

Getting it right for every child:
Inclusive practice in Aberdeen City

Family Guide to

Reading Memory Learning
Dyslexia
Spelling Organisation

Specific Learning Difficulties
& Dyslexia in context

September 2011

This leaflet can be downloaded at
www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/dyslexia

A close-up photograph of a piece of lined paper with handwritten letters in black ink. The letters are somewhat messy and include 'A', 'a', 'B', 'b', 'O', 'H', and 'h'. A yellow pencil is visible in the bottom right corner, pointing towards the center of the page.

What is Dyslexia?

As parents/ carers you understand your child's difficulties and **you are key to their education**. It is important to talk to the school if you are worried about their progress.

Dyslexia often gets in the way of children learning to read and spell. They can struggle even if they want to learn and they have been taught well.

Possible signs of dyslexia can include:

- early speech and language problems.
- mixing up the sounds in words.
- being unable to match speech sounds with letters.
- confusion of letters and words that look alike (e.g. b/d,p/q was/saw).
- letter/number sequencing problems.
- difficulty copying from a book or blackboard.
- frequently forgetting simple facts/names.
- difficulty with writing.
- difficulties with memory & organisational skills.
- lack of confidence &/or frustration when presented with challenging tasks.

It is not unusual for younger children to have these difficulties. Concerns should only be raised if the difficulties continue and/or do not change when supported.

Dyslexia can often 'run in families' and affects more boys than girls.

Identification and Support

Identifying and assessing dyslexia is an **ongoing process of information gathering** over a period of time rather than a single test (which only assesses how a child performs on one day).

If concerns are raised about your child's progress with learning and literacy, professionals will follow a process known as the **Staged Intervention Procedure**. The summary below describes what you should expect to happen at each stage. **You and your child should be involved and included in discussion at all stages.**

Stage 1

class teachers or learning support staff will take the lead in trying to find out what your child finds difficult, how they learn and what support they need. At this stage they:

- might discuss concerns with other school staff.
- will gather information about your child's learning preference, oral and language skills, strengths and difficulties.
- might write a support plan which details ways to help your child.

Stage 2

if difficulties continue, school staff may wish to carry out more formal assessments. This may include:

- reading and spelling tests, and/or assessing their written work.
- looking at the difference between what they can write down compared to what they can say or know.
- informally consulting with an Educational Psychologist (EP). The EP would not be directly involved with your child at this stage.
- writing an **Individual Education Programme (IEP)** to record and review your child's progress and the supports in place.

Dyslexia may be identified at this point or it may be appropriate to continue to monitor your child's progress.

Stage 3 - Not all children with dyslexia will reach this stage.

However, if your child has continuing difficulties the school will seek your consent to involve the Educational Psychologist more formally, and a full consultation meeting will be held to:

- allow you, your child and everyone who supports your child to consider their strengths and the areas in which they require support, and draw up an action plan.

A follow up consultation meeting will be arranged to evaluate this plan and if necessary plan further support.

Stage 4 - a very small minority of children may require an alternative placement (i.e. Kaimhill Dyslexia Unit, Additional Support Needs Base) in order to meet their support needs. The decision to apply for these provisions will be made together with yourself, your child, school staff and the Educational Psychologist.

What might School Support Involve?

School support will be based upon individual needs and not all of these supports are suitable for every child.

- allowing your child to verbally discuss or record their learning without writing (e.g. Dictaphone, using a scribe, computer use).
- marking written work on content rather than spelling.
- helping your child understand dyslexia, how they learn best, and how they can help themselves.
- changing text size, font, paper colour or the use of coloured overlays.
- paired reading, thinking and/or writing, and cued spelling approaches.
- spelling programmes (e.g. Spelling Made Easy).
- structured reading programmes (e.g. Toe by Toe).
- ICT support (e.g. laptop, text-voice/ read-aloud software).
- multi-sensory approaches – use of ‘doing’, interactive and investigative activities, such as discussion, drawing, making and presenting.
- communication and support to parents/ carers (e.g. home/school book, guidance for homework).
- practical learning resources like number squares, key word mats, personal dictionaries and word banks.



What can you do to help?

If you have concerns about your child's learning and literacy make sure that their hearing and eyesight has been checked. If you are still worried, discuss this with school staff. It may help to put your concerns in writing.

- make a list of questions before, and take notes at meetings if it helps you.
- understand your child needs time to relax when they come home from school, as they may be more tired than other children.
- try to find positives, praise their efforts, focus on successes and strengths to boost their confidence.
- find out more about dyslexia (see LINKS section).

Communicate with school as much as possible, to share any concerns you/ your child have, or ask questions. It is important to tell school what you know about your child, their strengths, and what you feel they need support with.



How to Explain Dyslexia to your child

Usually it is helpful for children/young people who are dyslexic, and their families, to know that dyslexia is the cause of their learning difficulties and differences.

Being told they are dyslexic may come as a relief to your child, and can help them to understand why they find certain things hard.

Dyslexia need not prevent your child from being successful; individuals with dyslexia have achieved success in many walks of life. For a list of **famous dyslexics** visit:

www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/about-dyslexia/famousdyslexics.html

It is important to stress that dyslexia is nothing to be ashamed of, help is available, and **there is no reason why they should not do well.**

It is helpful to explain that dyslexia:

- is common and other people in school, and maybe even others in their class, or in the family are dyslexic.
- does NOT mean they are 'stupid', everyone learns differently and have things they find tricky and things which are easier for them.
- is just something that people are born with, but it can get better with help.



- is a way their brain prefers to learn that can make some things (like reading, spelling, writing) tricky, but can also result in strengths and other positives, like the ability to:
 - talk about their ideas
 - think 'outside the box'
 - 'see the bigger picture'
 - be inquisitive & analyse situations
 - be creative & imaginative

It is also helpful to:

- talk about something they can do well (e.g. good with animals, being popular, funny, sporty, musical or artistic).
- mention that support in class, and slightly different ways of doing tasks in school, may help them to learn how to overcome the things they find hard.

Be prepared to discuss dyslexia more than once, it is likely you will need to return to the subject over the coming years. You might find talking to other families or children who have similar issues helpful, if so, contact your **local support group** (see LINKS section).



Homework Tips

Homework can be a useful way of finishing work started in class, or to practice something which has been covered in class. However many children with dyslexia find homework frustrating and it can result in daily upset. **If certain homework tasks are too difficult for your child, or take most of an evening to do, you should discuss this with the teacher who issued it.** It might then be agreed to:

- alter the level, volume, or method of recording, of homework tasks.
- allow for longer homework 'hand-in' dates.
- include more multi-sensory tasks
(instead of reading/writing based tasks).

If there are problems with your child copying down or remembering homework tasks, again this should be discussed with their teacher and an effective communication system put in place (e.g. notes, home/ school book, email).

These general tips might help to make homework less stressful at home.

Establish a routine

- identify a regular time (daily if possible) and place to do homework. A quiet area is likely to be best.
- using a visual timetable and setting a time limit with your child might help.
- collect useful materials like paper, pens, pencils, ruler, calculator, number square, text books and keep them together in a 'homework box'.

Level of assistance

- discuss the homework before starting, making sure your child understands what they have to do.
- encourage them to discuss their ideas, perhaps make a plan, checklist or mind map (see LINKS section).
- break tasks into small steps. You may need to help them organise what they need, or how they will set out their work. It might help to practise a part with them.
- discuss and identify how they will present their work. This could be through, you scribing for them, using a computer (word processing, powerpoint presentation), dictaphone, drawings, or mind mapping.
- if it helps you could record on the homework sheet or home/school book how long the task took, or how easy/hard your child found it. This can be done easily with traffic light colours (red-hard, orange-ok, green-easy) or an agreed number scale 1-5 (5 being hard). You might also want to comment on how much support they required. Communication systems should be agreed with their class teacher.
- encourage your child to check their work against their homework instructions or plan, and to check their answers.

Do not get worried about the number of spelling errors, the content of work is more important.

Ideas for encouraging reading

- paired reading.
- make time for reading for pleasure, some children may like to access comics or audio books. (see LINKS section)

Useful Links

National contacts:

- www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk 0844 800 8484
- www.bdadyslexia.org.uk 0845 251 9002

About dyslexia:

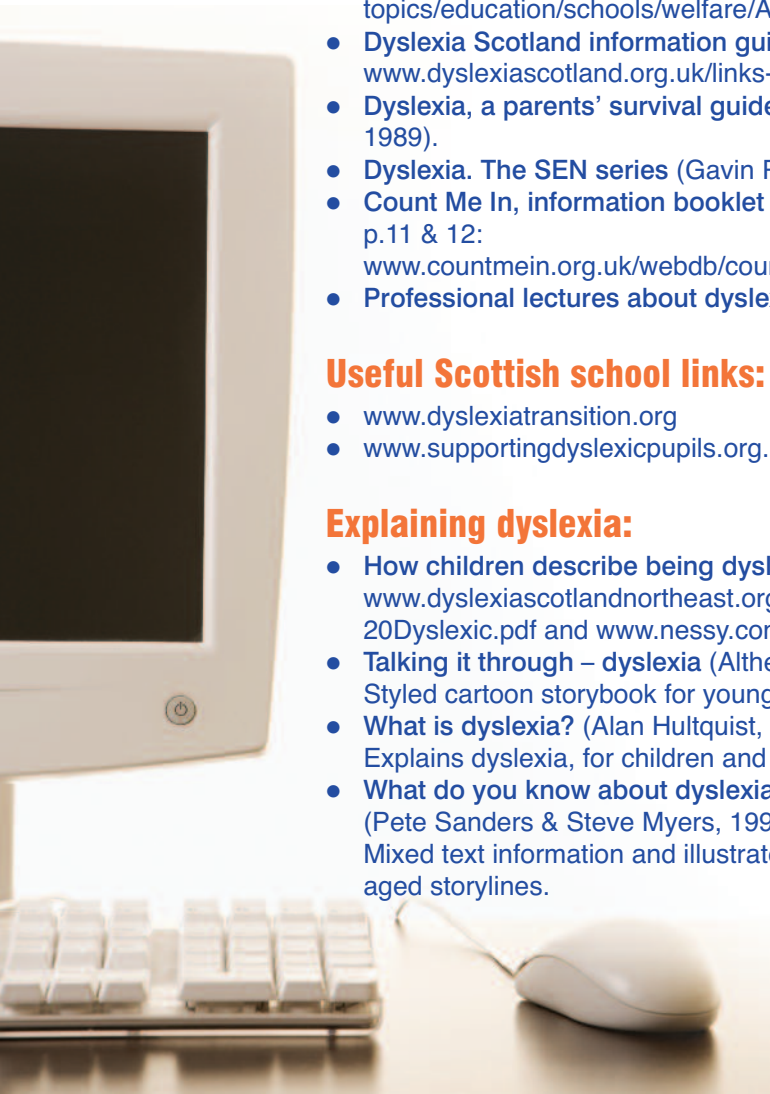
- Scottish working definition of dyslexia:
www.scotland.gov.uk/topics/education/schools/welfare/ASL/dyslexia
- Dyslexia Scotland information guides:
www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk/links-and-resources
- Dyslexia, a parents' survival guide (Christine Ostler, 1989).
- Dyslexia. The SEN series (Gavin Reid, 2011)
- Count Me In, information booklet for parents, p.11 & 12:
www.countmein.org.uk/webdb/count_me_in.pdf
- Professional lectures about dyslexia: www.dystalk.com

Useful Scottish school links:

- www.dyslexiatransition.org
- www.supportingdyslexicpupils.org.uk

Explaining dyslexia:

- How children describe being dyslexic and how to help:
www.dyslexiascotlandnortheast.org.uk/Content/Being%20Dyslexic.pdf and www.nessy.com/dyslexia/
- Talking it through – dyslexia (Althea Braithwaite, 2003).
Styled cartoon storybook for younger children.
- What is dyslexia? (Alan Hultquist, 2008).
Explains dyslexia, for children and adults to use together.
- What do you know about dyslexia?
(Pete Sanders & Steve Myers, 1996).
Mixed text information and illustrated secondary school aged storylines.



Local contacts

- **Dyslexia North East Support Group:**
www.dyslexiascotlandnortheast.org.uk
- **Aberdeen City Council Additional Support Needs:**
www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/SchoolsColleges/scc/scc_additional_support_needs.asp
- **Aberdeen City Dyslexia Practice Guidelines:**
www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/dyslexia

Legislation

- **Additional Support Needs Act:**
www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/welfare/ASL
www.enquire.org.uk
- **Information about Education in Scotland (Education Scotland):** including legislative information about Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and the Curriculum for Excellence www.ltscotland.org.uk/

Resources and approaches:

- **Assessing Dyslexia online toolkit:** www.frameworkforinclusion.org/AssessingDyslexia/
- **Products/ resources:** www.thedyslexiashop.co.uk
www.specialdirect.com/Catalogue.aspx?cid=17
- **Paired reading:** www.dyslexia.ie/paired.htm
- **Audio books:** www.calibre.org.uk * www.listening-books.org.uk
- **Study and revision skills:** www.supportingdyslexicpupils.org.uk (CD materials, section 3.5)

ICT:

- www.bbc.co.uk/schools/typing/
- www.wordtalk.org.uk
- www.ghotit.com
- www.aberdeen-education.org.uk/tasscc/
- www.rsc-ne-scotland.ac.uk/eduapps/mystudybar.php

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