

Information for parents and teachers

Helping children with VCFS cope better in the playground

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Children with VCFS sometimes cope better in class than they do in the playground. Classrooms are generally quite structured, ordered, calm and predictable. Rules and expectations are clear, tasks and activities are well defined, and the transition from one activity or lesson to the next is structured. This is the opposite of most playgrounds in schools!

- The playground is unstructured, noisy, under supervised and chaotic.
- There are rarely any organised games or activities.
- Physical and behavioural boundaries and limits are unclear and inconsistent.
- Teachers do not necessarily interpret or apply rules the same way.
- Other children run around and play in a variety of manners, and their own 'rules' can change suddenly.
- The combination of confusion, lack of structure, noise, movement and sensory input is sometimes too much for the child with a vcfs to cope with.

These factors can make the playground environment difficult for children with VCFS. To make matters worse, teachers can respond differently to the child's distress in these situations, sometimes supporting the child, sometimes punishing the child, and sometimes inadvertently inflaming the situation.

Supporting children with vcfs in the playground involves changes to the playground environment, and teaching children new skills:

- Prepare and inform school staff as much as possible about specific children and their needs.
- However possible, increase the amount of supervision in the playground. Consider the role of the Teacher's Aide, volunteers, prefects etc.
- Teach the child with VCFS specific games and activities.

- Provide a structured and organised playground environment with games and activities set up to be played. Teach all children the games and the process of moving from one game to another.
- Use peer support systems and buddy systems to give children additional support and supervision.
- Teach and practise these in class, and in situ.
- Model, rehearse and reinforce appropriate play skills.
- Teach the child how to choose games and activities.
- Teach the child more appropriate social interaction and play skills.
- Teach the child specific problem-solving strategies when it is still too hard. For example, the child can go to the library to play chess or computer or read.
- Develop appropriate sequences of play, including the movement and transition from one activity to another.
- Incorporate obsessions and intense interests into play sequences, for example 'dinosaur club'. Or make these into useful activities, for example categorising books in the library.

For more Information

If you require further information please contact:

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