

Dyslexia: TheSchoolBus Factsheet

- 🔊 What is dyslexia?
- 🔊 Spotting the signs
- 🔊 What can you do if you suspect a child has dyslexia?
- 🔊 What support is available?
- 🔊 How can you help (reasonable adjustments)?

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a common type of specific learning difficulty and spectrum disorder that affects the reading and writing skills of 4 to 8 percent of children.

Spotting the signs

The symptoms of dyslexia vary from child to child at different levels of severity; however, common signs of dyslexia include the following:

5 to 7 years

- Problems learning the names and sounds of letters.
- Spelling that is unpredictable and inconsistent.
- Problems copying written language.
- Poor phonological awareness.

7 to 12 years

- Slow reading speed.
- Problems with the correct spelling of words.
- Problems understanding and recognising new words.

Teenagers

- Slow writing speed.
- Poorly organised written work.
- Problems with reading fluency.

What can you do if you suspect a child has dyslexia?

If you are concerned about a pupil's reading and writing, the child's parents/carers ought to be the first point of contact and should be encouraged to refer the child to their GP for tests.

The GP would then ascertain whether the child's learning difficulty is caused by dyslexia or by another condition, such as a vision or hearing impairment.

What support is available?

Whilst dyslexia has no cure, there are several treatments which can help with reading and writing difficulties.

The parent/carer of the child is best placed to initiate treatment and the best way for them to do so is to find out as much as possible about the child's disability, in order to identify the best course of action.

The school's or LA's SENCO will be able to assist the child in many ways and provide additional support.

How can you help (reasonable adjustments)?

Children with dyslexia may have difficulty with reading and writing, but this does not mean they are less intelligent than other children.

Expectations for children with dyslexia should therefore be kept high, despite their learning difficulty. Indeed, with the right special educational needs (SEN) support, children with dyslexia can perform at the same level as their non-dyslexic peers.

The school should encourage parents to undertake an assessment of SEN for their child with dyslexia. The specific SEN support will then be outlined on an education and healthcare (EHC) plan, which may include:

- **Seating pupils with dyslexia near the teacher**, but as part of the class, to ensure that help is available when necessary.
- **Providing an outline of the lesson** at the beginning of the class to aid information retention.
- **Minimising the amount of writing** that a pupil with dyslexia has to do in favour of alternative techniques that better emphasise the child's knowledge and intellect, including computers and audio tapes to record information, and allowing the child to respond verbally.
- Explaining things slowly, frequently, and in a variety of ways.
- **Watching out for signs of tiredness and fatigue** – it takes a lot more effort for pupils with dyslexia to process information, so allow them to take regular breaks and only set homework that is absolutely necessary.
- **Allocating more time for completing work** because of the extra time pupil with dyslexia needs for reading, writing and proof-reading work.
- **Use two colours when marking a child's work** – one for content and another for spelling – but avoid using red pens as this can be demotivating, especially considering the extra effort required to produce the work. Only correct spellings that have been taught specifically.
- **Give dyslexic children the chance to explain their difficulties** to you when marking their work – this will help you to know what readjustments are required.
- **Encourage reading** by introducing new words slowly and save the child from having to read aloud in class, unless they are comfortable with it. Electronic story books are also a good way of developing a child's vocabulary and teaching the meaning of written books.

Teachers should not:

- **Shout** at pupils for behaviour that is related to their dyslexia.
- **Expect the same quantity of work** as from pupils without dyslexia.
- **Mock or laugh** at a child for showing signs of dyslexia.
- Expect pupils with dyslexia to **copy from the board**.
- **Overload** pupils with dyslexia with instructions.
- **Make sudden changes** in their timetable, teacher or task.
- Expect them to **learn strings of facts by heart**.

The school should also ensure that relevant teachers and staff members are familiar with the contents of the EHC plan and receive the appropriate training.