

Dyslexia: Information for Parents

Introduction

Most children learn to read and write easily, others take longer and may need extra help. However, a few children find the process of learning to read, write and spell particularly hard and it can then become a barrier to learning. Such children may have underlying problems that despite 'teaching' affect their ability to learn these skills; this can be sometimes referred to, particularly by professionals, as a 'Specific Learning Difficulty' (SpLD) or dyslexia.

Dyslexia can be considered to be one of several Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD), an 'umbrella' term to describe a variety of leaning differences, a combination of strengths and weaknesses that affect the learning process e.g. dyspraxia (difficulties with coordination) and dyscalculia, (difficulties with acquiring mathematical skills). The term dyslexia is derived from two Greek words, 'dys' meaning 'difficulty' and 'lexia' comes from the root 'lexis' meaning 'words or language'. The literal meaning is therefore 'difficulty with words' or difficulty reading and spelling words.

There is no single identified underlying cause for dyslexia or one single definition and this can lead to difficulties when trying to define it. However, Birmingham in line with current thinking and research accepts and recognises the need for both the following definitions:

Despite the use of different definitions of dyslexia, expert views largely agree on two basic points:

- It is now widely accepted that dyslexia exists
- Identifying dyslexia and developing ways to support dyslexic learners should be the focus of the way forward

Rose Report (2009 p9)

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Dyslexia is best thought of as a continuum from mild to severe. Dyslexia or 'difficulty with words may create difficulties with:

- the ability to deal with text at word level
- sorting out individual sounds that make up words (this will mean that they have problems with reading, writing and spelling)
- short term memory and sequencing
- organization, e.g. books and equipment for school.

However, dyslexia is not all about difficulties. Children and young people may be good at:

- problem solving
- music
- art
- sport
- ICT
- discussion/explanations

It helps to discover and celebrate strengths and work with the school to develop them. It is also important to keep a child's confidence and self esteem high. If you feel that your child's difficulties with reading, spelling and writing are affecting their progress at school, this may be the time to talk to your child's class-teacher and discuss your concerns. Schools have copies of the Birmingham Dyslexia Guidelines (2011) for further information and support.

Within the new Birmingham guidelines (2011) for supporting pupils with dyslexia, schools have a framework for identification which can be shared with parents/carers: 1. Early identification / intervention/monitoring of progress (class-teacher) 2. Skills assessment (SENCO, specialist literacy teacher) 3. Comprehensive assessment (involvement of outside agencies)

It is important to note that there is no single test for dyslexia.

In school, the support for children with dyslexia should be consistent with the Primary National Strategy following the three 'Waves' of support and provision as detailed below:

Wave One – Quality first teaching (whole class lessons)

The vast majority of pupils with dyslexia can be supported effectively through Wave 1 teaching and the use of 'dyslexia friendly' strategies in the classroom and adapting classroom practice.

Wave Two – Wave One quality first teaching **plus** additional, time- limited Wave Two interventions, designed to accelerate learning and increase rates of progress. Some children require additional support to achieve well and this can be provided through small group work with time limited interventions.

Wave Three – Wave One quality first teaching **plus** specific targeted approaches/ personalised interventions to maximise progress and minimise gaps in achievement.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Is dyslexia hereditary?

A: There is substantial evidence to support the view that dyslexia is evident in generations of families.(Ott 1993) It may often skip a generation or be present in extended family such as uncles or cousins, as well as siblings. Studies following the development of children born to parents with dyslexia revealed a heightened risk of literacy impairment. (Snowling & Frith 2003)

Q: Why use the term dyslexia instead of Specific Learning Difficulties?

A: Dyslexia is the term used by the current government guidance and is in common usage in the general population.

Q: Can dyslexia occur across the full range of abilities?

A: Yes. Dyslexia affects children across the range of intellectual abilities.

(Rose Report p10)

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Q: How do parents get their child's dyslexia acknowledged?

A: The best place to start is in school. If parents/ carers have any worries about their child's literacy development, they should talk to the class/form teacher and possibly the SENCO who can share information about the different levels of identification.

Parents /carers may also find information on the BDA website useful.

www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

Q: Who can identify that a child has dyslexia?

A: The IDP (2011) enables us to use a collaborative approach for identification which involves teachers, experienced literacy teachers, SENCO's, Educational Psychologists , specialist dyslexia teachers in consultation with parents/carers and schools. In line with other LA's and government guidance, in Birmingham we prefer to use the term identification rather than 'diagnosis' as the term 'diagnosis' implies a medical condition or deficit rather than a learning difference.

Q: How many children experience dyslexia?

A: Around 14% of the school population. Out of this 14% approximately 4% are considered to experience dyslexia to a point where their difficulties are significant.

Q: Can dyslexia occur in all ethnic groups?

A: Yes. Literacy and dyslexic difficulties can be identified in males and females across languages, ethnic and socio economic groups (Rose Report p36)

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Further Information for Parents/Carers

Working in partnership with parents / carers is an essential and valuable part of the assessment process. Views of parents /carers can be sought at reviews, meetings with teachers and members of support services in school, and meetings with the school SENCO .

Other sources of help: National Groups/ Organizations:

There are a number of voluntary organizations, charities and local support groups dedicated to dyslexia:

The British Dyslexia Association

98 London Road

Reading

RG1 5AU

Helpline number: 0118 966 8271

www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

Dyslexia Action

Head Office

Park House

Wick Road

Egham

Surrey

TW20 0HH Tel: 01784 222 300

www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk

Dyslexia Action (previously called The Dyslexia Institute)

The Dyslexia SpLD Trust

This is a group of organizations with funding from the Department for Education to provide information to parents, teachers and schools.

www.thedyslexia-spldtrust.org.uk

Birmingham Parent Partnership Service

SEN Parent Partnership Service

The POD,

28 Oliver Street

Nechells,

Birmingham B7 4NX

0121 303 5004

www.bgfl.org/services/parents