Recognising the Dyslexic Child – Notes for Parents (adapted by M Jameson)

Dyslexia tends to run in families. You may have a relative who has had problems, though not necessarily exactly the same problems that your child is having.

The term 'Dyslexia' comes from the Greek and means 'difficulty with words'. It is more than difficulty with reading and writing. People with dyslexia learn in a different way - many may be creative, original thinkers. While this creativity is valuable, it challenges traditional teaching methods.

Another term for Dyslexia is 'Specific Learning Difficulties'; this is generally used in official documents. Schools should deal with learning difficulties and disabilities by following a procedure laid out in the Code of Practice on Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs, recently updated. Children are placed on and can progress up the Special Educational Needs Register from the School Action stage (when they are monitored and advice is sought from the school special needs co-ordinator) to School Action Plus (when outside agencies are consulted). The school should provide support in class, in withdrawal groups or both and draw up an Individual Education Plan, outlining targets and how these are to be met.

If satisfactory progress is not made, an educational psychologist may be called in by the school to do an assessment and recommend whether the child requires a statement of Special Educational Needs. Some parents pay privately for an assessment by a dyslexia specialists or an educational psychologist.

It is important to recognise Dyslexia as soon as possible as a different approach - early on - can prevent many of the later difficulties. The dyslexic child should succeed once his or her various strengths and weaknesses have been identified and followed up with appropriate teaching across the curriculum. Teachers who use multi-sensory methods are most effective as they make use of all the possible ways to receive information.

Signs of Dyslexia – Children of nine or under will show SOME of the following:

The single most obvious sign is when a bright child is falling behind his peers in reading, writing, sequencing.

The single least obvious sign is s/he may become school phobic as a dyslexic intuitively knows this is not the sort of activity he can cope with.

- Particular difficulty learning to read, write and spell.
- Shows ingenious use of intellect in pre-guessing story line when starting to read.
- Good and bad days for no apparent reason – could read a word yesterday but not today
- Reading may 'come', but writing and spelling still hold great difficulty
- Will find school unusually tiring
- Persistent and continued reversing of numbers and letters 'b' for 'd', 36 for 63 etc.
- Difficulty telling left/right; with direction and time 'before/after', points of compass,
- Problems with telling the time; a poor perception of how time passes; yesterday/tomorrow
- May be unpunctual
- Extreme effort and sorting required for organising school day
- Difficulty with sequencing
- Difficulty with rote learning (such as multiplication tables)
- Needs to use fingers or marks on paper for calculations in number work
- Difficulty with remembering and following instructions

- Difficulty kicking/catching a ball, skipping/hopping, tying shoelace
- Appears to be bright, but 'unable to get it down on paper'
- Contributes well in class discussions but falls down in written tasks
- Poor concentration, easily distracted
- Frustration may lead to behavioural problems
- Beginning to lose confidence and have low self esteem as the gap between intellect and technical ability widens

Signs of Dyslexia
Children of twelve or under will show SOME of the following:

- Some of the earlier difficulties listed above will still be in evidence
- Continued apparently 'careless' mistakes in reading and/or a lack of comprehension
- Speed of reading comprehension seem slower than expected for his age and intelligence
- Earlier difficulties with spellings still apparent: letters may be left out, put in the wrong order, same word spelt in different ways
- Poor standards of written work, compared with oral ability
- Problems copying from the black/whiteboard
- Difficulty taking dictation
- Takes much longer than he should to do written work at home or school
- May avoid reading for pleasure as it is too difficult

Signs of Dyslexia

Children in Secondary School will show SOME of the following:

- Problems with organisation (confusion of lesson times and places)
- Forgetfulness - school materials, sports equipment, homework, appointments
- Persistent problems with writing and spelling
- May read inaccurately and have difficulty extracting information from text
- Difficulty pinpointing the main ideas in a passage and taking notes
- Problems with planning and writing essays
- Badly set out work
- Works well with computer producing work of higher calibre than when writing
- Misunderstanding of complex/compound instructions
- Tendency to miscopy number sequences, confuse telephone numbers etc.
- Extreme difficulty in learning a foreign language
- Excessive tiredness due to the amount of concentration and effort expended
- Immaturity
- Continued low self esteem and lack of confidence

Examinations

If your child is entering for an examination and has been diagnosed as dyslexic, certification of his or her difficulties can be sent by the school to the Examining Board asking for 'special arrangements'. Allowances may include extra time and in severe cases a reader or scribe. Under certain conditions a word processor may be used.

British Dyslexia Association has further information https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/