

Education and FASD

The Centre For  FASD

Dr Cassie Jackson



Agenda

- Where do children with FASD fit into the education system?
 - Strategies for managing in the classroom
 - Social vulnerability amongst peers
 - Video clip
 - Group work
- 



Where do children with FASD fit?

- Too able for MLD educational provision (on the whole)
 - Too socially vulnerable for PRU/EBD placements (although many end up here for long periods of time)
 - Not able enough for mainstream
- 



Stop focusing on IQ!

- A (near) normal IQ does not mean a child with FASD can function normally.
 - Executive functioning (and adaptive functioning) is more predictive academic success (social vulnerability) in children with FASD.
 - An educational psychologist assessment without executive functioning included, does not move anything forward.
 - The interpretation of neurocognitive results within the context of adaptive functioning is vital.
- 

FASD and the Classroom: Strategies

- Sensory overload
- Poor attention, concentration and hyperactivity (ADHD)
- Poor working memory
- Poor peer relationships and poor social skills
- Social vulnerability
- Meltdowns

Teaching a Student with FASD



Dear Teacher

You have a student in your classroom who has a Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and needs your help to access education. Thank you for reading this information.

Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) is an umbrella term representing the range of effects caused by prenatal alcohol exposure. Each student with FASD is individual and their learning difficulties and disabilities will depend on the extent of damage caused to the developing organs and brain. This damage results in difficulties for students in many areas of the curriculum in the acquisition of new information, linking new information to previously learned information and the practical application of knowledge gained.

1

UNDERSTAND

FASD is brain damage due to prenatal alcohol exposure

2

RECOGNISE

Know the signs of a child with FASD

3

ACCOMMODATE

Success is possible with supports and strategies

Equality Act

Schools "must make reasonable adjustments, including the provision of auxiliary aids and services, to ensure that disabled children and young people are not at a substantial disadvantage compared with their peers."

"This duty is anticipatory – it requires thought to be given in advance to what disabled children and young people might require and what adjustments might need to be made to prevent that disadvantage." See:

SEND Code of Practice 0-25: Statutory Guidance <http://tinyurl.com/SENDCoDe>



Unless otherwise noted material is excerpted from NCHAS UK Teacher Toolkit by Project Researcher C. Mackburn and Project Director S. Carpenter. For more information see: http://tinyurl.com/NCHASUK_TeacherToolkit. The in-depth Primary and Secondary Framework documents are widely used resources.



Reducing Sensory Overload

- Prevention is the most effective approach to FASD related meltdowns
- Difficulty filtering and screening out background interference:
 - Avoid busy and loud areas where possible/small group working
 - Teach self-soothing techniques
 - Factoring 'explosion' times – during/after school
 - Build in movement breaks at school and home
 - Breaks in the classroom – can be masked by 'doing a job for the teacher'
 - When giving choices, make these closed and visual where possible – less pressure on working memory and abstract reasoning
 - Manage transitions carefully – visual timetables, visual timers
 - Give time to process verbal instruction or explanation



ADHD Symptoms within the Context of FASD

- Remember ADHD is just a symptom of FASD, it is not the whole picture
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zj4F6qlsedo>
- Minimise distraction
- Movement breaks
- Single step instructions, key information where possible
- Task breakdown
- Visual prompts
- TA support to remain on task and reiterate teacher instructions for poor working memory
- Over-learning and repetition



Meltdowns

- ▶ Largely occur because of:
 - ▶ Sensory overload
 - ▶ Anxiety
 - ▶ Impaired hot executive functioning
- ▶ Prevention is key (but won't always work)
- ▶ In school - frequently hyper-aroused over-whelmed by their environment
- ▶ Often it is environmental and external factors in the world that trigger meltdowns
- ▶ Pre-planning and analysis of triggers – hard work but effective
- ▶ Keeping sensory overload and anxiety to a minimum
- ▶ Strategies for poor working memory and ADHD
- ▶ Preparation and transitions
- ▶ Consistency and routine
- ▶ Reassurance and repetition ++



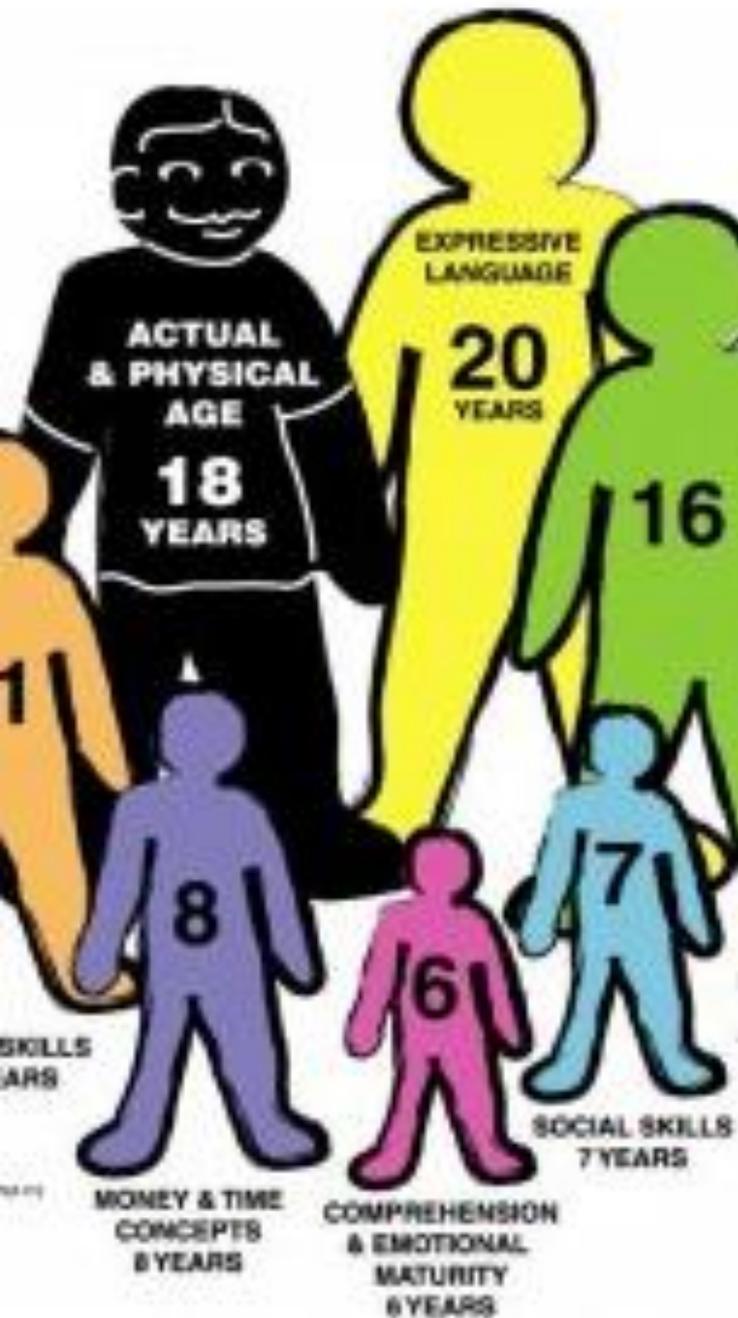
General Teaching Approaches for FASD

- ▶ Multi-sensory learning – visual, kinaesthetic, auditory
- ▶ Demonstrate as well as describe new techniques, and be prepared to repeat this daily
- ▶ Small group work and one-to-one work where possible
- ▶ TA support to help child remain on task (cold EF)
- ▶ Construct a personalised learning plan based on child's strengths and interests
- ▶ Use consistent language and approaches across home and school (working relationship with parents)
- ▶ Allow time to process verbal information. Ask the child to repeat the instruction back to you (however remember they still might not fully understand...)

Strengths to build on

- ▶ Practical strengths that are useful in child's educational careers and throughout life
- ▶ Many affected children are articulate and have engaging personalities. They enjoy being with other people
- ▶ Many have learning strengths around creative subjects, such as art, drama, sport, and technologies, although they often have difficulties with comprehension and sequencing tasks.
- ▶ While there are working/short-term memory difficulties, rote learning and long-term memory can be relative strengths.





Social vulnerability with peers

- ▶ Secondary school in particular
- ▶ Rule of thumb: halve a child's age for their social/emotional functioning age – keep your expectations of them at this level
- ▶ Easily led = Supervision +++
- ▶ Nurture groups (teaching social skills, feelings), role play, social stories
- ▶ Ownership and stealing
- ▶ Blurred reality and fantasy: 'lying' and confabulation



Repeating past mistakes

- ▶ Children with FASD struggle to learn from past mistakes and to imagine the consequences of their actions.
 - ▶ This makes discipline difficult and largely futile
 - ▶ Prevention is everything (and even then not always realistic)
 - ▶ Teaching self-regulation skills is key – this will not happen overnight and will likely never reach same level as unaffected young people
- 



The problem with traditional behaviour management strategies

- ▶ For a child to change their behaviour in response to either threatened punishment (detention, extra work) or future reward (positive referrals, treats, extra play time) they must:
 - ▶ Understand the concept of 'future earning' / deferred gratification
 - ▶ Have the impulse control to control reactions
 - ▶ Understand cause and effect
 - ▶ Have some understanding of impact on others
 - ▶ Be able to regulate emotional response
- ▶ Children with FASD generally do not have these skills



Supporting self-regulation skills

- ▶ Provide a safe de-escalation environment
- ▶ Enable a child to access this when they recognise they are becoming dysregulated and praise their recognition of this
- ▶ Do not use the de-escalation environment as a punishment or 'time-out'
- ▶ Every child with FASD will self-sooth differently:
 - ▶ Talking to themselves
 - ▶ Movement
 - ▶ Hiding
 - ▶ Need for deep pressure touch
 - ▶ No touch



As teachers of children with FASD, you will need to:

- ▶ Provide the scaffolding around the child's executive functioning impairment.
- ▶ Remember they will not fully understand the link between behavior and consequences, even if they tell you they do.
- ▶ Repeat. A lot.
- ▶ Remember the child will struggle to transfer learning a skill from one environment to another... hence the repetition.
- ▶ Supervise, supervise, supervise..
- ▶ Accept that there are some skills they may never fully master and will always need support with.
- ▶ Manage your own expectations – this is organic brain damage, not a 'behaviour problem'.
- ▶ Think 'can't' not 'won't' – Don't assume intentionality.



Video Clip: Lee Harvey-Heath

- ▶ Chair National FASD Advisory Board. Founder FASD Devon and Cornwall
 - ▶ Lives with FASD
- 



For teachers of children with FASD

- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSsCXnsYKRI>



Group Questions

- ▶ What will be key issues for a child with FASD moving into secondary school, and what strategies might help with this?
- ▶ Given the FASD profile, what will be key subjects or aspects of subjects that a child with FASD will struggle with and why?
- ▶ What subjects or activities are likely to be strengths and used to foster self-esteem? What else can be built into the curriculum?
- ▶ If punishing children with FASD does not work, what should we do instead?
- ▶ What features of a PRU will support a child with FASD, and what might be detrimental?
- ▶ What needs to be put in place for FASD children to manage exams in school?



Questions?

