

Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a difficulty with learning to read and spell. It is a difference in the way that the brain processes letters and sounds, particularly recognising and sequencing letters and sounds.

Dyslexia means that the child's brain processes (deals with) the information it receives through seeing, hearing and doing in different ways than the majority of brains. Children with dyslexia often have difficulties in the following areas:

- **Verbal processing difficulties:** the child doesn't immediately understand what s/he is hearing, s/he needs time to understand what is said. They may get words muddled when they speak. Their volume control of their voice may be poor (too loud / quiet).
- **Phonological processing difficulties:** this means that they have difficulties hearing the individual sounds in words and linking sounds to letters. This has a big impact on reading and spelling.
- **Memory difficulties:** dyslexic children often have difficulties with short term memory (remembering something they have just been told) and working memory (remembering something whilst doing something else – eg. going to their table and getting their writing book out interferes with them remembering what it was they needed to write). They often have difficulty retrieving the words they need from their memory.
- **Organisational difficulties:** dyslexic children often have difficulty sequencing things – this may be with a range of things, from the order they put their clothes on to the order of letters in a word. They will often forget things they need to have with them, no matter how often parents and teachers remind them!
- **Visual processing difficulties:** some dyslexic children may experience difficulties such as the words on a page moving or blurring when they try to read them. They may also have difficulties with hand-eye co-ordination that affects writing. They may reverse similar looking letters, such as b/d or g/q.

Dyslexic children often have strengths in areas other than literacy, such as maths, art or sport. This is one of the ways in which dyslexia is diagnosed, if a child has strengths in some areas and difficulties in others.

Many dyslexic children are bright and, with appropriate help, can become successful at school and in the world (there are many examples of successful dyslexics in business and the Arts, such as Richard Branson, Jamie Oliver, Roald Dahl and Walt Disney).

There are several different types of specific learning difficulty and a child can have difficulty in just one area or in several:

- **Dyslexia** – difficulty with reading and spelling
- **Dyscalculia** – difficulty with numbers
- **Dyspraxia** - difficulty co-ordinating movement
- **Dysgraphia** – difficulty writing

Of these, dyslexia is the best understood. Dyscalculia and dysgraphia are rarely diagnosed and dyspraxia is considered a medical condition and would therefore only be diagnosed by a doctor or Occupational Therapist.