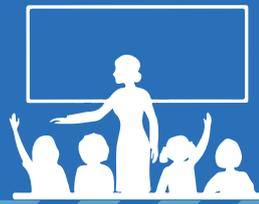


# FASD in the Classroom



## WHAT IS FASD?

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a neurodevelopmental disability caused by prenatal alcohol exposure. FASD is a lifelong and often invisible disability that may affect growth, coordination, behaviour, attention span, memory, learning, speech, IQ, reasoning and judgement. FASD may also affect vision and hearing, and can cause cardiac, renal and skeletal problems. Rarely people with FASD may have characteristic facial features, such as a smooth philtrum, small eyes and a thin upper lip<sup>i</sup>.

### UNDERSTAND

FASD is brain damage due to prenatal alcohol exposure

### RECOGNISE

Know the signs of a child with FASD

### ACCOMMODATE

Success is possible with supports and strategies

## FASD IN THE CLASSROOM

Challenges due to FASD may be evident in other disorders and disabilities but are more pronounced in students with FASD. **These include challenges with:**

- Memory/learning/information processing.
- Planning/temporal skills.
- Behaviour regulation/sensory motor integration.
- Abstract thinking/judgment.
- Spatial skills/spatial memory.
- Social skills and adaptive behaviour.
- Motor/oral motor control.
- Cognition/academic achievements.
- Language/social communication<sup>ii,iii</sup>.

FASD is often diagnosed alongside other disorders and disabilities such as Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Attachment Disorders and Sensory Integration Disorder.

## BEHAVIOURS ARE SYMPTOMS

Children with FASD will have unique profiles as their brains work differently. Learning difficulties associated with FASD will depend on the extent of damage caused to the brain. There are some things they are very good at doing but others they find more difficult<sup>ii,iii</sup>.

Children with FASD may score within standard IQ measurements, give the appearance of functioning at a level consistent with their age and appear physically mature. However, they may be performing at half of their developmental age in areas such as social skills and emotional maturity.

Similarly, children with FASD may appear to have reading level appropriate to their age and their expressive language may seem advanced, however, their academic abilities may be below their IQ level. Their adaptive behaviour, communication and living skills may also be further below their IQ score<sup>ii,iii</sup>.

### Secondary conditions

People with FASD may develop secondary conditions, which are challenges that a person is not born with, but that can develop over time as a result of having FASD. Secondary conditions include: mental health challenges; disrupted school experience; trouble with the law; confinement (for mental health challenges, alcohol and other drug use or crime); inappropriate sexual behaviour, and alcohol and other drug use<sup>ii,iii</sup>. Secondary conditions can be reduced by a range of protective factors, including having a positive educational experience. Table 2 demonstrates some ideas to help foster a positive educational experience for children with FASD.

Table 2: Ideas to help students do their best<sup>iv</sup>

Remember	Learn	Behave
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signs and pictures showing children what to do.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Step by step written or oral instructions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain what you expect and how to behave.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written reminders on the board.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual examples.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let children calm down before talking to them.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pictorial or visual timetables.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a quiet space for children to work on their own.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a safe space where they can go when they get angry.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warnings a few minutes before changing an activity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide lots of opportunities to practise.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual prompts.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequent checking in with children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide lots of repetition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular time to relieve stress.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One instruction at a time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear boundaries and expectations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help them know when others are encouraging silly things.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledging when children do remember.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular and easy routines.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notes or email sent home.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific feedback.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More time to do things.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check in regularly rather than waiting for questions.</li> </ul>	

### Other useful things to consider:

- Minimise homework.
- Children with FASD may benefit from someone to help them make decisions.
- Children with FASD can have trouble thinking outside of black and white.
- Children with FASD can do amazing things when working with their talents.

**Table 2: Common behaviours, misinterpretations and support strategies for young people with FASD<sup>v</sup>**

What behaviour may look like	What behaviour actually represents	Strategies to support the young person
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-compliance with order</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not understand or remember what is expected.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide instructions one step at a time, explain rules using simple language.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repeatedly making the same mistake</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not link cause and effect.</li> <li>• May not understand or remember.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide clear instructions.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often late</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties understanding the concept of time.</li> <li>• May not remember appointments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide assistance with organising tasks.</li> <li>• Visual cues and auditory reminders are useful.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not sitting still</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensory overload.</li> </ul>	<p>Provide opportunities for movement frequently.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor social Judgement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties interpreting social cues and understanding social conventions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use simple language. Provide clear instructions.</li> <li>• Role model positive interactions.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overly physical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not understand social cues about boundaries.</li> <li>• Hyper or hypo sensitive to touch.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide clear instructions about appropriate behaviours.</li> <li>• Role model positive interactions and encourage good behaviour.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not work independently</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not translate verbal instructions into actions.</li> <li>• May have problems with memory.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide clear, simple instructions, and always check their understanding by getting them to repeat back in their own words.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stealing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not understand concept of ownership.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain rules and expectations using simple language and visual cues.</li> <li>• Provide frequent supervision.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lying</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not link cause and effect.</li> <li>• Difficulties accurately recalling events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide clear instructions and talk through what is expected.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self - centred</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not link cause and effect.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk through different scenarios using visual supports, role play positive interactions.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volatile</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties verbalising feelings.</li> <li>• Feeling overwhelmed or over-stimulated.</li> </ul>	<p>Provide opportunities and appropriate space for them to calm down.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inconsistent performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties with memory.</li> <li>• Difficulties carrying through learning from one situation to the next.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use visual supports as reminders, provide frequent verbal reminders.</li> </ul>

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

### NOFASD Australia:

<https://www.nofasd.org.au/>

### FASD HUB Australia:

<https://www.fasdhub.org.au/>

### Telethon Kids Institute:

[https://www.telethonkids.org.au/our-research/research-topics/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorder-fasd/NO FAS UK](https://www.telethonkids.org.au/our-research/research-topics/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorder-fasd/NO%20FAS%20UK), Teachers Tool Kit: <http://www.nofas-uk.org/>

### Hey Teacher:

<http://www.ahw.org.nz/Portals/5/Resources/Fannz%20documents/Hey%20Teacher.pdf>

### Understanding and addressing the needs of children and young people living with FASD:

[https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/1613/1919/files/FASD\\_ResourceForTeachers.pdf?3284529561400562662](https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/1613/1919/files/FASD_ResourceForTeachers.pdf?3284529561400562662)

### Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and Complex Trauma A resource for educators:

[https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/1613/1919/files/FASD\\_2nd\\_Ed-2018.pdf?17909097525429957987](https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/1613/1919/files/FASD_2nd_Ed-2018.pdf?17909097525429957987)

## ABOUT US

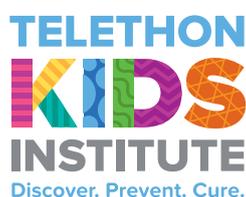
Telethon Kids Institute is working with Mercy Services and the Newcastle Local Drug Action Team to help make FASD History in Newcastle.

### *If you'd like to know more about the project:*

**Email:** [Helena.Hodgson@mercyservices.org.au](mailto:Helena.Hodgson@mercyservices.org.au) (Project Coordinator)

**Online:** <https://alcoholpregnancy.telethonkids.org.au/our-research/research-projects/making-fasd-history-multi-sites/>

**This program is funded by Australian Government Department of Health.**



<sup>1</sup>Bower, C., & Elliott, E. (2016). Australian Guide to the Diagnosis of FASD. Retrieved from [https://www.fasdhub.org.au/siteassets/pdfs/australian-guide-to-diagnosis-of-fasd\\_all-appendices.pdf](https://www.fasdhub.org.au/siteassets/pdfs/australian-guide-to-diagnosis-of-fasd_all-appendices.pdf).

<sup>2</sup>NO FAS U.K., (2017). Teaching a Student with FASD. Retrieved from [http://www.nofas-uk.org/TeachingAStudentWithFASD\\_FIN%20REV.pdf](http://www.nofas-uk.org/TeachingAStudentWithFASD_FIN%20REV.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>NOFASD Australia, (2017) Toolkit for parents, caregivers and families. Retrieved from <https://www.nofasd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/toolkit-2017-nov.pdf>

<sup>4</sup>Fetal Alcohol Network N.Z., (2016). Hey Teacher 2016. Retrieved from <http://ahw.org.nz/Portals/5/Resources/Fannz%20documents/Hey%20Teacher.pdf>

<sup>5</sup>Alton, H. & Evensen, D. (2006). Making a Difference Working with students who have Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, p. 6.5. Government of Yukon, Yukon. Retrieved from [http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/pdf/publications/fasd\\_manual\\_2007.pdf](http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/pdf/publications/fasd_manual_2007.pdf)