What are 'Speed of Processing difficulties'?

'Speed of Processing' is how long it takes someone to take in, understand and then respond to information.

It has nothing to do with a pupil's underlying ability, but it can be a significant barrier to learning. Pupils with processing speed difficulties can take a lot longer than their peers to complete a range of tasks in, and outside of, school.

Processing speed difficulties may also impact on a pupil's ability to follow complex instructions. This is because they may take longer to process each step and, as a result, they may become overwhelmed by the amount of information they have been given.

What might this look like?

- Not actively engage in classroom discussions (not because they don't know the answer but because by the time it has come to them, someone else has beaten them to it)
- Tend not to perform well in mental maths or quick-fire test
- Not manage to complete tests in the allotted time
- Find homework takes them a lot longer than other pupils
- Find it difficult to listen and keep track of what the teacher is saying
- Read at a slow pace
- Find solving simple maths problems in their head tricky
- Take a long time to complete multi-step maths problems
- Write very slowly
- Struggle to keep up with conversations
- Have word finding difficulties – e.g. 'you know erm thingy'
- Have trouble following instructions, especially if there are more than one step to remember

Top Tips

Pupils may benefit from:

1. More time to make decisions, give answers and complete tasks
2. The opportunity to read key texts/vocabulary before a lesson
3. The opportunity to read information more than once for comprehension
4. Differentiated outcomes e.g. Aim to complete 4 answers (then gradually increase)
5. Routine finishing off time to make sure they can do a piece of work justice and take pride in their outcomes (not in break or lunch)
6. Extra time in tests
7. Assistive technology or other writing supports (e.g. writing frames)
8. Instructions and information presented in 'steps' or 'chunks'
9. Task boards and written instructions alongside verbal instructions

Further Advice

Useful Websites:
Processing Speed Checklist (Sep 2018)

https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/local-offer/media-library/documents/resource-area-documents/spld-processing-speed-difficulties-checklist.pdf

Reading:
Article 'Supporting Children with Processing Issues' (Sep 2020)

https://senmagazine.co.uk/behavioural-emotional-and-social-difficulties-besd/11926/supporting-children-with-processing-issues/