

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is now well understood, but it can still feel puzzling and confusing to those who are affected by it.

Dyslexia mainly affects the learning of reading and spelling skills. Children with dyslexia find it hard to use phonics to sound out words; they have difficulty breaking up sounds of words and often find it hard to remember spoken information, like a set of instructions.

Many children with dyslexia also have difficulties with co-ordination or number work or with organisation and concentration. These difficulties are not part of dyslexia, but they can contribute to making the dyslexia more difficult to deal with.

Dyslexia is the most common specific learning difficulty and affects about 10% of the population to a significant degree. Many people with a less severe degree of dyslexia succeed at school with very little extra support. Those with the most severe difficulties will need continuing support throughout school and working life.



How can I tell if my child might be dyslexic?

Often the first signs of dyslexia show as problems learning to read, write, or spell. But these problems can be due to poor hearing or eyesight or the type of teaching. If these other factors can be excluded and difficulties continue then dyslexia is the most likely reason for difficulties in learning to read, write and spell.

Dyslexia tends to run in families; if there is a history of poor spelling or difficulties with learning to read, it is likely that the difficulties your child is experiencing are related to dyslexia.

There are some early signs of dyslexia which can be picked up even before formal reading teaching begins at school. These include: difficulty with the concept of rhyme; muddling up the names of things; difficulty in learning the sounds (or names) of letters of the alphabet.

Later in school, signs to look for include difficulty remembering instructions and generally appearing to be forgetful in everyday life; difficulties remembering the right name for objects or people; uncertainties about the pronunciation of long words and difficulties breaking words down into small units of sound.



What do I do if I think my child may be dyslexic?

The first thing to do is talk to your child's teacher. In today's primary schools the early teaching of reading that everyone receives is also suitable for children with dyslexia. However teachers can adjust and add to this quite easily if there are concerns – you may find out that they are already doing this. Schools also have access to additional programmes for those children who fall behind.

If you are still worried or your child is not making progress, then arrange a meeting with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) or the head of the school to discuss further options, including assessments.

Will my child learn to read, write and spell?

With the right support, children with dyslexia will usually be able to read, write and spell; though this will take them longer.

Assistive technology such as smart phones, laptops and tablet computers have helped many children with dyslexia to communicate effectively.

How can I find out if my child is dyslexic?

Schools now carry out quick and simple tests to track progress and to identify the early signs of dyslexia. If there are signs to indicate dyslexia and progress has not been good, an assessment can be done by a specialist teacher or educational psychologist in the school.

This assessment will give a picture of your child's strengths and weaknesses, as well as recommendations.



Will my child get extra help with exams?

Children with specific learning difficulties may be entitled to some additional allowances in examinations, such as key stage tests (SATs) or GCSE/A level courses.

This usually involves extra time, or help with reading questions or writing answers, depending on your child's needs. This kind of support is known as access arrangements.

Special access arrangements will need organising in advance of the exam, so speak to your child's SENCO to find out what support they could give.



Are there any support groups where I can meet other parents in a similar position?

Schools and Local Authorities link with support groups that they can put you in touch with, ask your teacher for help.

There are a variety of networks to support parents of children with learning difficulties, see our contacts.



Contacts

For information on good practice and supporting children and young people with dyslexia:

The Dyslexia-SpLD Trust
01344 381 564 or info@thedyslexia-spldtrust.org.uk

www.interventionsforliteracy.org.uk
www.thedyslexia-spldtrust.org.uk

Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre
01252 792 400 or enquiries@arkellcentre.org.uk
www.arkellcentre.org.uk

For local support groups and advice:

British Dyslexia Association
Helpline 0845 251 9002 or helpline@bdadyslexia.org.uk
www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

Dyslexia Action
01784 222 300 or info@dyslexiaaction.org.uk
www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk



Questions about dyslexia?



British Dyslexia
Association

Helen Arkell
Dyslexia Centre

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