



As a mainstream teacher, you will have children and young people with dyslexia in your class. These learners can struggle with reading, writing, spelling, sequencing and organisation.

Children and young people need to be identified, supported and monitored as early as possible to nurture their individual strengths and help them reach their potential.

The following lists suggest some potential indicators that a learner may be dyslexic:

General indicators of dyslexia

- Might be very competent in some areas but have a 'block' in others.
- Poor letter-sound recognition, awareness of sight vocabulary and sequential ordering.
- Poor short-term working memory with difficulty following instructions and being forgetful.
- Slow at information-processing in spoken and/or written language.
- Might have a limited concentration span and not seem to be able to focus at times.

Reading and writing

- Poor standard of written work in comparison with oral language skills.
- Incorrect or confused sentence structure.
- Planning difficulties, 'muddled' sequencing of ideas and events, confusion with tenses.

- Incomplete, untidy or disorganised presentation of written work.
- Poor letter formation and spacing, difficulties with pencil grip and control.
- Frequent letter and number reversals (b/d; p/q/g; 2/5; 6/9).
- Limited or incorrect use of punctuation.
- Spelling a word several ways in the same piece of writing.
- Difficulty remembering the spelling of common irregular words - 'said', 'they'.
- Confused order of letters in words for reading and spelling - girl/gril, church/chruch.
- Word reversals - saw/was, on/no.
- Unusual or phonetic spelling which is unusual for their stage.
- Might omit letters and/or syllables in words or miss out or add words into sentences.
- Difficulty with blending letter-sounds to read words and breaking words into syllables.
- Reluctance to read aloud.
- Reads without expression in a slow, hesitant, manner with inaccuracies.
- Doesn't recognise familiar words - even when read earlier in the text or on the same page.
- Problems with copying information.
- Tendency to lose the place, problems with scanning text from left to right.
- Difficulty with comprehension and/or picking out the main points.
- May disregard, or rely on, context and/or picture cues to aid comprehension.

Numeracy and time

- Difficulty with sequential order, multiplication tables, days of the week.
- Confusion with mathematical symbols such as + and x signs.
- Difficulty understanding the concept of place value.
- Problems with reading/understanding the language of maths.
- Confused by positional language and directions – before/after, top/bottom, x/y axis.
- Problems with telling the time, time-management and/or concepts of time - one hour, last week, tomorrow.
- Poor memory of sequence and direction of procedures (for example, layout and steps of long division).

Behaviour

- Appears to be disorganised or confused by everyday tasks.
- Uses avoidance tactics – looking for equipment, asking to go to the toilet.
- Performance/standard of work is inconsistent – has 'good days' and 'bad days'.
- Seems restless, easily distracted, inattentive or easily tired.
- Has little to show for a huge amount of effort, frustrated by lack of achievement.
- May adopt the role of 'class clown', be withdrawn, uncooperative or disruptive. In other cases pupils try not to draw attention to themselves.

How you can help

Remember that every child with dyslexia is different and has individual difficulties and strengths.

Although children with dyslexia will need additional targeted support, there are many ways that teachers can help the classroom. Minor changes to day-to-day practice can make a huge difference towards effective learning, not just for pupils with dyslexia.

Seating and grouping

- Check that pupils can hear and see you, the board/screen and visual prompts clearly.
- Seat the pupil where you can make eye contact and provide support quickly.
- Group pupils according to each activity, not by literacy level, unless specifically teaching literacy skills.

Information, instructions, organisation

- Give children thinking time to process information and respond appropriately.
- Make instructions short and simple. Break them down into chunks.
- Explain and present information in various ways (pictures, flow charts, diagrams).
- Ask pupils with dyslexia to repeat instructions so you can check their understanding.
- Display prompts and reminders about what to do, where to find things, useful words.
- Put labels on equipment and keep them in the same place.
- Provide desk-top mats/jotter inserts – word banks, prompts and personal targets.
- Provide (and demonstrate how to use) practical aids such as calculators, number/ tables squares, assistive technology.

Memory

- Use multi-sensory approaches to ensure that information is absorbed and stored.
- Teach a range of techniques to help children learn letter sounds and spelling rules.
- Engage pupils in purposeful movement, using rhythm and visual activities to stimulate memory and trigger recall.

Written work

- Encourage alternatives to writing – drawing, dictating/recording answers.
- Check children’s learning by requesting non-written responses – draw, act out, sing answers.
- Limit writing demands and give plenty of time to complete written work.
- Encourage the use of assistive technology and touch typing.
- Provide planning formats/writing frames/story skeletons for extended writing.
- Teach children how to use mind maps, spider webs, bullet points, flow charts.
- Don’t ask pupils to copy from the board - provide it to them in an electronic format.

Marking

- Develop a code with your pupils for marking errors. Using a cross or red pen to highlight errors may not be the best way – lightly underline or use a dot.
- Try to explain errors by marking their work with the pupil present.
- Specify what will be marked – content, spelling, technical skills or presentation – and mark only that.
- Minimise the number of errors you highlight – perhaps only one of each type. Suggest how to avoid these in the future.
- Use directed praise – say what you are praising – include effort as well as attainment.

- Avoid negative feedback in front of the class, give individual feedback privately.

Reading

- Provide tinted filters/overlays or reading markers.
- Use coloured paper and not black and white.
- Match reading resources to reading ability, ensuring that it is age appropriate.
- Encourage the use of books in audio/digital format to support access to texts.
- Teach the use of keywords, highlighting, colours and images to help remember

information.

- Highlight the main points in text to support comprehension, prediction and recall.
- Teach key vocabulary for new topics – use flash cards, word mats, posters/word walls.
- Avoid asking pupils with dyslexia to read aloud in class unless they tell you they are happy to do so.
- Introduce paired/shared reading activities to improve fluency, aid understanding and build confidence.

The Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit is a free online resource to support Scottish Teachers. The Toolkit contains modules for teachers to complete as part of professional learning.

addressingdyslexia.org

