

Information for parents about dyslexia

If a child appears to be struggling with spelling, reading, writing or numeracy, how do you know whether these difficulties are potential indications of dyslexia?

There are some obvious signs such as a 'spiky' profile which means that a child has areas of strong ability alongside areas of weakness. You may also have other family members with similar weaknesses. Remember that not all dyslexic children will display the same weaknesses and abilities.

General signs to look for are:

- Speed of processing: slow spoken and/or written language
- Poor concentration
- Difficulty following instructions
- Forgetting words

Written work

- Poor standard of written work compared with oral ability
- Produces messy work with many crossings out and words tried several times, e.g. wippe, wype, wiep, wipe
- Confused by letters which look similar, particularly b/d, p/g, p/q, n/u, m/w
- Poor handwriting with many 'reversals' and badly formed letters
- Spells a word several different ways in one piece of writing
- Makes anagrams of words, e.g. tired for tried, bread for beard
- Produces badly set-out written work, doesn't stay close to the margin
- Poor pencil grip
- Produces phonetic and bizarre spelling: not age/ability appropriate
- Uses unusual sequencing of letters or words

Reading

- Slow reading progress
- Finds it difficult to blend letters together
- Has difficulty in establishing syllable division or knowing the beginnings and endings of words
- Unusual pronunciation of words

- No expression in reading, and poor comprehension
- Hesitant and laboured reading, especially when reading aloud
- Misses out words when reading, or adds extra words
- Fails to recognise familiar words
- Loses the point of a story being read or written
- Has difficulty in picking out the most important points from a passage

Numeracy

- Confusion with place value e.g. units, tens, hundreds
- Confused by symbols such as + and x signs
- Difficulty remembering anything in a sequential order, e.g. tables, days of the week, the alphabet

Time

- Has difficulty learning to tell the time
- Poor time keeping
- Poor personal organisation
- Difficulty remembering what day of the week it is, their birth date, seasons of the year, months of the year
- Difficulty with concepts – yesterday, today, tomorrow

Skills

- Poor motor skills, leading to weaknesses in speed, control and accuracy of the pencil
- Limited understanding of non verbal communication
- Confused by the difference between left and right, up and down, east and west
- Indeterminate hand preference
- Performs unevenly from day to day

Behaviour

- Uses work avoidance tactics, such as sharpening pencils and looking for books
- Seems 'dreamy', does not seem to listen

- Easily distracted
- Is the class clown or is disruptive or withdrawn
- Is excessively tired due to amount of concentration and effort required

A cluster of these indicators alongside areas of ability may suggest dyslexia and further investigation may be required.

Next steps

If you suspect that your child may be dyslexic then you should discuss your concerns with your child's teacher, or the school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo).

A teacher should consult the school's SENDco to discuss the next steps and appropriate support. The SEND Code of Practice states that if a teacher suspects that a learner has special educational needs (SEN) then they must inform the child's parents and include them in discussions about what is the best support for their child. They must also tell parents about any special educational provision that is made for their child.

There is a view that any child with a diagnosis of dyslexia should be on the SEN register but this misses the point of 'different from or additional to'. Also, given that experts now recognise that approximately one fifth of all children have elements of dyslexia it is not equitable that all children with elements of dyslexia will need to be on the SEN register. Many elements of dyslexia can be managed through Quality-first teaching (QFT) which includes a high level of differentiation.

The needs of many children with a diagnosis of ASD, dyslexia or ADHD can and should be met through QFT. They will not necessarily be included as having SEND.

The definition of SEN should be needs-led and based on providing provision to meet children's needs and if this can be done without additional SEN provision, there's no need for a child to be on the SEN register just because they have a diagnosis of a condition such a dyslexia.

Equally, there will be many children who will not have a diagnosis, but require support and provision that is 'different from or additional to' the rest of their cohort. Often the provision of this support can form a basis of a later diagnosis.

Using interventions as a class teacher

At your school you might use the rule that any child receiving an intervention should be included on the SEN register. This needs to be looked at differently. An intervention may be part of the support you provide to a child on the SEN register, but the fact they are receiving intervention support is not a reason to place them on the register. It undermines the importance of differentiation as integral to outstanding teaching.