

Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia)

A ready reference for Parents & Teachers

For further information:

The British Dyslexia Association Tel: 0118 966 8271

www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk

<http://www.wbdyslexia.org.uk/>

Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)

The term 'specific learning difficulties' covers dyslexia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia.

Dyslexia

The term 'dyslexia' is used to describe a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. The characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory, and verbal processing speed. The following are not indicators of dyslexia, but can be areas where dyslexics may find difficulties: concentration, motor co-ordination, organisation and mental calculation.

Although found across a whole range of ability levels, the idea that dyslexia presents as a difficulty between expected outcomes and performance is widely held.

Main Characteristics

- The student may frequently lose their place while reading, make a lot of errors with the high frequency words, have difficulty reading names and have difficulty blending sounds and segmenting words. Reading requires a great deal of effort and concentration.
- Written work may seem messy, with crossing outs, similarly shaped letters may be confused, such as b/d/p/q, m/w/n/u, and letters in words may be jumbled, such as tired/tried. Spelling difficulties often persist into adult life and students may become reluctant writers.

Potential Impact upon Learning

- Often loses place when moving from one line to the next; print often becomes blurred or letters or words appear to move.
- Finds it difficult to obtain meaning from text and misreads questions.
- Finds it very difficult to work from the board.
- Finds it difficult to listen for long periods of time.
- Becomes stressed and frustrated because unable to write legibly, quickly or neatly and the content does not relate to knowledge.
- Has difficulty in remembering daily/weekly timetables, instructions, facts for tests and examinations.
- Rarely completes work on time.
- Suffers from eye discomfort and headaches and is often tired.
- Is creative and imaginative.

Suggested Support Strategies

- When possible use a multi-sensory approach, draw on supplementary visual, tactile, and auditory resources in addition to text.

- Students with dyslexia may prefer to use oral ways to communicate what they have learnt.
- It is often helpful if the first words of each sentence are highlighted in colour and work is left on the board for longer periods of time. If the department has electronic copies of its handouts, then worksheets can easily be altered; the use of PowerPoint on an interactive whiteboard can also be helpful here.
- If websites are being used, it may be worth exploring if the text colours on these can be altered, and text to speech software where available.
- Use of handouts in addition to whiteboard (on which it is best to use coloured pens, try blue rather than black) that are differentiated in terms of readability, levels of text, number of sentences on each page, font type and size, e.g. increase in spacing between words and lines, colour of paper, e.g. yellow or blue.
- The use of coloured papers such as buff can create reduce glare for those students whose specific learning difficulty is visually based.
- Text pre-read by member of staff who is familiar with the student's specific needs.
- Use of mind mapping techniques may be helpful.
- Remember also to review the text used on maps and diagrams and other forms of visual presentation used in your subject.

When a handout is text-rich consider limiting the amount of information and presenting it in a vertical rather than linear format.

- Teaching of specific strategies may be helpful, including alternative methods of recording, such as text to speech and speech to text software to support note taking, lengthy writing of texts, reading for meaning and revision skills. This is worth particular consideration when preparing any work to be done on field trips or outside of the usual classroom environment.
- Keep a subject dictionary to support an understanding of new words and their meaning.
- The use of spreadsheets can provide a visual aid to students with dyslexia as they can be taught visual methods of laying out their work.
- Only ask the student to read aloud if you are certain that it is a manageable task.
- High expectations and low stress atmosphere. It is helpful (to all) to give a framework to the lesson. Be specific and try to link details and examples back to the overall concept.

SEN Staffing

Deputy Head Student Progress & Inclusion: Mrs M Sims

Special Educational Needs and Disability Coordinator (SENDCo): Mrs J Hale

Specialist Teacher: Mrs J Wheeler