

## Useful Links

**Leeds City Council, Learning Inclusion Service**

**SEN Inclusion Team (SENIT) & Educational Psychology Team**

Adams Court, Kildare Terrace, Leeds LS12 1DB

0113 3951039

**Leeds SEND Information Advice Support Service**

(formerly known as Parent Partnership service)

[www.leedsparentpartnership.co.uk](http://www.leedsparentpartnership.co.uk)

Help line: 0113 395 1200 General Enquiries: 0113 395 1222

**Dyslexia Alliance Yorkshire**

[www.dayonline.org.uk](http://www.dayonline.org.uk)

Phone: [07380633826](tel:07380633826)

**British Dyslexia Association**

[www.bdadyslexia.org.uk](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk)

The British Dyslexia Association

Unit 8, Bracknell Beeches, Old Bracknell Lane, Bracknell, Reading RG12 7BW

Tel: 0333 405 4555

Helpline: 0333 405 4567

**Leeds and Bradford Dyslexia Association (LABDA)**

[www.labda.org.uk](http://www.labda.org.uk)

See website for contact/ helpline details

See website for details of Parent Support Group

## Family Guide to

# Dyslexia

Leeds Learning Inclusion Service

Specific Learning Difficulties &  
Dyslexia in Context



# What is dyslexia?

Most children learn to read and write with few problems, some need a little extra help to become fluent readers and writers. However, for some the process of reading and writing is too difficult even with appropriate teaching, and underlying problems may affect their ability to develop these skills. This can sometimes be referred to, particularly by professionals, as a 'Specific Learning Difficulty' (SpLD) or dyslexia.

The Learning Inclusion Service endorses the following Rose definition for 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. (People can be a 'little dyslexic')
- **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 must first have been made. Without this provision it would not be possible to tell whether or not the difficulties are 'persistent and severe'.

## 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, known as phonemes. Changes in the sounds that make up words can lead to changes in their meaning. For example, a child with a good level of phonological awareness would understand that if you change the letter "p" in the word "pat" to "s", the word becomes "sat".

**Verbal Memory:** This is the ability to remember a sequence of verbal information for a short period of time. For example, the ability to remember a short list such as "red, blue, green", or a set of simple instructions, such as "Put on your gloves and your hat, find the lead for the dog and then go to the park."

**Verbal processing speed:** This is the time it takes to process and recognise familiar verbal information, such as letters and digits. For example, someone with a good verbal processing speed has the ability to quickly write down unfamiliar words when they are spelled out, or write down telephone numbers they are told.

**Co-occurring difficulties:** Dyslexia and many other learning difficulties do not always occur in isolation. It is quite common for an individual to have *co-occurring* conditions, such as Developmental Coordination Difficulties (DCD) or Dyscalculia.

**Intervention:** This is a timed (usually about 20 minutes daily/ three times a week) set of sequential lessons, aimed at enabling a pupil achieve specific targets.

**SPLD:** The term 'Specific Learning Difficulty' (SpLD) refers to a difference / difficulty people have with particular aspects of learning. The most common SpLDs are dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder(ADHD), dyscalculia and dysgraphia.

**SENIT:** Special Educational Needs Inclusion Team: A group of teachers working for the Local Authority. SENIT visit school, at school request, to help assess and support children and young people who are struggling to make good progress in line with their peer group. They can give a professional opinion as to whether a pupil's difficulties meet the applied definition of dyslexia and advise on inclusive practice and intervention to raise achievement.

## FAQs



**Are all children with reading difficulties dyslexic?** No. Literacy difficulties exist on a continuum. 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. If these criteria are not met the child should not be described as having dyslexia.

**Why do some children experience dyslexia?** Whilst there is a general acceptance that dyslexia exists and significant advances have been made, research into causation is still ongoing. 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?** Understanding the interaction between genes and the environment can be complex. However, long held theories that dyslexia can be inherited have been substantiated as a result of medical and technical advances.

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

**Who Identifies dyslexia?** Dyslexia can be identified by professionals with appropriate specialist training and qualifications.

Staff in schools often find it helpful to discuss children, whose progress causes concern, with outside agencies. These may include a specialist teacher from the SEN Support and Inclusion Team or the Educational Psychologist assigned to the school.

Following a substantial period of involvement and with consideration of all the information available, The Complex Needs Service can provide school staff and parents with a professional opinion as to whether the pupil's difficulties meet the applied definition of dyslexia. This opinion will also be subject to peer review.

**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 succeed, with some compensatory strategies, throughout their school life and examinations without causing concerns around progress. 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.

## Support in School

Schools have three tiers of support that they could offer:

- **Universal** (Wave 1)—available for all pupils in class.
- **Targeted** (Wave 2) small group intervention, usually for a set time 3-5 times per week.
- **Personalised** (Wave 3) - one to one support, usually for a set time 3-5 timers per week.

The arrangements of this will vary from school to school. Your SENCo will be able to discuss these with you.

**Universal adjustments within the classroom will vary according to pupil need but may include:**

Changing text size/font/ paper colour/ using coloured overlays. (*This can help pupils who experience 'visual stress', making text easier to read.*)

Paired reading/writing.

Using alternative ways of recording ideas.

Word banks/ personal dictionaries.

**Recommended targeted & Personalised intervention could include:**

Active Literacy Kit

Toe by Toe

Alpha to Omega

Units of sound

SENIT Phonics Programmes

These are all structured, mult-sensory Dyslexia Friendly interventions. For more information talk to school to find out which programmes they use.



## What you can do to support your child

If you are concerned about your child's learning ensure basic health checks such as eye/ear checks are up to date.

Communicate with school as much as possible, sharing any concerns and successes noted. Ask your child's teacher about how the school supports children in learning to read and write, strategies may have changed since you were at school!

Sometimes it may also be helpful to discuss your concerns with the school's SEN-Co, who will be able to reassure you about how the school assesses and supports pupils who are struggling to pick up the mechanics of reading and writing.

### ***Homework:***

- 1) Homework can be useful to practise something that has been covered in class.
- 2) Remember that your child needs time to relax when they come home from school, they may find it more tiring than their friends.
- 3) Get into clear routines—set times and places, this can encourage concentration (and willingness!).
- 4) If tasks appear too difficult, or are taking too long to complete, discuss this with the teacher who set it. It may be that alterations can be agreed such as alternative method of recording or a later submission date.
- 5) Consider the level of assistance you give; if you are having to contribute too much to the task it may not be benefitting your child.
- 6) Ask the teacher for advice.
- 7) At exam time encourage an early start to revision, use alternative ways of recording such as mind maps and visual (picture) supports as prompts.

### ***Self Esteem:***

Promote a positive self image—praise effort and achievement.

Look at <http://www.dyslexia.com/famous.htm> for examples of people who have dyslexia and achieved.

Useful books to share about dyslexia include: "The Illustrated Guide to Dyslexia and its Amazing People" (Kate Power and Kathy Iwanczak Forsyth)), Tom's special Talent" (Kate Gaynor), "Dyslexia and my Superpower (Margaret Rooke) "Creative, Successful, Dyslexic: 23 High Achievers Share Their Stories" (Margaret Rooke)

## How we support children

School assessment and provision should enable the majority of pupils to make progress, in some cases pupils benefit from additional assessment and advice. If school feels that your child has not made expected progress, in spite of appropriate teaching and provision, and meets the criteria for the Complex Needs Team to be involved, school may make a request for assessment and advice. If we accept the request we will make an appointment to visit school where we will:

- Meet with staff and yourself to begin to build a picture of your child's strengths as well as perceived barriers to learning.
- Use specific assessments such as reading/ spelling ability, phonics knowledge, processing speed, and memory.
- We will look carefully at how your child responds to the assessments and explore strategies that they use.
- Consider other contributing factors to learning, such as attendance, health issues such as hearing/ visual impairment, changes of school as well as emotional or motor difficulties.
- If we feel it is appropriate we can give a pupil a label of SpLD (Dyslexia) after thorough assessment and consideration against the 'Rose Definition'.

The Learning Inclusion Service supports schools in developing their own capacity in meeting the needs of pupils through consultation and training.

