

Advisory Teaching Service

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Understanding and responding to pupils with

Short Stature

Information and advice for schools and settings



Advisory Teaching Service

PD Team



Quality
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2018



Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

Background to short stature

What is short stature?

- It is estimated there are approximately 30,000 people in the UK with short stature.
- Short stature occurs when a person's growth is restricted to a significant extent.
- It may be the result of one of over 100 medical conditions.
- There are two classifications:- 'disproportionate short stature' (DSS) and 'proportionate short stature' (PSS).
- The most common form of DSS is 'achondroplasia'.
- It may be more noticeable in some people than others.

How is it caused?

PSS is caused by :-

- a person's body not producing enough hormones and/or processing them incorrectly
- a child having parents significantly shorter than the average
- general growth delayed at any stage
- a genetic condition, e.g. Turner Syndrome
- a chronic illness or its treatment

DSS is usually inherited and due to a genetic mutation.

What are the physical effects?

- The effects of short stature can be apparent at birth.
- PSS is linked to a general lack of growth so a person will have body proportions found in the majority of the population.
- An individual with DSS has bones and joints that don't develop as would be expected which may lead to shorter limbs.
- Individuals with short stature, especially when caused by DSS, may have difficulty with their joints, breathing, speech & hearing.

Useful websites

www.achondroplasia.co.uk
www.tss.org.uk
www.restrictedgrowth.co.uk

In an educational setting

What are the challenges?

- Enabling self esteem, particularly in secondary schools
- Ensuring pupils can sit correctly, comfortably and safely
- Some pupils experience pain which may affect their ability to focus in lessons
- Some children have sleep apnoea which can cause sleepiness during the day
- General fatigue
- Difficulty with balance and reach
- Difficulty carrying heavy bags
- Pupils may not be allowed to take part in impact activities
- Accessing some aspects of the school curriculum, e.g. reaching over a wide science bench
- Fitting into school uniform
- Overcoming stereotypical attitudes to 'dwarfism', e.g. genre of story telling
- Some children may have hormone treatment &/or leg lengthening operations and be a wheelchair user at times.

How to help

- ✓ Be sensitive to the child's and family's wishes and needs.
- ✓ Equipment can be adapted/provided to ensure safe access to the curriculum.
- ✓ Allow for extra time as appropriate, e.g. to move between different areas of the school.
- ✓ Allow for fatigue and any other associated difficulties.
- ✓ Refer to the school's Access Audit and Disability Equality Scheme and provide a risk assessment as appropriate.
- ✓ Make arrangements to avoid a pupil carrying heavy resources, e.g. text books, between lessons.
- ✓ Provide positive role-models to pupils and their peers.
- ✓ Enabling low tech resources e.g. steps throughout the school.