

**DYSLEXIA:** The current understanding of Dyslexia is that it is a cognitive deficit. The 2 key behavioural manifestations of the disorder are severe and lasting difficulties in word reading and spelling but these will vary depending on the underlying severity of the deficit and according to the learner's age, stage, environment and individual strengths and weaknesses.

**Dyslexia** is characterised by a poor ability to manipulate the sound system of a language. Many dyslexics also have other conditions e.g. dyspraxia, dyscalculia. There is often a distinct discrepancy between apparent ability and academic attainment and as such dyslexic students may suffer from very poor self-esteem and lack of confidence and can experience a great deal of frustration at school. Dyslexia is independent of intelligence.

**Dyslexia** is usually detected at a young age when a child experiences subtle language difficulties. These may include imprecise speech/word finding difficulties, difficulties in learning verbal sequences such as days of the week, months and a poor auditory memory. The current position on development dyslexia is that it manifests first as a reading problem, then as a spelling problem. The disorder continues to show up mainly as a spelling problem.

### Characteristics of Dyslexic Students

#### 1. Visuo-spatial

- Persistent reversal of letters, syllables, words
- Jerky eye movements
- Possible abnormal pupil dilation
- Good spatial ability

#### 2. Auditory

- Difficulty in following aural instructions
- Difficulty in repeating polysyllabic words
- Sound confusions
- Poor sound blending

#### 3. Sequencing and Memory

- Left/right confusion
- Short term memory difficulties
- Directional confusion e.g. up/down, yesterday/today
- Difficulty in estimating time
- Confused word order in speech
- Difficulty in mental arithmetic

#### 4. Motor co-ordination

- Poor handwriting
- Restless/hyperactive
- Clumsy/accident - prone

#### 5. Academic

- Orally capable: discrepancy between "brightness" and school progress
- Difficulty in written expression
- Reading &/or spelling below ability level
- Often bizarre spelling
- Difficulty in sequencing instructions
- Difficulty in memorising tables
- Difficulty acquiring, generalising from and applying rules
- Disorganised
- Low frustration threshold

#### 6. Oral

- Misunderstands instructions or information
- Has word finding problems

- Has difficulty pronouncing polysyllabic words
- Has difficulty in group situations, particularly in sorting information in group discussions.

### 7. Practical Problems (specially for new students/Year 7)

- Finding way around school
- Finding the right room/understanding the room numbering system
- Having the correct equipment
- Punctuality
- Telling the time
- Following the timetable
- Moving between sets/whole class lessons/tutor groups
- Recording homework
- Filing work, keeping track of worksheets

## AREAS OF DIFFICULTY WHICH ARISE MOST OFTEN

### READING



- Inaccurate reading e.g. substitutions, reads words backwards, ignores punctuation, omits prefixes/suffixes
- Difficulty in extracting main points/ summarising from what has been read
- Difficulty in selecting and ordering relevant information
- Difficulty in recalling and/or understanding what has been read

### WRITING



- Poor handwriting
- Slow writer. Difficulties in copying quickly and correctly
- Problems with writing and listening simultaneously
- Poor tracking > problems in copying from board
- Immature punctuation
- Poor editing
- Problems in planning and beginning tasks
- Ambiguous/ confusing sentence

### LISTENING



- Easily distracted by other noise
- Poor concentration, wandering attention in classroom
- Problems in remembering instructions given verbally, particularly if a number of steps are involved.

## STRATEGIES FOR HELPING DYSLEXIC STUDENTS

### READING

✓ <b>When using photocopies don't separate information from the questions</b> – have separate sheets so students can place them side by side. This helps <b>reduce tracking problems</b> .
✓ <b>Pre teach</b> key words/concepts before asking students to tackle long pieces of text. Define a <b>purpose</b> for reading so the student knows what information he/she is expected to be looking for
✓ Encourage <b>previewing</b> of reading material. Ask students to <b>skim</b> for gist or <b>scan</b> for specific information (e.g. dates, proper names) to glean an overview of the reading material before beginning close reading.
✓ Encourage students to <b>predict</b> outcomes from written material. This helps to check understanding and encourages higher meta-cognitive skills
✓ Encourage students to <b>summarise</b> or <b>retell</b> what they have read (either to a peer, group or whole class) as a way of reinforcing and clarifying information
✓ As many dyslexic students have problems with contrast <b>avoid using black or green pens</b> on whiteboards. Also consider using <b>tinted paper</b> for worksheets
✓ Allow ample time for <b>rehearsal</b> if the child is to read aloud to a group or the whole class.
✓ When typing your own worksheets use a <i>sans serif</i> typeface e.g. Arial, Calabri
✓ Highlight / <b>identify key words</b> and terms in one area of the board or put topic word lists on display and direct students to refer to them. Encourage personal dictionaries

### WRITING

✓ Provide <b>writing</b> frames to help students to plan extended pieces of work
✓ Provide <b>model answers</b> to show students what is required. Be specific about good practice
✓ Break assignments into a series of simple, well-defined steps as a <b>highly structured</b> approach should help minimise organisational problems
✓ Use cloze passages/exercise
✓ Provided "write-on" worksheets where possible to reduce the amount of copying a student has to do
✓ Establish an agreed length of writing (e.g. half a page) or a set amount of time (e.g. 30 minutes) you expect a student to spend on a task. Communicate this information with the child's family via link book
✓ Allow students to present information via flow charts, labelled diagrams, mind maps, in note form, on tape, as a presentation etc. rather than requiring sentences and paragraphs
✓ Allow access to a <b>computer</b> where possible. Dyslexic students are often embarrassed about untidy work and poor spelling and by using a computer many are able to produce attractive work they feel proud of. They are also able to use spell and grammar check facilities to edit their work.
✓ Ensure <b>explicit teaching</b> of organisation & revision techniques e.g. mind mapping, note making / taking, mnemonics, rhymes etc and teach your student how to <b>systematically</b> approach extended writing tasks, exam papers and questions