

Dyslexia

A Guide for Parents and Carers in Nottinghamshire

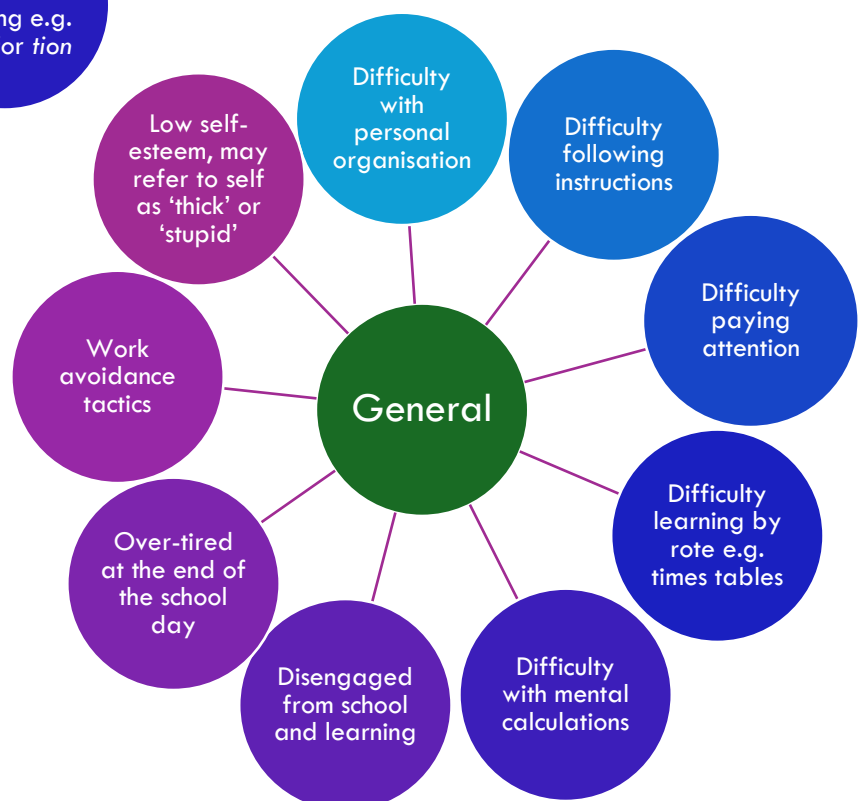
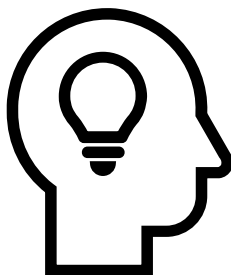
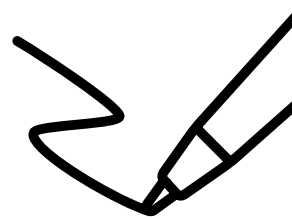
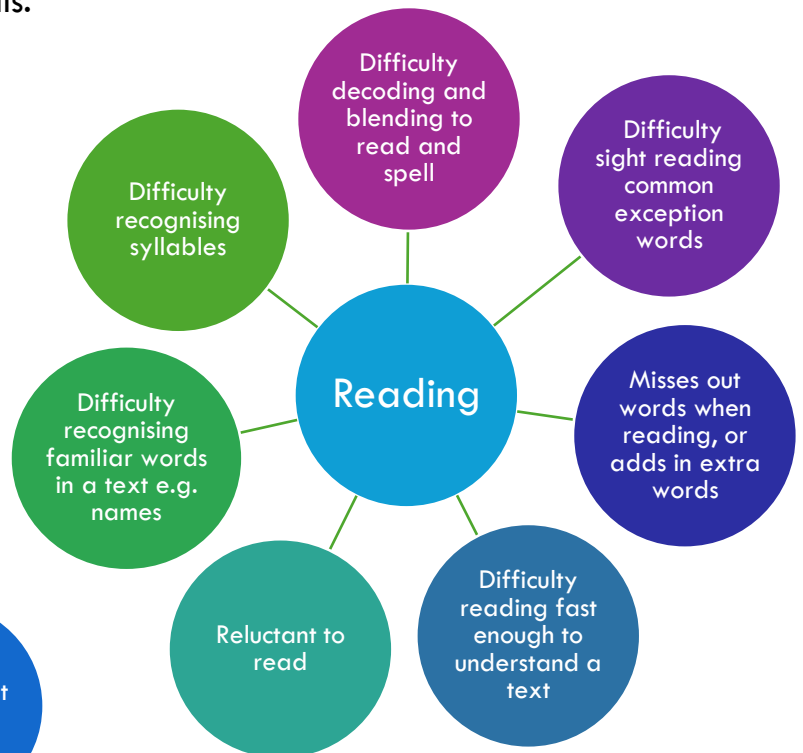
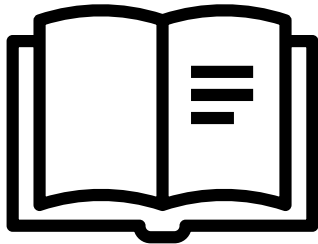


What is Dyslexia?

- Dyslexia is a common learning difference, which affects about 1 in 10 people.
- Dyslexia makes it difficult to learn to read fluently and spell accurately.
- These difficulties are caused by differences in the way the brain processes language, in particular, the sounds and syllables which make up words.
- Individuals with dyslexia can find it difficult to remember information they have just heard and often may need more time to process information.
- Dyslexia has nothing to do with how intelligent or hardworking you are.
- We understand it as a learning difference rather than a medical condition, and although most dyslexic people cope well as adults and go on to be successful in their chosen path, their dyslexia does not go away.
- As well as difficulties with reading and spelling, these differences in the way the brain processes and remembers information can affect Maths skills, the ability to sequence and organise ideas and personal organisation.
- Lots of dyslexic learners are also creative and practical thinkers. When they are taught in the way they learn, and adjustments are made to support their reading and spelling, they can do just as well as, or even better than, non-dyslexics in school and beyond.

How do I know if my child is dyslexic?

There are lots of indicators, but the key one will be that they are finding it unexpectedly difficult to pick up reading and writing skills.



What support should be available for my child at school?



Identification

School should be able to identify whether your child is experiencing dyslexic-type difficulties through observation, work samples, in-class assessments, and screening tools. **There is no need for a formal assessment for your child to get the support they need.**



Dyslexia friendly learning environments

Offer alternative methods of recording work, provide support for reading, encourage the use of technology in the classroom, provide support for spelling and use techniques which support working memory. Access arrangements for assessments should be considered.



Intervention

Some students will need to do some extra work to improve reading, spelling and writing skills. This should be carefully targeted and monitored to check whether it is working. The aims should be clear and the sessions should be carefully structured.



Metacognition and self esteem

Students should learn self-help strategies, study skills, memory techniques, and tips and tricks for organisation using their strengths to support areas of difficulty. Schools should recognise strengths, nurture interests and hobbies and help them to understand their learning difference.



Partnership

School should listen to your concerns and experiences. They should explain to you what support is available and let you know how interventions are going. They should let you know how your child will be supported through assessments and what adaptations are being made in the classroom and to homework tasks.



Does my child need a formal assessment?

With the right training and tools, staff in schools are able to identify literacy difficulties, including dyslexia, and put support in place. School staff can look at a range of information about the way your child is learning, including:

- the progress they have made over time
- what support they have had and the impact it has made
- what the student says about their learning
- information from parents and carers
- results of any screening tests
- assessments they have completed in class
- areas of strength
- what interventions they have had and the progress they have made over time.

By drawing all this information together, schools can decide how best to support the student, and judge whether any difficulties they are experiencing are due to dyslexia. Schools will refer to dyslexic traits, dyslexic tendencies or dyslexic-type difficulties. Where schools feel they need further training to put together these school-based assessments of dyslexic traits, or where pupils' needs are particularly complex or exceptional, advice may be sought from the SEND Inclusion Service.

Formal dyslexia assessments can only be completed by a specialist teacher with an appropriate Level 7 qualification or an educational psychologist. A qualified professional will carry out a range of assessments on reading, spelling, memory and processing over a few hours, and use the results to give a 'diagnosis' of dyslexia. In Nottinghamshire, the local authority does not provide these, so they are done privately, and can be costly.

A formal assessment of dyslexia is not needed to access any support in school, including access arrangements. Schools have to provide their own evidence for access arrangements, and although they can use external dyslexia assessments in some circumstances, they are not necessary.

At university, students with a formal assessment of dyslexia can apply for Disabled Student Allowance, which might mean they may be provided with a laptop, for instance, or some supportive software. Universities all differ in their approach but all of them will provide some kind of support for students to get a formal assessment. Some will reimburse most of the cost of the assessment. Some universities have in-house assessors who provide assessments as part of your university package, and there is a lot they will put in place even without a 'diagnosis', so it is worth finding out what they offer when choosing where to apply.

Regardless of how your child has been identified, the same kind of support is available for them in school.

How can I help at home?

Supporting reading at home

General

- Make reading a fun, relaxed experience: little and often
- Read to your child, but understand they might be tired at bedtime
- Videos for background/prior knowledge
- Audiobooks – e.g. Calibre Audio <https://calibreaudio.org.uk/services>
- Comics – e.g. The Phoenix <https://www.thephoenixcomic.co.uk/>
- Graphic novels – Page 45 Comic specialists in Nottingham
- 'Hi lo' books – Barrington Stoke, Little Gems <https://www.barringtonstoke.co.uk/>
- Scanning pens
- Use child's interests – sport, fishing, dancing
- Make it purposeful e.g. recipes or instructions, with visuals and small chunks of text



Phonics

- The main approach to early reading in schools is phonics – learn the link between letters (graphemes) and sounds (phonemes) and then use these to crack the reading code by blending these sounds together from left to right
- Ask school for sound charts
- Play alliterative games - Annie got an apple, Billy got a bike, Cath got a car
- Help your child to see that words have patterns e.g. cat, hat, pat, mat
- Play 'I Spy' to help your child hear the first sounds of words

Other approaches

- Teach sight words to help develop reading fluency. Working hard to read every single word becomes disheartening and tedious. Knowing a bank of common words by sight improves reading fluency
- This is learning to read words by looking at them and remembering them, rather than sounding them out.
- Bingo games and lotto games, snap, pairs

Comprehension

- 'Warm up' the book first – talk about the pictures and discuss what the story might be about.
- 'Read around' tricky words
- Encourage your child to predict what will happen next
- Ask questions about the story
- Teach your child how to 'chunk' words into syllables

Supporting Spelling at home

- Explore patterns and rules – why is a word spelt the way it is?
- Identify the tricky part of the word and concentrate on this
- Use apps e.g. Squeebles
- Magnetic letters, writing in glitter, making words from playdoh – use all the senses
- Teach dictionary skills – try Barrington Stoke's spelling dictionary
- Electronic spell checkers/dictionary apps
- Mnemonics – make them visual or add an action to make them more memorable
- Reassure the child that most people find new words difficult to learn, especially subject-related ones.



Homework

- Maintain an open dialogue with school
- Establish a routine, and build in rest breaks
- Go over instructions so they are clear what they need to do – make them visual
- Chunk it – little and often is better than all in one go
- Use strengths to show knowledge – e.g. pictures and captions, photos, diagrams, infographics, mind maps



Organisation

- Give instructions one at a time
- Visual or colour-coded timetables
- Lists – activity strips
- Alarms and reminders on phone
- Post it notes on the door
- Packing own bag the night before
- Giving child ownership – choose the bag, a folder for homework, pens and highlighters
- Encourage the child to decide on a place for everything so that they can find them easily



Self-esteem

- Nurture hobbies and interests
- Help them to understand their learning difference and show you understand it too
- Ensure you maintain high aspirations for your child and support them to feel positive about their learning difference
- Encourage the child to express, at home and outside, their needs. E.g. 'it helps me to have only one or two instructions at a time'.
- Celebrate role models with similar learning differences, in the family, community and famous faces



Dr Maggie Aderin-Pocock, Space scientist



Theo Paphitis, Businessman, TV personality



Lewis Hamilton, F1 Driver

Glossary of Terms

Dyslexia	A common learning difference which makes it harder to learn to read and write fluently and accurately.
Intervention	Targeted support for an identified barrier to learning. Intervention often happens alongside the usual classroom teaching and may be for a set period of time. Many interventions are pre-designed programmes. Usually they are based on research and evidence of what works well.
Metacognition	A person's ability to plan, monitor and evaluate their own learning. The ability to think about and reflect on how you are learning.
Mnemonics	A memory aid such a rhyme or pattern of letters designed to help you remember something e.g. <i>Richard of York Gave Battle In Vain</i> for colours of rainbow.
Phonics	A structured approach to teaching reading (and spelling) which starts with the sound individual letters make and then moves onto blending sounds together to make words. This is the approach to reading used in all primary schools in England. Sounds, and the letters which represent them are taught in a certain order.