

13. Dyslexia

Pupils with dyslexia experience difficulties in learning aspects of literacy and, sometimes, numeracy. They often have weak short-term and working memory, and slow processing skills. Pupils with dyslexia may also have poor sequencing skills, experience difficulties with audio and/or visual perception, spoken language and motor skills.

Pupils with dyslexia may demonstrate some or many of the following signs:

- Appear intelligent, but find it difficult to write anything down on paper
- Have areas in which they excel, particularly drama, art, sport and debating
- Clumsiness
- Act as the 'class clown' to compensate for what they see as their academic failure
- Become withdrawn and isolated, sit at the back and not participate in class
- Be able to do one thing at a time very well, but unable to remember a list of tasks
- Looked 'glazed' when language is spoken too quickly
- Find school exhausting as a result of having to put so much effort into learning
- Be bullied

Dyslexia affects individual children differently. It can take a long time for a pupil to be diagnosed with dyslexia, which can be mild, moderate, severe or profound. Therefore, it is important not to wait for a diagnosis before taking action if you think one of your pupils may be dyslexic.





What can you do as a teacher to support pupils in your class who may have dyslexia?

- Make sure that all of the pupils in your class feel valued and important, including those who experience difficulties or struggle with learning.
- Encourage and motivate all of your pupils to do the best they can.
- Have high expectations for all of your pupils' ability to contribute in class, but be realistic and reasonable about your expectations for their writing and reading.
- Explain things many times and in different ways – sometimes to the whole class, to a smaller group, as well as individually to any pupils with dyslexia.
- When you give instructions, use few and accurate words and use simple sentences. Allow time for the meaning to sink in. Check that all pupils have understood – ask some individual children to explain the instructions back to you or another child.
- Guide pupils about how to work through tasks systematically. Take time to teach skills in a calm, systematic and repeated regular routine.
- Try to go through written work together with the pupil. Make sure you first highlight what the pupil has done right. Then identify some of the main mistakes and concentrate on those. Avoid overwhelming the pupil by correcting every single mistake.
- While you are looking at the pupil's work, try to find out the reasons for any mistakes – give the pupil the chance to explain what they have done and what they find difficult.
- Watch out for signs of low confidence and self-esteem.
- Provide opportunities for all of your pupils to show their skills and knowledge. Pupils with dyslexia will often be good at creative subjects, or can talk very confidently. Giving them opportunities to do what they are good at will help to build pupils' confidence and self-esteem.
- Remember that pupils with dyslexia have to work harder than other pupils. Look out for fatigue, and allow them to rest by doing tasks that they feel more comfortable with.
- Be generous with praise and encouragement when a pupil is successful, as well as when they are trying hard, even though their finished work is not so good.

Reference:

Adapted from: UNESCO (2015), *Teaching Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Settings*, Bangkok: UNESCO

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001829/182975e.pdf>

Acknowledgements

Grateful acknowledgement is made to the following sources:

Extracts from *Teaching Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Settings*: Teaching Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Settings. Published in 2015 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization 7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France and UNESCO Bangkok Office. This publication is available in Open Access under the Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO (CC-BY-SA 3.0 IGO) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/igo/>)

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