

Managing Dyslexia and Dyslexic Tendencies in school

Note: This information should be read in conjunction with the school's SEND Policy.

What is Dyslexia?

The British Dyslexia Association's definition 2022

'Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed. Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities. It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points. Co-occurring difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organisation, but these are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia. A good indication of the severity and persistence of dyslexic difficulties can be gained by examining how the individual responds or has responded to well-founded intervention' (British Dyslexia Association, 2022).

This definition explains the many characteristics of Dyslexia linked to reading and other aspects of language and organisational skills. It reiterates that Dyslexia can affect a range of children with differing intellectual abilities. Some children have outstanding creative skills; others have strong oral skills, both these attributes are typical of many children, including those with dyslexic tendencies. Dyslexia occurs despite quality first teaching, and is independent of socio-economic background or intelligence. 10% of our population may have Dyslexia in some form (The Centre for Education and Youth, 2020) and this is beginning to be prevalent within our schools. Specific Learning Difficulties is a current high incidence need within Barkisland, and this is due to children being diagnosed with Dyslexia.

Typical traits of Dyslexia and Dyslexic Tendencies in pupils

Throughout their school careers a dyslexic child may:

- Appear bright and able, but can't get their thoughts down on paper;
- Have areas in which they excel, particularly in drama, art and debating;
- Be clumsy;
- Become withdrawn and isolated, sitting at the back and not participating;
- Be able to do one thing at a time very well but can't remember an entire list;
- Look 'glazed' when language is spoken too quickly;
- Go home exhausted at the end of a normal day because they have had to put so much effort into learning
- Be bullied

Early Years (3-5) children may show :

- Difficulty learning nursery rhymes
- Difficulty paying attention, sitting still, listening to stories
- Likes listening to stories but shows no interest in letters or words
- Difficulty learning to sing or recite the alphabet
- A history of slow speech development
- Muddles words e.g. cucumber, flutterby
- Difficulty keeping simple rhythm
- Finds it hard to carry out two or more instructions at one time, (e.g. put the toys in the box, then put it on the shelf) but is fine if tasks are presented in smaller units
- Forgets names of friends, teacher, colours etc.
- Poor auditory discrimination
- Confusion between directional words e.g. up/down
- Family history of dyslexia/reading difficulties
- Difficulty with sequencing e.g. coloured beads, classroom routines
- Substitutes words e.g. "lampshade" for "lamppost"
- Appears not to be listening or paying attention
- Obvious 'good' and 'bad' days for no apparent reason

Primary (5-11) school children may show:

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,

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
- Memory difficulties e.g. for daily routines, self-organisation, rote learning
- 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.

It is also important to note that there can be a genetic factor in developmental dyslexia, although other family members may have varying symptoms and severity. Therefore, it is useful for parents to inform school if they have Dyslexia or Dyslexic tendencies.

Principles for managing Dyslexia and Dyslexic Tendencies

Early Identification and Provision

Early identification is key in supporting children with Dyslexia or Dyslexic tendencies to enable them to reach their full potential. The school's policy for assessment and identification of children's special needs is set out in the SEND Policy. It will generally be a child's class teacher who will recognise the early signs of dyslexia and as a result arrange for suitable provision, in liaison with the Inclusion Manager (Mrs Howarth). Parents and carers also need to be aware of the difficulties their child is encountering. Indeed, it may be their initial concerns that have alerted the teacher. From Year 3 upwards it is increasingly common that Dyslexic Tendencies will become more apparent within a child.

Assessment will include: background information, pupil interviews, classroom observation, data tracking, book scrutiny and ongoing assessments (both formative and summative).

If the school and parents are concerned, then school have access to a Dyslexia screening tool provided by GL Assessment. This is an initial screener for teachers concerned about a pupil's literacy progress and skills application. It is a screener for individual pupils whose learning in literacy is causing concern which then provides a standardised assessment. This is a short, quick initial assessment to see how far a pupils' abilities and skills match those of people who have been found to have dyslexia. Based on the discrepancy model, the test comprises six subtests covering three areas; ability, attainment and diagnostic. Class Teachers do not have the qualifications to provide a formal diagnosis of Dyslexia, however this tests give us a good indication of children who are displaying Dyslexic tendencies. It can also form parents decision to pursue a formal diagnosis for their children, however this often comes at a cost. Please note that we would not tend to complete this assessment with children under the age of 7, and ideally not before Year 3.

Action taken is guided by the school's SEND Policy, the SEN Revised Code of Practice, and the available school resources. It may include all or some of the following:

- Appropriate differentiated planning by the class teacher.
- An Individual Support Plan where necessary.
- Support from a Teaching Assistant when possible, under the guidance of the class teacher and/or the Inclusion Manager. This maybe support within class or as an intervention depending on the individual needs of the child.

- Interventions may include some/all of the following practices; Precision Teaching, Nessy and Beat Dyslexia.
- Regular reviews to determine progress and evaluate effectiveness of support with the child's class teacher, parents and Inclusion Manager where required.
- Consultation with or referral to the Educational Psychologist if required.
- Educational Psychologists are always involved with children who have a Statement or who are undergoing Statutory Assessment. Schools can talk to their Educational Psychologist about any other pupil as they see the need.
- GL Assessment Tool

Access to the mainstream Curriculum:

Everybody has an individual learning style. Children who have dyslexia and dyslexic tendencies process information, particularly the written word, slower than other people. Understanding how they learn best, and being flexible enough to adapt teaching approaches, are vital factors in enabling dyslexic children to learn effectively in the classroom.

At Barkisland CE (VA) Primary School we ensure that:

- Pupils with dyslexia have access to the full, broad and balanced curriculum.
- All staff are responsible for meeting the needs of pupils with dyslexia and have an understanding of implications this has on the subjects which they teach and co-ordinate. School staff receive regular up-to-date training in all aspects of the National Curriculum.
- Staff use multi-sensory techniques to facilitate learning. This may include; visual prompts, ICT, voice/video recordings and concrete resources for pupils to access.
- Pupils access the curriculum through differentiated tasks, outcomes and resources.
- Staff produce learning materials that are dyslexia friendly.
- Staff adopt a flexible approach to teaching – *“If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn.” ~ Ignacio Estrada.*

Partnership with Parents

Here at Barkisland Primary School, we encourage parents to share their concerns and recognise that parental anxiety is very often justified. We welcome information parents have regarding their child. In addition we share information with parents about the measures that are being taken to address the child's difficulties and ensure that parents understand the system (the Revised Code of Practice, role of staff, support services and funding system). Finally, we ensure that parents are involved in the target-setting process, the ISP and the review of the targets set which occurs every term.

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