

A parent's/carer's guide to

Dyslexia



Education Resources

Dear Parent

"Education for learners with dyslexia" (HM Inspectorate of Education, 2008) highlighted examples of good practice in supporting children and young people with dyslexia across Scotland.

It also encouraged debate around an agreed definition of dyslexia. The following working definition has been developed by the Scottish Government:

"Dyslexia can be described as a continuum of difficulties in learning to read, write and/or spell, which persist despite the provision of appropriate learning opportunities. These difficulties do not reflect an individual's cognitive abilities and may not be typical of performance in other areas."

This booklet has been prepared jointly by Psychological Services staff and Inclusion Co-ordinators in South Lanarkshire Council. It is intended to help parents to support children and young people who may be dyslexic.

Andrea Batchelor

Head of Education (Inclusion)

What is dyslexia?

Most children learn to read easily if they attend school regularly, are taught using a structured phonics programme, and have a supportive background.

However, some children are identified as having dyslexic difficulties, or dyslexia. Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty which can result in significant, persistent problems in learning to read and spell.

There are different theories about causes. However, the result is usually that the child finds it difficult to learn the sounds and shapes of letters and words and finds it hard to be able to say them accurately and fluently. These are core skills that form the basis of reading ability. Problems in this area can cause difficulties in understanding the ideas in a book or text, which can then further slow down progress in reading and spelling. This can of course lead to the child being further 'put off' doing these activities, because they find them too difficult.

The skills that are affected vary from individual to individual, as does the extent of the difficulties each child experiences. For example, the child may be able to sound out individual letters, but not be able to read fluently. Or, they may be able to remember whole words, but not sound out new or familiar words letter by letter.

Sometimes dyslexic difficulties can be overlooked if the child is very able or has difficulties in other areas of learning.

Some children can read words quickly and accurately, but find it difficult to make sense of, or remember the ideas they are reading. This is not necessarily dyslexia, and this child may need different kinds of help to improve this aspect of learning.

As reading, writing and spelling are such important skills in education, dyslexia is the most commonly identified kind of specific learning difficulty, but children can have specific difficulties in other areas - for example with maths, spatial understanding, or coordination.

What can we do?

Research shows that planned intervention and support which is tailored to the individual child's learning needs can be very effective in improving his or her literacy skills. It also means that such pupils become more motivated and can benefit more from their learning experiences across the curriculum. With better learning experiences come greater self-belief and increased motivation.

Within educational establishments, strategic planned approaches are aimed at:

- ▶ identifying difficulties as early as possible
- ▶ improving children's literacy skills
- ▶ providing appropriate support to access all areas of the curriculum
- ▶ encouraging self-belief instead of feelings of failure

How common is dyslexia?

Studies show that around 4% of school pupils will have specific difficulties of a dyslexic nature. In practice this means roughly one child in every class. However, children will vary in the type and extent of difficulties they experience. Targeted intervention over a short period of time will enable some children to improve their literacy skills reasonably quickly. Others may require longer term interventions, perhaps throughout their educational careers.

Identification

Dyslexia can be identified as a series of patterns. For example, in relation to reading and writing your child may:

- ▶ have little or no early knowledge of letters
- ▶ be unable to recite letters of the alphabet
- ▶ have difficulties recognising sounds of letters
- ▶ have problems with putting sounds together to make words: for example m-a-t = mat
- ▶ be unable to find the start of a story
- ▶ make odd spelling errors
- ▶ reverse or muddle letters and/or syllables/numbers when reading or writing

- ▶ have problems copying
- ▶ have poor handwriting
- ▶ have marked difficulties with sequencing, order and direction
- ▶ have good oral skills but difficulty with reading development
- ▶ show poor concentration for literacy work - e.g. restless, yawning

There may be other more general associated difficulties:

- ▶ finding the correct word to express themselves
- ▶ learning things by heart e.g. times tables
- ▶ problems with early speech development
- ▶ clumsiness and difficulties with co-ordination
- ▶ confusing left and right
- ▶ poor organisational skills
- ▶ taking a very long time to do homework

Your child may show emotional or behavioural difficulties because he or she is struggling with this area of learning

- ▶ use of avoidance strategies
- ▶ claiming dislike of reading and writing
- ▶ behaviours showing evidence of frustration and poor self-esteem e.g. anger, feeling ill, lack of interest in his or her work

How can I help my child?

- ▶ share concerns with your child's teacher at an early stage
- ▶ work closely with your child's teacher and ask for suggestions for helping at home
- ▶ ask about strategies such as Paired Reading at Home
- ▶ continue reading to your child as it encourages their enjoyment of reading
- ▶ notice the things your child is good at and let them know you appreciate these qualities and skills
- ▶ make sure he or she is not compared unfavourably to any brother or sister who shows more literacy ability
- ▶ encourage other family members to be supportive
- ▶ reassure your child that having a specific difficulty does not mean they cannot achieve, and point out their many strengths
- ▶ you may also seek information from the Children's Assistant or Librarian within your local library as there are certain publishers who have developed reading materials for dyslexic children

How can South Lanarkshire support your child?

In line with national guidelines, South Lanarkshire has a **Staged Intervention** process to support children and young people with additional support needs. **Staged Intervention** begins in early years establishments and continues into primary and secondary education.

The Staged Intervention Process

- ▶ identification of child's needs by class teacher/parent/carer
- ▶ identification of appropriate strategies and resources, in schools, including ICT
- ▶ progress is tracked and monitored
- ▶ additional advice and/or support may be sought from a specialist support teacher within your child's learning area
- ▶ an advisory resource teacher can assess and make recommendations to schools on appropriate hardware and software to support a pupil with dyslexic type difficulties

- ▶ where problems persist despite the support outlined above, it may occasionally be necessary to access additional advice from the school link educational psychologist
- ▶ at each stage of the process parents are encouraged to work in partnership with educational establishments

Useful books and reports

Dyslexia: A Parents' Survival Guide by C Ostler.

Pub: Ammonite ISBN 1869866134

Dyslexia: A Complete Guide for Parents by G Reid.

Pub: Wiley ISBN 0470863129

Identifying and Supporting the Dyslexic Child

by C Mellors.

Pub: Desktop ISBN 187240636X

Mind Maps for Kids: Max your Memory and

Concentration by T. Buzan.

Pub: Thorsons ISBN 0007197764

Plees Help: Help for Children with Dyslexia by A Tipper.

Pub: Desktop ISBN 1872406432

Count me in - responding to dyslexia
Strathclyde University/Scottish Executive
<http://www.countmein.org.uk/>

Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties, 2009
(The Rose Report)
<http://www.skillsforlifefnetwork.com/?atk=3522>

Education of learners in dyslexia, HMIE, 2008
<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/eflwd.html>

Useful websites

www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk

www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/dyslexia

www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/welfare/ASL/dyslexia

Our acknowledgement and thanks are extended to the Inclusive Education Service for assistance in compiling this leaflet

Learning and Literacy Group, Psychological Service,
South Lanarkshire

If you need this information in another language or format,
please contact us to discuss how we can best meet your needs.

Phone: 01698 710568

Email: enquiries@slcpsych.org.uk

www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk