Learning Support Team

Tips for helping a child with processing difficulties

Adjust for success
provide patience, understanding, and time

Allow additional time
Learners with slow processing speed are not lazy, they need more time to take in and respond to information including reading comprehension, understanding lessons and completing homework. Allow as much time as they need.

Repeat instructions and task directions
These require understanding and holding multiple pieces of information in working memory, long enough to be acted upon.
When possible involve multiple senses to help the child understand what is required –
e.g. reading directions aloud, showing charts and diagrams, WAGOLLs

Give the Big Picture
To prevent cognitive overload, highlight main ideas and gist of a lesson.
Allow learners to understand the big picture, before tackling the more detailed points.

Overlearning
Reading the same thing over and over again to help understand a set of directions.
Repeat a lesson until it can be understood.
Make use of IT so an activity can be experienced as many times as the child needs to master the material e.g. for learning spelling and sight words.

Get them to work it out on paper
To prevent having to hold multiple pieces of information in their head.
E.g. for reading comprehension – draw the setting make a character tree as child reads, and when completing maths procedures.

One question at a time
Cover up all but the question being worked on to make it easier to focus on the information that is being requested and to start a task that can seem overwhelming at first glance.

Shorten assignments
Concentrating and reducing workload to allow for more time in providing quality work.

Give top marks for knowledge vs. performance
Assess on what has been learned rather than how much has been done.

Allow access to a laptop
Using a keyboard and learning to type automatises the writing process and reduces the potential distraction caused by the physical act of forming letters.

Keep background noise to a minimum
Position in the classroom is important – at the front of the classroom concentration and attention can be maximized.
Visual overload should also be avoided if possible.

There's only so much time in the day, for those with slow processing it tends to run out quite quickly!

ideas adapted from www.readandspell.com/what-is-processing-speed