

## Supporting Children with Dyslexia

### A Volunteer's Guide

#### What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia affects around 10% of the population. It is:

- Inherited and has a biological basis
- Mainly a difficulty with processing sounds in language (phonological processing)
- Most visible in reading and spelling, and may also affect comprehension, working memory and processing speed
- Not linked to intelligence
- Sometimes occurs alongside other needs such as dyscalculia or ADHD



#### Why is reading harder for a child with dyslexia?

Children with dyslexia may find that even when they are trying very hard, their reading may be slow and effortful. Many children with dyslexia find it harder to:

- Identify and retain sounds in words
- Blend sounds into a whole word quickly
- Build an automatic 'mental word bank' (they often need far more repetition/exposure)

#### What can dyslexia feel like?

Children may experience:

- Sound processing difficulties: mixing up similar sounds (e.g. ship/sheep), hearing words inaccurately (thirty/thirteen)
- Visual processing difficulties: letters may blur/move; tracking can be difficult; similar letters can be confused (b/d/p/q)
- Working memory difficulties: forgetting sounds, instructions or what has just been read
- Processing speed: taking longer to respond or decode
- Automaticity: difficulty in recognising whole words quickly and without having to think about it - 'I knew it yesterday; today it's gone'
- Negative self-perception: 'I'm tired.' 'I'm stupid.' (Often reflects frustration, not ability)

c a t  
c t a  
f b c

Letters can rotate to  
make new words

Letters can be inverted and spacing between  
words can be altered

Ouce ndonat imet here saw ad riuce audaqrincess

(Once upon a time there was a prince and a princess)

whol ovep blayin gwith thei rboobl ein the woop

(who loved playing with their poodle in the wood)

HALO  
be a ddouble, outlinin, or halo  
words. There may be a ddouble  
nd letters and words. There may i  
dlinin, or halo around letters and  
be a ddouble, outlinin, or halo an  
There may be a ddouble, outlinin  
s and words. There may be a ddouble  
halo around letters and words. Th  
outlinin, or halo around letters an  
be a ddouble, outlinin, or halo an  
There may be a ddouble, outlinin

Letters may be blurry or  
wobbly or have patches  
missing

## Practical ways to support a child with Dyslexia

- **Make reading fun**
- Keep the session calm, friendly and encouraging
- Prioritise enjoyment and confidence
- Help the child access the story and meaning
- Let the learner choose books where possible (including comics/graphic books) if in-line with school guidance
- Reassure them that reading can be hard and that's okay
- talk about the story: 'What might happen next?' 'Who is your favourite character?'
- Celebrate progress - no matter how small
- Give the word quickly if the child becomes stuck, so as not to lose fluency
- Don't make the child "sound" out the word repeatedly
- Consider using the "Echo Reading" technique to bolster the child's confidence.



## When the child gets stuck on a word

### DO

Give the word quickly and move on  
Praise effort  
Keep the story flowing  
Check for meaning after reading

### DON'T

Leave long silences  
Make the child sound out words repeatedly  
Correct every mistake  
Make reading feel like a test

## Summary

Remember, your aim is to help the child feel safe, successful and confident. It is not your role to 'diagnose' dyslexia. Please consult with the class teacher or your school contact if you have any concerns about a child's reading. Do not share your concerns with the child or write notes regarding this in the child's reading diary / record.

## Helpful links and further reading

**British Dyslexia Association** - <https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/advice/children/guidance-for-parents>

**Visual stress and dyslexia** - <https://eye-expert.co.uk/visual-stress/>

**Nessy website – educational information and resources** - <https://www.nessy.com/en-gb/dyslexia-explained>

**Dyslexia-friendly books** - <https://collins.co.uk/collections/barrington-stoke>

**Visual stress information** - <https://www.dyslexiauk.co.uk/visual-stress-irlens-syndrome/>

**NHS Dyslexia information** - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dyslexia/>

**Made by Dyslexia** - <https://www.madebydyslexia.org/>

