

Support positive behaviour

A suggestion for implementing the strategy

'Key areas to support' from the Guide:

[Dyspraxia and learning](#)

Includes:

Understand the behaviour

Address frustrations

Recognise and respond to distress

Ako – take a reciprocal learning approach

Manage difficult times

Develop school-wide strategies

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From

Guide: [Dyspraxia and learning](#)

Strategy: [Key areas to support](#)

Suggestion: [Support positive behaviour](#)

Date

23 August 2025

Link

inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/dyspraxia-and-learning/support-positive-behaviour

Understand the behaviour

Identify the likely triggers or reasons for the behaviour of concern. When the function or purpose of the behaviour is identified, the information can be used to address the triggers in the environment and to respond appropriately.

Behaviour is a form of communication and it serves a purpose. When you understand its purpose, you can understand how to respond and intervene.

Source:

(Ministry of Education | Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga, PB41 pdf
<https://pb41.tki.org.nz/Media/Files/Understanding-why-children-behave-the-way-they-do>

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Address frustrations

An All About Speech Therapy practitioner describes how verbal dyspraxia can affect social skills and lead to frustration.



Video hosted on Youtube <http://youtu.be/T6kC1EcYDxw>

Closed Captions

Source:

[All About Speech Therapy](#)

<https://youtu.be/T6kC1EcYDxw>

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Recognise and respond to distress



Source:

Ministry of Education | Te Tāhuhu o Te Mātauranga

<https://www.education.govt.nz/school/student-support/special-education/behaviour-services-to-help-schools-and-students/minimising-physical-restraint-in-new-zealand-schools-and-kura/>

[View full image \(70 KB\)](#)

Recognise the signs that students are becoming overwhelmed or struggling, respond with the kind of support ākonga need to feel settled again and restore connections and support integration back into classroom and peer activities.

Ako – take a reciprocal learning approach

As each student with dyspraxia is different, some approaches will work better than others.

Explore different approaches with the student and regularly reflect with them on what's working well. Refine as needed.

Help students develop a strong sense of identity and know their needs and abilities

- Explore flexible options to allow students to learn in ways that work for them.
- Validate, respect and respond to student concerns and emotions.
- Help students give language to what they are feeling using verbal and visual tools.
- Work together to identify challenges, solve problems and develop systems for asking for help and finding a safe place or person.
- Create opportunities for students to take the lead using their strengths and interests.
- Develop cues that can be used by ākonga, peers or kaiako to signal such things as the need to refocus or take a break from a task or situation.

Work together to develop effective feedback systems

- Develop clear written and visual success criteria.
- Use concrete and precise communication to avoid misunderstandings.
- Consider short term contracts to achieve specific learning goals and task expectations.

Manage difficult times

There will be times when ākonga feel overwhelmed. Guide ākonga through these challenging situations, while being calm and confident.

Notice the signs that ākonga are becoming anxious. For example tapping, rocking and fidgeting.

- Remind them of any self-management and relaxation strategies they know.
- Remove unnecessary demands and/or redirect the student to another activity.
- Connect with ākonga using verbal and non-verbal techniques.

Slow down and communicate calmly and simply

- Maintain a low, calm tone of voice.
- Use supportive phrases such as “I’m here to help. When you are ready, we can...”.
- Actively listen, for example nod and repeat key phrases.
- Validate student emotions “I can see you are feeling frustrated.”

Be mindful of your body language

- Approach ākonga from the side, rather than front on, this is less confronting.
- Maintain a calm presence and provide reassurance.
- Keep an appropriate distance, close enough to let ākonga know you’re there, but making sure they don’t feel trapped.
- Use appropriate eye contact, direct eye contact can be challenging and intimidating.

Create a safe space and get support

- Create space and use silence and non-action as an opportunity for ākonga to gather their thoughts. Pause, observe and prepare for any further action that may be needed.
- Ask other ākonga to move away or leave the classroom if necessary. Be aware of how this may impact others.
- Use your school’s agreed process for getting support.

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Develop school-wide strategies

Develop personal, class and school-wide strategies that increase positive behaviours and promote self-management.

- ✓ Regularly teach and reinforce behaviour expectations throughout the school.
- ✓ Identify, understand and remove or minimise things that cause distress or are known triggers for students.
- ✓ Build staff, peer and student capability to recognise signs that the student is beginning to feel upset or anxious and to respond appropriately.
- ✓ Use personalised timetables, timers and visual aids so students can anticipate transitions and manage them independently.
- ✓ Talk through last minute changes that may be startling to students.
- ✓ Keep whānau informed of what is going on each week and let them know if there is going to be a change to the plan.

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