



# STRENGTHS OF LEARNERS WITH FASD - TEACHER RESOURCES

FASD - FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER

Contact our dedicated FASD Advisors via our Helpline 0300 666 0006 (option 2) (Tues-Fri, 10am to 2.30pm) or by emailing [fasdhub.scotland@adoptionuk.org.uk](mailto:fasdhub.scotland@adoptionuk.org.uk)

FASD stands for **Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder**. FASD is a **lifelong** condition that affects the **brain and body** of people who were exposed to **alcohol in the womb**. All individuals with FASD have both **strengths and challenges**, and will need **supports** to help them **succeed** with many different areas of their daily lives. With early diagnosis, and the right supports all individuals with FASD **can be successful throughout life**. ([CanFASD](#)) No two learners on the spectrum will be the same, but there are **commonly identified strengths**. The most important thing you can do as a teacher is **get to know your learner well**, so that you can build on their strengths and support them to overcome difficulties.

## Personal Strengths

### Helpful and keen to please

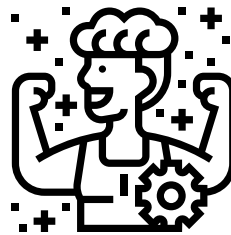
Learners with FASD often want to help and please others. Give roles within the class which allow them to do this successfully. Sometimes, learners with FASD can appear objectionable if told to do something, but will comply if asked for their cooperation instead.

**Support this strength:** Support with a purposeful job to help adults. Ensure clear understanding of their role and the task itself. Use visual reminders as prompts to support memory differences.

### Caring with a strong sense of justice

Learners with FASD can be incredibly caring, especially if someone seems vulnerable. They often have points of insight, so can contribute to class discussions around what is 'right' and what is not. They often want to help people who are upset or sad.

**Support this strength** by discussing socially appropriate ways to show care. They may need help to articulate ideas in a class discussion.



### Non-judgemental

Learners with FASD often struggle with social awareness and behaviour. Because of this, they tend not to judge, reject or bully those who don't fit into a social 'norm.'

**Support this strength** with careful monitoring of friendships. Learners with FASD are often socially and emotionally younger than their age. They often choose friends who have complex needs of their own. They need support in recognising healthy friendships, strengthening them and keeping them.

### Friendly and outgoing

A learner with FASD may be well known across the school community for their ability to speak to anyone and everyone. They may do well speaking to guests and visitors or buddying a new pupil.

**Support this strength** by teaching appropriate social skills, what information we share about ourselves and what information we do not. Provide opportunities for them to practise.

### Good with younger children, the elderly and/or animals

Many learners with FASD benefit from and will enjoy 'buddying' a younger child. Look for opportunities from them to do this, for example: to work with an early learning and childcare setting/P1 class; visits to sheltered housing; coaching a younger sports team; helping at a school club; or helping at an animal shelter would all help to foster this strength.

**Support this strength** by matching level of responsibility to ability. 'Rehearse' roles with them ahead of time. If coaching, a visual timetable of activities may help them remember what to do.

### Energetic

Many learners with FASD are 'hands' on', concrete, active learners. If possible, use this strength by providing movement-based learning tasks. If a learner has Occupational Therapy input, look at their profile for suggested tasks.

**Support this strength** by ensuring that the task is simple, clearly explained (using visual and verbal) and finite.



[www.adoptionuk.org/fasd-hub-scotland](http://www.adoptionuk.org/fasd-hub-scotland)

# Learning Profile and Strengths

## Hands on, concrete learners

Learners with FASD often struggle with abstract concepts. They may learn best when they can interact with actual objects or items to help their learning in a concrete way.

**Support** this by ensuring that the learner 'carries the learning over' from the concrete learning to the abstract concept. Learners may also need support to transfer learning from one context to another.



## Often lateral thinkers with real points of insight in certain areas

Because of their brain differences, learners with FASD often have creative solutions or unusual insights.

**Support** this by encouraging them to become metacognitive - to think about (and explain) their thinking. Make sure that the learner also understands the 'big picture' of what is being taught. Praise their insights.

## Often athletic, sporty, creative or musical

Build opportunities for the learner to share their skills and possibly teach others. Allow them to show learning in these ways.

**Support** this by encouraging social skills and organisational skills if involved in coaching or clubs. Make the learner's role and task clear.

## Persistent, determined and hard-working

Perseveration is a characteristic of FASD. This is a brain-based difficulty to transition or switch from one task/activity to another. This can look like stubborn repetition or objectionable behaviour to "keep on keeping on" after the allocated time for the task has passed. However, this determination to keep trying can be a positive attribute if channelled correctly.

**Support** this by ensuring that the task is of the right level and length to be completed. Give clear visual indications of time remaining to aid transition.

## Excellent long term visual memories

Learners with FASD are often visual learners. Break tasks into visual steps. 'Over-learning' through a range of activities will help the learner to consolidate their knowledge. Allow learners to record this information in a way that suits their visual learning style.

**Support:** If learners are taking this information home, keep a copy in school too.

**MOST IMPORTANTLY** - schools should recognise the **strengths of neuro-diverse learners**, celebrate them and **provide opportunities** for learners to showcase and build on their strengths. Otherwise, learners who have neurodiverse conditions such as FASD can be consistently underestimated as they often struggle with areas where ability is traditionally measured - such as reading, spelling and maths. Being in an environment where their **strengths are celebrated** can **transform** the school experience for learners.

## Useful Links/Reference:

- **Dan Dubovsky- Common Strengths of Students with FASD** - [YouTube Video](#)
- **FASD in the Classroom resource for professionals:** [fasdwaterlooregion](http://fasdwaterlooregion)
- **Understanding, FASD: What Educators Need to Know**
- **Guided Growth: Educational and Behaviour Interventions for children and teens with FASD** and early trauma, Ira J Chasnoff & Ronald J Powell (nti upstream, 2020)

For our full range of FASD Education Factsheets, visit: [www.adoptionuk.org/fasd-hub-scotland](http://www.adoptionuk.org/fasd-hub-scotland)



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FASD Hub Scotland provide a tiered support service for all parents/carers, living in Scotland, who are parenting individuals with FASD or have a history of PAE, and professionals working with and supporting these families.



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