

INFORMATION SHEET – WHAT IS DYSLEXIA?

“Dyslexia causes difficulties in learning to read, write and spell. Short-term memory, mathematics, concentration, personal organisation and sequencing may also be affected. Dyslexia usually arises from a weakness in the processing of language-based information. Biological in origin, it tends to run in families, but environmental factors also contribute. Dyslexia can occur at any level of intellectual ability. It is not the result of poor motivation, emotional disturbance, sensory impairment or lack of opportunities, but it may occur alongside any of these. The effects of dyslexia can be largely overcome by skilled specialist teaching and the use of compensatory strategies.”

Dyslexia Definition, Dyslexia Action, 2006

What are the ‘at risk’ signs of dyslexia?

- Having difficulties sounding out words and mispronunciation of letter combinations (lack of phonological awareness).
- Making unexpected errors when reading aloud, missing words out or reading the wrong word.
- Taking excessive time to read and understand something.
- Spelling difficulties.
- Difficulties copying from the blackboard or in taking notes.
- Difficulties with sequencing e.g. learning times tables, days of the week or months of the year.
- Poor short-term memory e.g. remembering a series of numbers such as a telephone number, or a list of instructions.
- Confusing left and right.
- Confusing names or objects or using spoonerisms e.g. ‘par cark’.
- Finding it difficult to learn songs/nursery rhymes.
- Appearing to have misheard instructions or questions.
- Suffering stress or low self-esteem.
- Communicating well orally but poorly in written work.
- Having a blood relation with similar difficulties.

Dyslexia – the facts

- Dyslexia is a brain developmental disorder with consequences that persist from the pre-school years through to adulthood. It is a life-long condition.
- Brain imaging has shown differences between dyslexic and non-dyslexic individuals in specific areas of the language processing regions of the brain.
- It does not affect intelligence: it can occur at any level of intellectual ability.
- Dyslexia is characterised by an inability to recognise the sounds that letter combinations make (phonological awareness) which is the skill that underlies literacy development.
- Dyslexia is a dimensional disorder, which means that it can affect an individual mildly, moderately or severely. The number and type of difficulties also vary from one dyslexic person to another.
- Dyslexia occurs irrespective of race, age and socioeconomic status but those who are most disadvantaged are likely to be more affected over their lives.
- Dyslexia is the most common of the learning difficulties and affects approximately one in ten of the UK population to some degree. That represents around 1.2 million children in the UK and an average of 2 to 3 children in every classroom.
- Dyslexia is inherited - several genes have been identified as possible causative factors. If one parent is dyslexic there is a 50% chance that any of their children will inherit dyslexia.
- Unrecognised dyslexia frequently results in the loss of self-esteem, underperformance and unrealised potential.
- Early intervention is critical: international studies have shown that children at the highest risk of dyslexia can be identified as early as 5 or 6 years of age.
- A formal assessment with an educational or occupational psychologist or specially trained teacher will establish whether or not an individual has a specific learning difficulty.
- The effects of dyslexia can be mitigated but dyslexia itself cannot be reversed.
- International studies have shown that specialist, structured, multi-sensory teaching designed to meet the needs of the individual not only helps reduce the difficulties that dyslexia presents but also improves general literacy skills.
- Dyslexia often co-occurs with other conditions such as dyspraxia and attention deficit disorder.

What does Target Dyslexia do?

Target Dyslexia:

- Supports and guides parents of children who are dyslexic.
- Supports children who have been diagnosed as dyslexic or who display dyslexic traits.
- Talks about issues the children are experiencing with their literacy and school work in general, explaining why they have difficulties in certain areas.
- Focuses on student's achievements and strengths, of which there will be many.
- Raises children's self-esteem.
- Teaches spelling and literacy skills in a caring, nurturing environment.
- Fosters an understanding of the English language.
- Improves skills in reading, spelling, writing and comprehension.