**What is Tourette Syndrome?**

Tourette Syndrome (TS) is an inherited neurological condition. It affects one school child in every hundred and is more common amongst boys. Over 300,000 children and adults are living with TS in the UK.

**Key features**

The key features are tics – involuntary sounds and movements, which must be present for at least 12 months to meet the diagnostic criteria. Over 85% of people with TS will also experience co-occurring conditions and features which might include Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), and Anxiety.

**Myths about TS**

TS is often misunderstood as a condition which makes people swear, or say socially inappropriate things. Although it is true that ‘coprolalia’ – the clinical term for involuntary swearing – is a symptom of TS, it only affects a minority of people. 90% of people with TS ***do not*** have coprolalia

**Who has TS?**

As with other neurological conditions, TS is more prevalent in boys.

Currently there is no research or technology that can predict how TS might affect someone long-term. It is thought that approximately half of children with a TS diagnosis will see a significant reduction in their symptoms as they approach adulthood. For some people, living with TS will continue throughout their life, but symptoms are likely to wax and wane (a term often used to describe the coming and going of tics).

While every student is unique, the following are general suggestions that may help a student who has TS to achieve their academic goals. Please always be mindful of the exhaustion caused by tic suppression and associated social pressures, and seek guidance from Additional Learning Support regarding reasonable adjustments for exams and homework submissions. (These will hopefully already be in place, but TS is often undisclosed – see ALS details on Advantage)

* Recognise that tics are involuntary movements and sounds that wax and wane and can change unpredictably. In many cases, students with TS will attempt to suppress their tics to avoid negative attention from others. While the tics may appear to be within the students’ control and are being done purposefully, they are not.
* Reduce Stress/Anxiety. Stress typically increases symptoms. Therefore, noting what factors increase stress and reducing them will often help to reduce symptoms.
* It may be helpful to provide time and space for tics to be let out in private, thus lessening the build-up of tension. Use of a discrete ‘time out’ agreement would allow the student to leave the classroom without causing too much disruption if it becomes unmanageable for them.
* Try to avoid seating arrangements where tics will cause the greatest disruption, for example the middle of rows or near something breakable. Sometimes sitting at the front of the class can improve attention but at other times it makes the tics visible to everyone and so should be avoided.
* Ignore the symptoms that can be ignored. This demonstrates acceptance and normalizes Tourette syndrome and other related symptoms. Modeling acceptance can reduce both bullying and stress and may help the student with TS to focus his/her energy on academic work rather than tic suppression.
* Handwriting issues are among the most common difficulties for children with TS. Helpful accommodations can include the use of a computer, tablet, a scribe, or having notes provided. Please do not mark them down for poor handwriting.
* Be aware of co-occurring conditions, such as Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), which are very common for students with TS. The characteristics of these conditions are often more problematic and harder to manage than the tics themselves.
* If appropriate, involve the student with TS in developing plans and strategies for managing symptoms that can be difficult or impossible to ignore. Please be discreet and liaise with Additional Learning Support first to ensure the student is comfortable with this.
* When in communication with parents or caregivers, be sure to share the student’s achievements and strengths, not just the difficulties.
* Tourettes [Action website provides resources](https://www.tourette.org/resources/overview/tools-for-educators/managing-classroom-ts-child/) for assistance in developing support and strategies. They offer guidance and materials designed to help with recognition and management of TS symptoms (tics) in the classroom and college environment. [www.tourettes-action.org.uk](http://www.tourettes-action.org.uk)