



Occupational Therapy Within a School Environment

What is Occupational Therapy?

Paediatric occupational therapy assists children of all ages with physical, sensory, cognitive, behavioural or social challenges. OT promotes and enables the engagement and optimal functioning of children in their activities of daily living such as dressing, feeding, play and learning. This can be done within their home and school environments.

How do we help in school?

Within the school environment, we collaborate with parents and teachers to identify the best ways in which to support the child. This could be through behavioural strategies, classroom adaptations or even just how to provide the parent or teacher support.

We often work with children who experience difficulties with their:

- o *Sensory Integration* – We assess the different sensory systems in the body and their effect on attention, behaviour, eating and even going to the bathroom. For example, when a child who enjoys moving a lot in the classroom is given that movement, it allows them to focus better and learn in class. This also pertains to the learning style a child has. For example, we look at if the child is a visual learner meaning they prefer and respond better to instructions given visually and through demonstration, as opposed to just listening to instructions on an auditory level. We can also assist children if they are sensitive to noise if noise in the classroom affects their ability to concentrate and understand instructions.
- o *Posture* – We assess a child's posture in the classroom to see if they are sitting in the best position to attend and learn. We also look at how they are using their muscles to be able to sit for long periods of time. This impacts their concentration and endurance. This also plays a big role in how they write because if their focus is only on remaining upright it makes it difficult to focus on the written expression of their work.
- o *Cognitive Skills* – We look at if the child can organize their work in the classroom, understand 3-4 step instructions, the way they process information, as well as, their processing speed. We can assist children with Dyslexia and children who have different learning difficulties by trying to find compensatory strategies or strategies to try and fix the issue within the classroom environment.
- o *Attention*

- o *Praxis* – There are three main components to praxis otherwise also known as motor planning. These include coming up with an idea, planning the different steps involved in your head and lastly the execution of this. When assessing, we try to identify where there might be a fallout. Practically, this can manifest through a child being clumsy, having difficulty organising work, difficulty with creative writing or open-ended tasks, difficulty with unfamiliar tasks and knowing how to approach them, preferring routine and requiring lots of repetition of instructions.

- o *Fine motor skills* – Our aim is in developing strength and coordination in the hands to assist with being able to write in the classroom, engage in extra mural activities such as art.