

A Family Guide to Dyslexia

What is Dyslexia?

Most children learn to read and write with few problems; some need a little extra help to become fluent reader and writers. However, for some the process of reading and writing is extremely difficult even with appropriate teaching. Underlying problems may affect their ability to develop these skills. Sometimes this can be referred to as 'Specific Learning Difficulty' (**SpLD**) or dyslexia.

At White Laith we use the Rose definition of Dyslexia (2009):

- 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**.

This definition recognises that **intervention** has to have taken place in order to be able to say whether the difficulties are 'persistent and severe'.

Support in school

We have three tiers of support in school:

- Universal is available to all children.
- Targeted is small group intervention
- Personalised is tailored specifically to an individual.

Universal adjustments for SpLD at White Laith can include: changing text size /font/ paper colour, alternative ways of recording, paired reading and writing, personalised word banks, memory prompts on tables, scaffolded tasks, talking boxes

Targeted support could include: SENIT phonics programs, Key Word Readers, Lexia, Handwriting intervention, ALK intervention, CODE intervention, Lunch Time reading

Personalised adjustments could include: specialist assessments to identify areas of focus, Individual learning plan with SENCO involvement, talking boxes/ voice recognition software, Nessy Reading and Spelling, Pen grips/ slopes, Touch Typing, 1:1 support in class eg for editing writing, individual challenges, SENIT phonics, Key Word Readers, reading books chosen specifically for them.

If personalised support is required or in some cases lots of ongoing targeted support, a child will be on the SEN Register.

What can I do if I think my child has dyslexia?

Talk to your child's teacher- share concerns initially. Your child's teacher can tell you what is in place to support your child. Remember that progress may be seen in smaller steps- share these with your child's teacher.

Talk to your child about what they find tricky about reading and writing and what helps. Feed this back to the class teacher.

Make sure your child has had a recent hearing and eye test to rule out other difficulties.

Remember that your child needs time to relax when they come home from school and they may find school more tiring than their friends. Get into clear routines about homework—set times and places which can encourage concentration (and willingness!). You can support learning at home through:

- Lexia or Nessy Reading and Spelling (up to 20 minute sessions at home or in school).
- Use multisensory strategies to learn spellings sent home- your child's teacher can talk to you about how to do this.
- Support your child to read to you daily.
- Read to your child every day or as often as possible. This is especially important if they find reading tricky. Enjoy books, talk about them, share thoughts/ ideas, discuss new vocabulary.
- For older children you can download 'ClaroSpeak', which will read text that you photograph and you can download audio books too so they are not left out of what other children their age might be able to read.
- Learning Logs are open-ended so all children can take part. Consider the level of assistance you give; if you are having to contribute too much to the task it may not be benefitting. If tasks appear too difficult, or are taking too long to complete, discuss this with the teacher.

Help your child to feel positive about themselves- everybody has different things that they find tricky. Value small successes and share their strengths.

Glossary

Phonological Awareness – is thought to be a key skill in early reading and spelling development. It is the ability to identify how words are made up of smaller units of sound.

Verbal Memory – this is the ability to remember a sequence of verbal information for a short period of time.

Verbal Processing Speed – This is the time it takes to process and recognise familiar verbal information, such as letters and digits.

Co-occurring difficulties – Dyslexia and many other learning difficulties do not always occur in isolation. It is common for an individual to have difficulties in other areas of learning.

Intervention – This is a timed set of sequential lessons aimed at supporting pupils to reach specific targets.

SpLD – The term 'Specific Learning Difficulty' (SpLD) refers to a difference or difficulty that people have with a particular aspect of learning. Dyslexia is a type of SpLD.

SENIT – Special Educational Needs Inclusion Team – a group of teachers working for the Local Authority to support schools and individuals with SpLD.

FAQs

Are all children with reading difficulties dyslexic? No and difficulties can be mild to severe. There is no clear cut off point where a child can be said to have dyslexia. A child can be seen as having dyslexia if their reading and/or spelling skills develop incompletely or with great difficulty and the problem is severe and persistent.

Why do some children experience dyslexia? The causes of dyslexia are complex and these may vary between individuals but are likely to include difficulties with phonological processing. Sensory processing and difficulties becoming automatic with key literacy skills may also play a part.

Is dyslexia hereditary? Yes, dyslexia can be inherited although this is not always the case.

Can dyslexia occur across the full range of abilities? Yes, dyslexia can occur in pupils of all levels of ability.

Who identifies dyslexia? Our SENCo can use indicators and assessments as well as how well the child has responded to intervention to say whether dyslexia is a possibility or likely. Dyslexia can be identified formally by the SEN Support and Inclusion Team but only where progress is very limited and following a substantial period of involvement.

My daughter received a diagnosis of dyslexia whilst at university. Why was this not recognised earlier? Dyslexia exists on a continuum. Not all individuals are severely affected and it is possible for individuals to find strategies to succeed, with some compensatory strategies, throughout school. As curriculum or subject demands become more challenging and complex, underlying difficulties may become evident. It may only be at this point that it is appropriate to investigate such difficulties further.