference and special educational needs (SEN).³

ORACY AND DLD

Classroom talk and taking part in conversations is important for children with DLD. A focus on oracy can support learning through explicit teaching, modelling and opportunities to practice aspects of oracy, for example how to engage in discussion, use key vocabulary, ask and answer questions, and use language for different purposes.

TO SUPPORT CHILDREN WITH DLD, CONSIDER:

- Providing extra time to process information and instructions
- Repeating key points and using visual supports as scaffolds
- Adapting your own language: simplify sentences, slow your speech and use clear, literal language⁴
- Creating a positive culture of classroom talk: encourage contributions, use supportive feedback and give specific praise to build confidence and participation

WHAT IS DLD DAY?

DLD Day is an international awareness day led by RADLD (Raising Awareness of Developmental Language Disorder). This year, DLD Day is on Friday 17th October. It's a great opportunity to increase understanding, spark conversations and take practical steps to support children with DLD.

Visit radld.org

FRIDAY 17 OCTOBER

WHAT CAN YOU DO NOW?

Use DLD Day as a springboard to make a difference in your classroom and school:

- **Spread the word** – Share what you've learned about DLD with a colleague or your team.
- **Learn more** – Explore resources on DLD through the RADLD or NAPLIC websites, then try the RADLD DLD Quiz to test your knowledge.
- **Reflect on your class** – Consider whether any students might be showing signs of DLD and consider how you could better support them. Raise any reflections with your SENDCO.



CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

To deepen your understanding and connect with others:

- **Join NAPLIC Peer Support Network groups** – Engage with teachers and professionals sharing experiences and strategies. Visit www.naplic.org.uk/events/
- **Become a NAPLIC member** – Access resources, professional development, and a supportive community of educators focused on DLD. Visit www.naplic.org.uk/membership/

NAPLIC
Professionals supporting language and communication development



¹ Norbury, C. et al., (2016). 'The impact of nonverbal ability on prevalence and clinical presentation of language disorder: evidence from a population study', Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 57 (11), pp1247-1257. Available at: acamh.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jcpp.12573

² Speech and Language UK. Developmental Language Disorder. Available at: speechandlanguage.org.uk/educators-and-professionals/resource-library-for-educators/developmental-language-disorder-dld/

³ Speech and Language UK (2021). Developmental Language Disorder: A guide for every teacher on supporting young people with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) in mainstream schools. Available at: speechandlanguage.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/ican_dld_guide_final_aug4.pdf

⁴ Moor House Research and Training Institute. Could it be Language? Key strategies to support language disorders in the classroom. Available at: www.moorhouseschool.co.uk/_site/data/files/users/125779AF2E24CE9F5DDEEC30A047D36C.pdf