

# Dyslexia: How Teachers Can Help

Although children with dyslexia will need additional targeted support, there are many ways in which teachers can help them – and other children - in their mainstream class. Minor adaptations to day-to-day practice can make a huge difference and ensure that they are learning effectively.

## Seating and Grouping



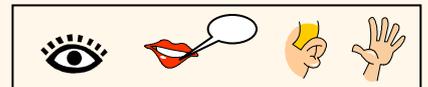
- ◆ Check that the child can see you and the board/visual prompts.
- ◆ Seat the pupil in a position where you can give help and make eye contact easily.
- ◆ Group according to the requirements of the task, not by literacy level, unless specifically teaching literacy skills.

## Information/Instructions/Organisation



- ◆ Give children 'thinking time' to process information and respond appropriately.
- ◆ Make instructions short and simple. Break them down into small manageable steps.
- ◆ Be prepared to explain things many times, in a variety of ways - individually, if necessary.
- ◆ Ask children to repeat instructions or questions to ensure understanding.
- ◆ Whenever possible, reinforce verbal information/instructions in a visual format; demonstrate tasks.
- ◆ Present information in a range of ways, e.g. pictures, flow charts, diagrams.
- ◆ Label equipment and display prompts and reminders about what to do, where to find things, useful words, etc. Leave them in the same place and refer to them often.
- ◆ Provide desk-top mats/jotter inserts - alphabet, word banks, prompts and personal targets.
- ◆ Provide - and demonstrate how to use - practical aids (calculator, number/tables squares; magnetic/wooden letters).

## Memory



- ◆ Use a multi-sensory approach (visual, auditory and kinaesthetic), so that children are using as many channels as possible to ensure that information is being absorbed and stored.
- ◆ Teach a range of strategies to help children to learn letter-sounds/spellings, including:
  - ❖ 'Look, Say, Trace, Cover, Write, Check' and mnemonics.
  - ❖ Tracing over letters / words (using fingers/a variety of media) on a range of different surfaces (textured materials, laminated boards, own hand/partner's back, etc.)
- ◆ Provide opportunities for children to be active – rearrange/sort cards; play a game; move to a rhythm whilst counting, practising multiplication tables, learning the alphabet, months of the year, days of week, etc. (reinforced by visual cues, if possible).

## Written Work



- ◆ Limit writing demands and give plenty of time to complete written work.
- ◆ Ensure that keyboard skills are taught - encourage the child to use a word-processor.
- ◆ If possible, develop alternative assessment methods as a means of demonstrating what has been learnt, e.g. illustrations, oral questioning, allowing the child to dictate answers.
- ◆ Provide planning formats/writing frames/cloze activities.
- ◆ Teach children how to use mind maps, spider webs, bullet points, flow charts, ICT software e.g. 'Clicker 5', 2Simple, 'Kidspiration', 'Inspiration'.

## Marking



- ◆ Mark work in as positive a way as possible - give constructive feedback. Praise for effort, not only for achievement – the child has had to work extremely hard.
- ◆ Mark for content, rather than spelling, technical skills or presentation. If you have to mark a piece of work in a child's absence, use two colours – one for content and another for spelling and presentation.
- ◆ Minimise the amount of errors you mark/highlight. Give suggestions on how to avoid these in the future.
- ◆ Lightly underline or use a dot (not a cross or red pen) to highlight spelling errors – only mark words that have been taught.

## Reading



- ◆ Provide coloured matt transparencies or reading markers.
- ◆ Use pastel shades of paper (cream, if possible) for notices, handouts and tests.
- ◆ Ensure that reading resources are age-appropriate and match the child's reading ability. Books in audio format are an excellent way to access texts.
- ◆ Encourage children to use keywords, colours and images to help them absorb and remember information. Highlight the main points in text.
- ◆ Provide key vocabulary for new topics - flash cards, word mats, labels, posters/word walls.
- ◆ Ensure that the child is comfortable reading aloud – if possible, provide opportunities to rehearse/prepare beforehand.
- ◆ Introduce paired/shared reading activities for additional practice, to improve fluency, aid understanding and build confidence.

## Copying/Reading from the Board



- ◆ Limit the amount of reading/copying from the board. Provide print-outs or photocopies, if possible.
- ◆ Use coloured chalk and markers for board work. Try some of the following strategies:
  - Write alternate lines in a different colour.
  - Number or mark the start of each line clearly or write numbers/marks (e.g. a coloured dot) at either end of each line.