

What is Occupational Therapy (OT)?

Occupational Therapy supports children to participate in their daily activities more independently.

Children and young people with autism and learning difficulties often experience challenges that may impact on their participation in activities at home, at school and in the community. As a result of their autism or learning difficulty, individuals commonly have challenges with sensory processing, emotional regulation and motor skills. They may also have a restricted repertoire of activities and have difficulties accessing or be reluctant to participate in a range of tasks. This can affect their ability to complete all their necessary daily activities such as: toileting, dressing, using transport, moving around school, eating, doing school work and playing.

Occupational Therapists help children develop independence in their academic, leisure and self-care activities by adapting the task, the environment or by using specific equipment or activities to address and improve underlying difficulties.

Occupational Therapy can help your child with:

- Increasing engagement in learning activities (for example using self-regulation and mutual regulation strategies to achieve a 'calm-alert' state for learning);
- Taking part in a wider range of school activities (for example providing anxiety management strategies, increasing tolerance of sensory input, providing graded supports);
- Increasing independence in school routines (for example developing skills in organising belongings, transitioning, planning for activities, mobility around school);
- Eating and drinking (for example by increasing tolerance of new foods, participating in mealtime routines, developing independence using cutlery and cups);
- Self-care skills (such as washing, brushing teeth, hair and nail care, dressing, using the toilet);
- Growing up and puberty (such as understanding of body changes, public and private behaviour, female sanitary care);
- Accessing the community (for example providing safety equipment and strategies, travel training);
- Developing handwriting (for example by improving fine and perceptual motor skills, developing core stability and shoulder strength);
- Widening repertoire of play activities (for example by addressing sensory seeking/avoiding behaviours, providing graded support for participation, developing motor planning skills);
- Improving participation in P.E., leisure and break time activities (for example through gross motor skill development and developing motor planning skills).

Occupational Therapy Provision at Cambridge School:

The Occupational Therapist at Cambridge works with the children at a level that is appropriate to their needs. To ascertain which level of occupational therapy support the child requires to become healthier and more independent, gain important life skills and confidence, and engage more fully in meaningful activities, the therapist will observe, assess and liaise with involved adults to gain an understanding of the student's specific strengths and areas for development.

The Occupational Therapist will then work with the child at a universal, targeted, or specialist level:

- **Universal** interventions include the provision of training, mentoring, information and literature to adults supporting children. The aim of universal support is to ensure that parents, carers and those working with children have the knowledge they need to help children realise their potential.
- **Targeted** interventions include tailored class based interventions and groups with a focus on functional independence, the set up and preparation of tailored resources and training to enhance the capacity of school staff who are in direct contact with the child on a daily basis, joined collaboration and outcomes planning with the student, staff, parents, multidisciplinary team and external services and the provision and maintenance of equipment.
- **Specialist** interventions include direct 1:1 sessions with the child, which may involve standardised/non-standardised assessment, specialist interventions created specifically to address the child's needs, the set up and preparation of tailored resources and training to enhance the capacity of school staff who are in direct contact with the child on a daily basis, joined collaboration and outcomes planning with the student, staff, parents, multidisciplinary team and external services and the provision and maintenance of equipment.

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