

Dyslexia & Literacy Difficulties

Information for Parents

February 2021

In general, people with dyslexia find reading and spelling more difficult, and will require direct and systematic teaching. With the right instruction, almost all individuals with dyslexia can learn to read/improve their literacy skills.

This document has been produced by the EPS Teachers to help parents work with schools to support the learning of pupils who find literacy difficult. However, we acknowledge that in these unprecedented times, our ways of working are changing in response to the challenges presented by school closures and government guidelines to reduce the spread of the Coronavirus (Covid-19).

We understand that home-schooling a child with literacy difficulties takes patience, perseverance, and special accommodations. Experience of being a home-school parent can make you uniquely knowledgeable of what your child needs.

The EPS Teachers have been very restricted in our face to face involvement with schools, relying much more on virtual and consultation work. Due to school closures etc., we appreciate that schools are also constantly adapting and may not have been/be able to deliver their usual, appropriate and timely interventions.

We are hoping to resume assessments and more of our usual 1-1 teaching during the Summer Term 2021, if it is safe and permissible to do so. In the meantime, until more usual ways of working are in place, we appreciate that some parts of this document/protocols may have been/may be difficult to follow due to the Covid 19 pandemic and would like to reassure you that we are still here to support you and your child.

I think my child maybe dyslexic what do I do?

- Don't panic!
- Read this short guide for more information about what dyslexia is and what you and school can do to support your child.

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What is dyslexia?

It is estimated that 1 in 10 people have dyslexia. However, the use of the term 'dyslexia' and what it means has recently been debated. There seems to be no universal definition or assessment pathway for dyslexia (Elliott & Grigorenko, 2014).

We see dyslexia as a difference in the way the brain processes written and spoken information. Often, information is forgotten, muddled up or parts missed out. Skills that are affected vary from individual to individual.

Schools will support your child whatever, their difficulty and through intervention and time it will become apparent if dyslexic tenancies are present.

(See Appendix 1 for possible indicators of dyslexia.)

How can I help my child?

Share your concerns with your child's class teacher and/or SENDCo (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator).

- **Provide school with any relevant information, including your child's development (milestones) and recent health checks (up to date sight and hearing tests).**

Work closely with the school to support your child's individual learning needs and ask for suggestions for helping your child at home.

Identify learning differences and difficulties as early as possible.

Help your child to see that everyone is different; recognise and promote their strengths

Celebrate small steps of achievement.

Next Steps:

Initial parent/teacher meeting

- Identification of child's needs by school and parent/carer
- Discussion with school about what they are already doing (e.g. group intervention) to support your child and how you can help. This may include considering homework (differentiation of tasks, volume of work and the time your child is spending on homework).
- Agreeing targets for your child and a date for a follow-up meeting.

Follow-up parent/teacher meeting

- Discussion of your child's progress.

If-

- **The intervention is working**, both you and school are happy with the progress being made. The intervention may continue or could be stopped, and the child monitored in class.

Or-

- **Little or no progress has been made** and both you and school feel that your child had the opportunity to make progress i.e. the child's attendance has been good;
 - School may discuss or recap previous information regarding your child's developmental milestones and history.
 - School may suggest small group or 1 to 1 intervention.
 - School may talk about the importance of reading at home. Regular reading (even 1 page an evening is great!)
 - School may suggest another meeting in 6 weeks to discuss progress and next steps if needed.

What to expect if dyslexia is suspected

- School may ask you to share your views about how you feel your child is doing and if possible, may ask for your child's views.
- School and you may feel that your child is making small steps of progress and the intervention should continue.
- If school feel that progress is not being made, they may suggest a referral to the Educational Psychology Service for further advice. The Educational Psychologist may refer your child is a Specialist Teacher.
- School may discuss the term 'dyslexia' and 'dyslexic tendencies'

(See Appendix 2 for EPS Definition of Dyslexia.)

Dyslexia and dyslexic tendencies

- Dyslexia and literacy difficulties both respond to intervention. However, if the difficulties continue despite appropriate intervention from school the student may be experiencing dyslexia or have dyslexic tendencies.
- School staff cannot give an official diagnosis of dyslexia. However, pupils do not need the 'label' to be given support; provision in school will not change with an official diagnosis.
- School may re-explain to you, all that they are doing for your child to overcome any barriers to learning. This should incorporate developing your child's self-esteem. Discussion may recap the importance of sharing things the child is good at/enjoys outside of school; (school may suggest that your child brings in certificates etc. from home that can be celebrated in school.)

- School may suggest that they, you, or both you and a member of staff from school, talk to your child about what dyslexia is; whether you want to discuss the term 'dyslexic tendencies' with your child and the implications of this, i.e. how important is the label?

Websites that maybe helpful

Website address	Areas explored on the website	Description of the website
http://www.parentchampions.org.uk/resources/understanding-dyslexia-booklet/	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. About Dyslexia? 2. Information for parents 3. Basic ways to help in everyday life 	Two PDF booklets: one for parents/carers of children 7-11 one for parents/carers of young people aged 11-16
http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. About dyslexia 2. Information for parents 3. Homework tips 	Information about dyslexia.
www.topmarks.co.uk/parents/	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 10 top tips on hearing your child read. 2. Learning letters and words through play 	Advice, games and resources

Websites that Contain Literacy Games

<http://www.ictgames.com/literacy.html>

<http://www.letters-and-sounds.com>

<http://www.topmarks.co.uk/>

Free software that speaks the text that children type

www.wordtalk.org.uk/Home/index.php

<https://www.callscotland.org.uk/information/text-to-speech/naturalreader/>

An app that speaks typed text -Claro Scanpen £9.99

Typing games

www.tenthumbstypingtutor.com/

<https://www.kidztype.com/tags/bbc-typing/>

Appendix 1 - Possible Indicators of Dyslexia

School may use this list as a prompt for questioning, when discussing your child's early milestones. However, please note that these indicators can be present in general literacy difficulties as well as co-occurring difficulties such as "motor co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organisation but these are not, by themselves markers of dyslexia" (The Rose Report 2009, page 29).

It is through monitoring over time and intervention that school will be able to gain a clearer picture of your child's difficulties and how best to support them.

Pre-School

- Uses persistent jumbled phrases, e.g. 'cobbler's club' for 'toddler's club'.
- Uses substitute words e.g. 'lampshade' for 'lamppost'.
- Inability to remember the label for known objects, e.g. 'table', 'chair'.
- Difficulty learning nursery rhymes and rhyming words, e.g. 'cat, mat, sat'
- Delayed development of speech.

Pre-School non-language indicators

- May have walked early but did not crawl - was a 'bottom shuffler' or 'tummy wriggler'.
- Persistent difficulties in getting dressed efficiently and putting shoes on the correct feet.

- Enjoys being read to but shows no interest in letters or words.
- Is often accused of not listening or paying attention.
- Excessive tripping, bumping into things and falling over.
- Difficulty with catching, kicking or throwing a ball; with hopping and/or skipping.
- Difficulty with clapping a simple rhythm.

Primary School age

- Has particular difficulty with reading and spelling.
- Puts letters and figures the wrong way round.
- Has difficulties remembering tables, alphabet, formulae etc.
- Leaves letters out of words or puts them in the wrong order.
- Still occasionally confuses 'b' and 'd' and words such as 'no/on'.
- Still needs to use fingers or marks on paper to make simple calculations.
- Poor concentration.
- Has problems understanding what he/she has read.
- Takes longer than average to do written work.
- Problems processing language at speed.

Primary school age non-language indicators

- Has difficulty with tying shoelaces, tie and dressing.
- Has sequencing difficulties, e.g. ordering days of the week, months of the year etc.

- Surprises you because in other ways he/she is bright and alert.
- Has a poor sense of direction, confuses left and right.
- Lacks confidence and has a poor self-image.

Aged 12 or over (As for Primary School plus)

- Still reads inaccurately.
- Still has difficulties with spelling
- Needs to have instructions and telephone numbers repeated.
- Gets 'tied up' using long words, e.g. 'preliminary', 'philosophical'.
- Confuses places, times, dates.
- Has difficulty with planning and writing essays.
- Has difficulty processing complex language or long series of instructions at speed.

Aged 12 or over non-language indicators

- Has poor confidence and self-esteem
- Has areas of strength as well as weakness.

Adapted from www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/parent/indication-of-dyslexia

Appendix 2 - EPS Definition of Dyslexia

South Tyneside Educational Psychology Service adheres to the following definition of dyslexia, which is based on the British Psychological Society's 2005 definition, but which incorporates the emphasis in the Rose Report (2009) on dyslexia as a continuum of difficulties.

"Dyslexia is evident when accurate and fluent word reading and/or spelling develops very incompletely or with great difficulty. This focuses on literacy learning at the 'word level' and implies that the problem is persistent despite appropriate learning opportunities. It provides the basis for a staged process of assessment through teaching. It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points"

Therefore, if a child's difficulties are persistent, despite appropriate intervention (delivered as part of 'additional SEND support'), over a reasonable period of time, it is highly likely that he or she is dyslexic. However, as noted, 'Dyslexia is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, as there are no clear cut-off points. Until recently, a child was deemed to either have or not have dyslexia. It is now recognised that there is no sharp dividing line between having a learning difficulty such as dyslexia and not having it.'

(Identifying and Teaching Children & Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties, 2009).