

## Specific Learning Difficulties

A Special Educational Need is when a child or young person (0-25 years) has a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. The young person might find it difficult to learn new things compared to the majority of others of the same age.

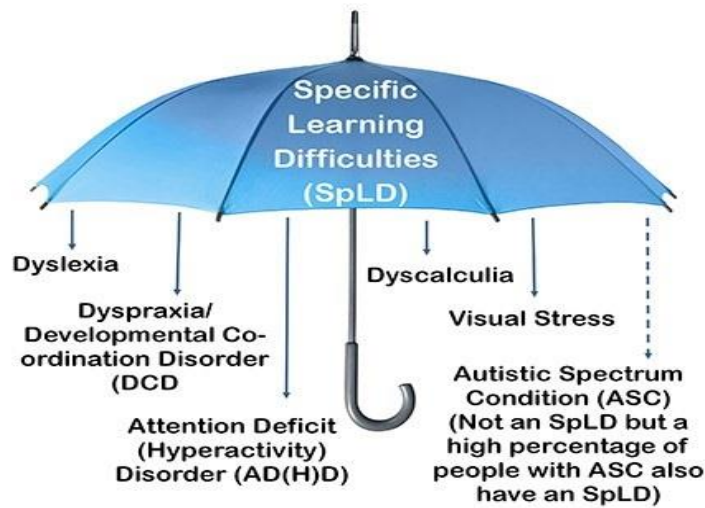
We believe everyone should have the opportunity to reach their full potential in swimming. To achieve this, all swimmers need access to the best possible teaching, coaching and facilities available.

We are aware that every child is unique and special educational needs are not limited to the disabilities listed.

As a club we are happy to discuss needs on an individual basis so we can support all members appropriately.

Equality doesn't mean that everybody is treated equally, but that everybody is treated fairly; diversity is about recognising that there are individual and group differences, and that people should be treated according to their need.

As part of our Diversity Inclusion Action Plan, we have summarized some of the common Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs), and in particular, looking at how these difficulties may affect some members of our swimming community.



Specific Learning Difficulty	Some examples of how the SpLD may impact a young person in a swimming context.
<p><b>Dyslexia</b> - is typically characterised by difficulties with reading, writing and spelling, but can also cause issues with memory, organisation and planning.</p>	<p>They may struggle to read the board or take longer to do so.</p> <p>They may forget mid-set what they should be doing, or even forget their equipment.</p> <p>They may struggle with organising their competition scheduling.</p>
<p><b>Dyscalculia</b> - is typically characterised by having difficulties with numbers.</p>	<p>They may read the number of repetitions/lengths incorrectly and therefore swim the wrong distance.</p> <p>They may also struggle to convert the meters into lengths.</p> <p>They may struggle to read the time, or understand the turnaround times for a set.</p>

<p><b>Dyspraxia</b> - is typically characterised by having difficulties with fine and gross motor coordination.</p>	<p>They may struggle to learn or perform new drills or change/alter their technique.</p> <p>They may lack spatial awareness, which could cause issues whilst swimming in a lane environment.</p>
<p><b>Visual stress</b> - is characterised by having a perceptual processing condition which can cause difficulties reading, headaches and visual problems from exposure to patterns in text (such as lines of text).</p>	<p>They may struggle to read from the board (this can vary from being slow at reading to not being able to read the text at all because the words appear to move/jump around on the board).</p> <p>*Unfortunately, this condition is made worse as the boards are white*</p>
<p><b>Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder - AD(H)D</b> - is typically characterised by impulsive behaviour, difficulty concentrating and maintaining focus, absorbing information and hyperactivity (in ADHD).</p>	<p>They may struggle to listen to, and remember, instructions so they do the wrong thing.</p> <p>Their impulsiveness can cause them to shout out or 'answer back'.</p> <p>The hyperactivity could cause them to fidget with their equipment but can also cause issues with sleeping - they rarely get enough sleep which can have an impact on their training.</p>
<p><b>Autism Spectrum Disorder</b> - is a developmental disability caused by differences in the brain.</p>	<p>May include some of the above in addition to:</p> <p>They may struggle with communicating and interacting so they may be very quiet and find it hard to make friends. This doesn't necessarily mean they are unhappy.</p> <p>They can suffer with sensory overload so the noises/smells in a swimming pool environment could cause them some distress.</p>

### Specific Learning Difficulties: Communication is key

To be a good communicator for swimmers with a Specific Learning Difficulty you need to:

- Use accessible language and avoid jargon or long words that might be hard to understand.
- Be prepared to use different communication tools - visual, auditory and kinaesthetic.
- Follow the lead of the swimmer you are communicating with - it may be worthwhile checking with the swimmer and/or their parent/carer to see which type of communication method they prefer and find easiest to follow and understand.
- Find the right place to communicate in - some swimmers may find that when you are communicating to the group they find this too distracting therefore one-to-one or small group communication may sometimes be more beneficial.
- Go at the pace of the swimmer you are communicating with and check they have understood the information you are giving.
- Be understanding and set clear and consistent boundaries - remember the swimmer can not help having the difficulties they have.
- It is important that you always remain calm even when dealing with any challenging behaviour to avoid any escalation.
- Learn from your experiences and observe how the swimmer responds; and then you can adapt as appropriate.
- Do not be worried if at the end of the swimming session, the swimmer is not cheerful- this doesn't mean they haven't enjoyed the session.