

Dyslexia

Information for Parents



www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/inclusion

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is defined by the British Psychological Society (1999) as follows:

'Dyslexia is evident when accurate and fluent word reading and/or spelling develops very incompletely or with great difficulty. This focuses on literacy learning at the 'word level' and implies that the problem is severe and persistent, despite appropriate learning opportunities. It provides the basis of a staged process of assessment through teaching.'

- Current research evidence suggests that dyslexia can occur in children and young people of all abilities.
- The link between dyslexia and other learning difficulties is not simple. Individuals may have other learning and behaviour problems, or low self-esteem. These problems may occur in some, but not all, children and young people with dyslexia and therefore they are not part of the definition.
- The definition focuses on observed difficulties as there is continuing debate regarding the causes of dyslexia.
- Evidence suggests phonological processing (i.e. the ability to identify and manipulate sounds) is important

for success in reading and spelling and is an area where many individuals with dyslexia have difficulties. This is a skill children need to have to become successful readers and starts early with the introduction to nursery rhymes.

Reading and spelling

- Reading and spelling are complex skills that need to be taught. Each child is entitled to learn to read and spell.
- Almost all children and young people can learn to read and spell.
- If a child does not make progress, the teaching needs to be modified.
- Parents can play a vital role in helping their children learn to read and spell.

Frequently asked questions

Do all children and young people with reading difficulties have dyslexia?

- No, other reasons for reading or spelling difficulties include:
 - sensory impairment
 - missed learning opportunities (illness, absence, school changes)
 - quality of teaching/learning experiences

With appropriate instruction these children and young people will progress.

- Children and young people with dyslexia will make progress, but it is slow and takes a lot of effort.

What are the most effective approaches for pupils with dyslexia?

- When teaching is matched to current learning, using systematic approaches with small targets.
- Allowing time to learn a skill – from accuracy, to fluency, to application and then generalisation.
- Providing frequent short sessions (little and often).
- Using phonic strategies.
- Using multi-sensory teaching.
- Parental involvement.

Does dyslexia run in families? Is there a gene for dyslexia?

- Literacy difficulties do appear to run in families.
- There is some research evidence for role of specific genes.
- It is difficult to separate the influence of genes from that of the environment.
- Children and young people from families with reading difficulties can learn to read.

How do parents get their child's dyslexia acknowledged?

- Schools have the primary role in identification and support. The Special Educational Needs policy should detail provision for literacy difficulties.
- Support is provided in line with National Strategies, Code of Practice for SEN and Disability Discrimination Act.
- One-off assessments can only provide partial information.
- The school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) can seek advice from local support services.
- Parents can talk to their child's teacher or the school SENCo.

Don't children and young people need to be of at least average ability to have dyslexia?

- No, intelligence and dyslexia are separate.
- Some children and young people with low ability are good at reading or spelling.
- Some children and young people with high ability are poor at reading or spelling.
- Dyslexia can occur at all levels of intelligence, in all social classes and ethnic groups.

Does it need an educational psychologist (EP) to get my child's dyslexia recognised?

- Not necessarily – support is available from Special Educational Needs and Disability Inclusion Service (SENDIS) (support services) and EP when appropriate.
- Teachers are trained in National Strategies.
- Emphasis on early intervention
- Code of Practice for SEN encourages a staged approach to assessment

through teaching and early intervention.

- The Local Authority (LA) is providing training in dyslexia for schools.

Should identification of dyslexia trigger specialist teaching?

- Not necessarily - support becomes increasingly specialist to reflect a child's level of need. There is a continuum of dyslexia requiring differing levels of provision.
- Support is provided at different levels in accordance with the National Strategies and Code of Practice for SEN, and children and young people with significant difficulties would have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) specifying support.
- Schools are required to provide quality first teaching and to ensure a dyslexia friendly school environment.
- Specialist training is available locally for teachers and teaching assistants, e.g. in effective interventions and dyslexia friendly schools.
- Advice and support is available to schools from the support services.

Multi-sensory Teaching

What is multi-sensory teaching?

It is a method of learning that is often recommended for children and young people with dyslexia. It involves seeing, hearing, speaking, movement of fingers and vocal muscles. It enables learners to use their strengths and at the same time exercise weaker channels.

A multi-sensory approach to spelling

The adult writes the word to be learnt clearly in large letters. Joined handwriting should be used if the child is comfortable with this. The child is then encouraged to follow this routine.

Method

- 1 Say the word clearly. Say it in syllables or other small bits (re-mem-ber, sh-out).
- 2 Use plastic letters to make the word. Mix up the letters and make the word again. Do this a few times.
- 3 Look very carefully at the word. Look for any 'tricky' bits (gh in light, ues in Tuesday). Write 'tricky' bits in a different colour or think of ways to remember them, e.g. u eat sweets on Tuesday.
- 4 Trace over the word saying the word as you do so.
- 5 Turn the word over.
- 6 Write the word without looking.
- 7 Turn the card back and check it is correct.

How parents can help their child

- Working closely with your child's school is important. It is helpful to use similar approaches to the school. Talk to your child's teacher to discuss how you can support at home.
- Set aside a short daily session (10 minutes is reasonable for a 7 year old).
- The simplest way for parents to help is to do some supervised reading every day. Read a book together and help them with difficult words.
- When you listen to your child read, don't be surprised if words are forgotten from one line to the next. Just keep helping and stay patient.
- Your child's self-esteem may be low. Try to be positive and encouraging rather than critical. Help your child realise what he or she does well and discourage negative attitudes. Try and encourage your child in other areas they are successful and interested in.
- Make learning fun by playing games, e.g. I spy, rhyming words, e.g. what rhymes with man, counting syllables, e.g. clapping name rhythms.
- Read to your child so that he or she continues to enjoy books.
- It is important that they can access reading material appropriate to their age and interest level, e.g. Harry Potter – if they cannot read this, for parent to read to/with them or to provide CDs. Milton Keynes Library has a good stock of story CDs.
- Help your child with homework and let the teacher know if the work is too difficult or is taking a long time.
- Encourage your child's independence with remembering equipment, use picture prompts to support if required, e.g. simple timetables.
- If they are keen on IT, then encourage them to use their computers at home. Speak to the school or contact SENDIS about useful software.

Further sources of information

Special Educational Needs & Disability
Inclusion Service
01908 238196

Educational Psychology Service
01908 367333

Milton Keynes Parent Partnership Service
01908 254518

Dyslexia Action
<http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk>

www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/inclusion



Available in audio, large print,
braille and other languages

01908 367333

Educational Psychology Service

Holne Chase Centre
Buckingham Road
Bletchley MK3 5HP

T: (01908) 367333

F: (01908) 643256

E: education.psychology@milton-keynes.gov.uk