

Dyslexia - A guide for parents

Staffordshire Parent Partnership Service



Definition

Most children learn to read and write easily. Others take longer and may need extra help, but do manage it. However, a few children find the process of learning to read, write and spell particularly hard.

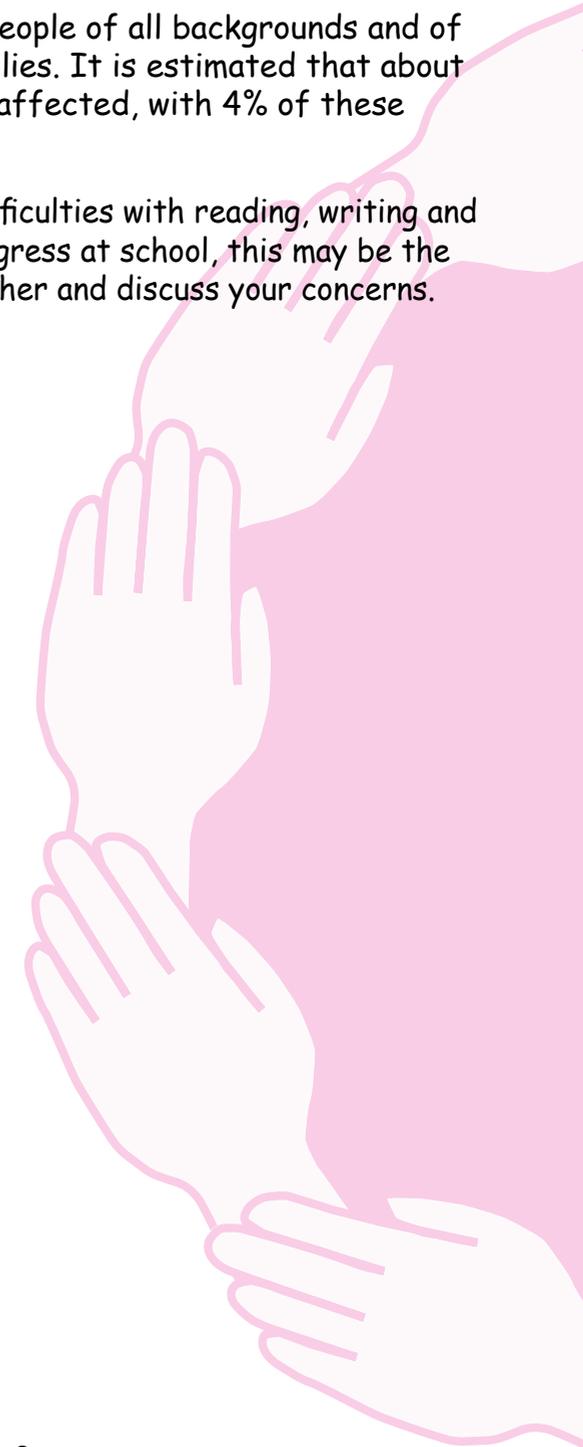
Such children may have underlying problems that affect their ability to learn these skills. This is called "dyslexia", which means "difficulty with words". It is sometimes referred to, particularly by professionals, as a "specific learning difficulty" or "SpLD".

The British Dyslexia Association uses a definition of "a difference in the brain area that deals with language. It affects the underlying skills that are needed for learning to read, write and spell." Recent research on the brain has shown that people with dyslexia process information differently.



Dyslexic tendencies occur in people of all backgrounds and of all abilities and can run in families. It is estimated that about 10% of the population may be affected, with 4% of these having severe difficulties.

If you feel that your child's difficulties with reading, writing and spelling are affecting their progress at school, this may be the time to talk to your child's teacher and discuss your concerns.



Signs

Dyslexia creates difficulties with the ability to deal with text, and sometimes numbers too. Children may find it difficult to sort out the individual sounds that make up words. This will mean that they have problems with reading, writing and spelling.

Children may also have difficulty with memory and sequencing, numeracy and sometimes in other areas too. Some dyslexic children are described as being disorganised and forgetful - they never seem to have the right books and equipment for school. Others may have difficulty with motor skills - that is, how they move their body or use equipment such as pens or scissors.

However, dyslexia is not all about difficulties. Children may be good at problem-solving, many are artistic or sporty. Every child has things they like and are good at. It helps to discover and celebrate these strengths and work with the school to develop them. It is important to keep a child's self esteem high.



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What should I do if I think my child is dyslexic?

If you are worried about your child's progress then always speak to your child's school. You may wish to make an appointment to see the class teacher or the school SENCo (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator). They may be able to reassure you that adequate progress is being made, or they may share your concerns. If you feel you would like support to talk to the school staff, you can always take along a friend or someone from the Parent Partnership Service.

Teachers in school will have experience of supporting children with reading and writing difficulties. Many will have received some training on dyslexia and some may have additional qualifications in teaching pupils who are dyslexic. They can help think about what changes may be needed in the classroom to make it easier for these children to learn.



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What can the school do to support my child?

Teachers regularly assess a child's progress to help them plan new work. If they are concerned about a child's progress the teacher will look at how they can adapt their teaching to help the child learn. This may include making small changes to the way the lesson is taught, the materials that are used, or the support given to a child during normal teaching.

Schools now identify some children who receive additional support through government-funded schemes. You may hear these mentioned. They include:

- Early Literacy Support
- Additional Literacy Support
- Further Literacy Support
- Springboard (support in numeracy)
- Wave Programmes

A small number of children need even more support (see the section on "School Action and School Action Plus" overleaf). This involves a more detailed and structured teaching approach or further changes to the teaching methods to allow them to be included in lessons.



If necessary, the school can make a referral to the District Support Team, which includes the Special Educational Needs Support Service (SENSS) and Educational Psychologists (EPs). The school will then work with them and you to draw up a programme of help and support.

If you are not sure what the SENSS team or an EP does, then ask for our leaflet "Key people involved in meeting children's special educational needs", which will explain this for you. This leaflet should be available from your child's school, or contact the Parent Partnership Service who will send you a copy. You can telephone on 01785 356921, email to spps@staffordshire.gov.uk or visit the website at www.staffordshire.gov.uk/spps

School Action and School Action Plus

If your child's difficulties are such that they are placed at School Action or School Action Plus, the school will usually set up an Individual Education Plan (IEP). You, and your child, will be involved in setting targets for this. Outside agencies and specialist support may also be asked to give their advice. Your child's progress will then be regularly monitored and reviewed. If your child is meeting the targets and making good progress, it may be possible to reduce the support. If not, the school will be able to adapt the support as necessary.

A booklet explaining School Action and School Action Plus in greater detail is available from Staffordshire Parent Partnership Service by telephoning 01785 356921 or emailing spps@staffordshire.gov.uk. The booklet is also available on our website: www.staffordshire.gov.uk/spps

The Local Authority supports every school by providing advice through the District Support Team. This team includes advisory teachers from SENSS, EPs and Education Welfare Officers (EWOs). The team can help school, and parents, draw up a programme of support. This may include:

- Looking at the school's assessment of the child
- Reviewing the strategies that have already been tried
- Helping consider how the child's needs can be met
- Thinking about how the school could adapt the learning environment
- Planning what to do next
- Drawing up an IEP
- Providing appropriate training for school staff.

Members of the team sometimes work directly with children, either individually or in small groups. Your permission will always be sought before this is done.



What help is available within Staffordshire schools?

There is now a lot of help and support available within Staffordshire schools for pupils who are having difficulties. This includes:

- **Dyslexia-friendly Schools Initiative**

In 2002, Staffordshire introduced a Dyslexia-friendly Schools Initiative.

The initiative is built on evidence that shows that more children are successful when taught using "dyslexia-friendly" teaching methods. These methods rely on encouraging children to learn using all of their senses - sight, hearing, movement, touch, etc. This multi-sensory approach has benefits for all children too. While non-dyslexic children can learn through using dyslexia-friendly methods, this does not work the other way round. In other words, dyslexia-friendly strategies help everybody, and harm nobody.



There are three level of Dyslexia-friendly status:

Entry Level (formerly Level 1)

Full Status

Enhanced Status.

At Entry level schools would be expected to show evidence that their classroom teaching uses a multi-sensory approach. Parents can be assured that even at this first level of the process, staff have engaged with training and governors have had an awareness session. Schools are verified as having achieved this by a member of the SENSS team.

Full status reflects a deeper level of knowledge with a growing and embedded approach across the school whilst Enhanced status reflects a long term commitment to embedded good practice and a holistic approach to the other difficulties that may be found alongside dyslexia.

● Dyslexia Centres

These are the specialist provision in Staffordshire for pupils who are dyslexic. There are now four Key Stage 2 Dyslexia Centres in the county for children of primary age.

The Centres provide individual education programmes to teach literacy skills to children who have been identified as having dyslexia. The pupils remain on roll at their mainstream Primary School and attend the centre for one session (either morning or afternoon) each week. Transport at the start and end of the school day is provided if the pupil lives more than two miles away from the centre. Transport is also provided to collect a child from, or return them to, their mainstream school in the middle of the day.

Numbers are kept low (six pupils each session) with two specialist staff employed to allow an individual programme to be set up for each pupil. This may include programmes to develop literacy, and to raise self esteem, depending on the needs of each child.

Close liaison between the centre, home and the mainstream school makes sure that the strategies and programmes are supported in all settings.

Your child's school can make a referral for attendance at a Dyslexia Centre. A Statement of Special Educational Need is not necessary, but your child must have a diagnosis of dyslexia. School must also provide evidence of a lack of progress despite the support they have given; this would normally be over a minimum of two Individual Educational Plans.

A child's attendance at a Dyslexia Centre is reviewed after two terms. The aim is to equip the child with strategies and skills to enable them to be successful, with appropriate support, in their mainstream school.



A leaflet "A parent's guide to Staffordshire's Dyslexia Centres" is available which explains more about how they work. For a copy, contact Parent Partnership Service on 01785 356921, email spps@staffordshire.gov.uk or check the website at www.staffordshire.gov.uk/spps

For more information on the Dyslexia-friendly Schools Initiative or the Dyslexia Centres, please contact:

Kate Plant SENSS County Manager, Stafford and South Staffs, Newcastle and Moorlands

01785 356861

cathryn.plant@staffordshire.gov.uk

Michelle Haywood SENSS County Manager, Burton and Tamworth, Lichfield and Cannock

01283 239082

michelle.haywood@staffordshire.gov.uk

or visit their website at www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education/welfareservice/SpecialEducationalNeeds/dyslexiasupport/DyslexiaParents.aspx

SENSS is now part of the wider Special Educational Needs Inclusion service (SENIS) provided by Entrust, the partner education agency with Staffordshire local authority. www.entrust-ed.co.uk

Helping your child at home

As part of the dyslexia-friendly initiative, the SENSS team produced a pack for parents of children at Key Stages 1 and 2 that contained ideas for how parents can help and support their child at home. This pack describes games and activities that will be fun, while also helping a child to build on the key skills that they need.

The pack should be available in your child's school and school staff can photocopy the activity sheets for you to use with your child. A copy is also available for parents to borrow from the Parent Partnership Service library (see below).

Some books that parents may find helpful include:

- **"So you think you've got problems?"** by Rosalind Birkett
- **"Dyslexia - how would I cope?"** by Michael Ryden
- **"Books for dyslexic readers"** is a catalogue which lists books which are easy to read but with interesting content published by Dyslexia Action
- **"Digby the Dyslexic Dinosaur"** was written in 2008 by the children at Stafford Dyslexia Centre and will be helpful for other children

These books are all in the Parent Partnership Service Book Library; ring 01785 356921 or email spps@staffordshire.gov.uk We also have a number of other books which you can borrow to help explain dyslexia to your child, as well as useful books for parents and teachers.

Other sources of help

There are a large number of voluntary organisations, businesses, charities and local support groups dedicated to dyslexia. Some are listed below. This information is provided in good faith and does not constitute a recommendation.

National Groups / Organisations:

The British Dyslexia Association

Unit 8
Bracknell Beeches
Old Bracknell Lane
Bracknell
RG12 7BW

Helpline number: 0845 251 9002
www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

Dyslexia Action

Egham Centre
Park House
Wick Road
Egham
Surrey
TW20 0HH

Tel: 01784 222 300
www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk

Dyslexia Action (previously called The Dyslexia Institute) has local assessment and teaching centres at Stone (0300 303 8351), Sutton Coldfield (0300 303 8351) and Derby (0300 303 8350).

IPSEA

This is a charity offering free advice to parents and carers on special education.
www.ipsea.org.uk
Tel: 0800 018 4016

Local Groups:

Dyslexia Association of Staffordshire (DAS)

22 Hartshill Road
Stoke-on-Trent
ST4 7QU

Tel: 01782 848 784
www.dyslexiastaffordshire.co.uk

Dig-iT (Dyslexia Information Group in Tamworth)

c/o One Stop Community centre
Kerria Road
Amington
Tamworth
B77 4EW

Tel: 0753 451 3338
Email: office@tamdyslexia@gmail.com
www.dig-itam.weebly.com
FB/Twitter: @Digitamworth

There are a large number of websites devoted to dyslexia. Again, these are not recommendations, but may be a starting point for you.

2 Simple Software	www.2simple.com
Barrington Stoke	www.barringtonstoke.co.uk
Crick Software Ltd	www.cricksoft.com
Crossbow Education	www.crossboweducation.com
Enabling Technology Ltd	www.enablingtechnology.net
Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre	www.arkellcentre.org.uk
iansyst Ltd	www.iansyst.co.uk
Inclusive Technology	www.inclusive.co.uk
LDA	www.ldalearning.com
Learning Materials Ltd	www.learningmaterials.co.uk
Multi-sensory Learning Ltd	www.msl-online.net
Net Educational Systems Ltd	www.nessy.com
REM	www.r-e-m.co.uk
SEMERC	www.semerc.com
Smart Kids (UK) Ltd	www.smartkids.co.uk
Toe-by-Toe	www.toe-by-toe.co.uk
Website for young people	www.dudeswithdyslexia.com

The law and further reading

Definition of Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Children with SEN have learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most children of the same age.

These children may need extra or different help from that given to other children of the same age.
(SEN Code of Practice 2001)

Governors must use their best endeavours to ensure that the necessary provision is made for any pupil with SEN.
(Education Act 1996 s 317 (10)(a) (amended by SENDA 2001).

Definition of disability

A child is disabled if he/she is blind, deaf, dumb or suffers from a mental disorder of any kind or is substantially and permanently handicapped by illness, injury or congenital deformity or other such disability as may be prescribed.
(Children Act 1989)

A person has a disability for the purposes of this Act if he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
(Disability Discrimination Act 1995)

A person (P) has a disability if -

- a) P has a physical or mental impairment, and
- b) the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on P's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

- c) Schedule 1 to the Equality Act sets out the tests for determining whether a person has disability and these reflect similar provisions in the Disability Discrimination Act.

The effect of impairment is long-term if it has lasted for at least 12 months, is likely to last for at least 12 months, or is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person affected.

Disability Discrimination

The responsible body of a school:

- may not discriminate in relation to admission
- may not discriminate against a pupil in the way it provides or does not provide education for the pupil
- may not discriminate by excluding a pupil

There is an additional duty on schools to make "reasonable adjustments" and to prepare an accessibility plan to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school's curriculum, improve the physical environment of the school and improve the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

(The Equality Act 2010)

Leaflets produced by Staffordshire Parent Partnership Service include:

- Information for parents/carers who have children with special educational needs - General
- Information for parents/carers who have children with special educational needs - Early Years
- Information for parents/carers who have children with special educational needs - School Exclusion

Information Packs:

- Supporting your child's educational needs - General
- Supporting your child's educational needs - Statutory Assessment
- Supporting your child's educational needs - Early Years

General Leaflets:

- Dyslexia - A guide for parents
- Developmental Coordination Disorder or Dyspraxia - A guide for parents
- Transition Review- Year 9 onwards

Copies of these can be obtained from:

Staffordshire Parent Partnership Service
14 Martin Street
Stafford
ST16 2LG

Telephone: 01785 356921 (Minicom service available)

E-mail: spps@staffordshire.gov.uk

Website: www.staffordshire.gov.uk/spps



working together for your child

Staffordshire Parent Partnership is funded by Staffordshire County Council. It operates independently as a confidential service for parents and carers of children with special educational needs.

If you, or someone you know, would like a copy of this booklet in large print, Braille, on audio-tape or in languages other than English, please contact the **Parent Partnership Service on 01785 356921.**

Email: spps@staffordshire.gov.uk

Website: www.staffordshire.gov.uk/spps

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