

## 6. SUPPORTING DYSLEXIA AND LITERACY



**Extract**

### OVERVIEW

In this module, we will cover the following topics:

- What is dyslexia?
- Signs that tell you a child may have dyslexia
- Supporting children with dyslexia

### INTRODUCTION

This module provides an overview of some of the issues relating to dyslexia. You'll learn what dyslexia is, and learn about the key areas of difficulty experienced by children with dyslexia.

You'll look at the signs that tell you a child may have dyslexia, and examine how dyslexia is assessed.

Finally, you'll consider different ways of supporting children with dyslexia, including:

- synthetic phonics methods
- structured teaching and learning
- multisensory methods
- the use of technology

### WHAT IS DYSLEXIA?

Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty that affects language development. Individuals with dyslexia have some degree of difficulty in one or more of the following areas:

- Phonology (working with the sounds of spoken words)

- Short term memory (especially relating to visual symbols and signs)
- Sequencing and organisation

These difficulties can cause problems with literacy skills such as:

- relating sounds to letters
- sounding out words
- spelling
- reading
- writing

Some dyslexic individuals also experience difficulties with:

- spoken language
- memory
- organisation
- maths

There are different degrees of dyslexia, and individuals can be affected in different ways and require different levels of support. The level of support needed will depend on several factors including:

- the degree of dyslexia
- the strengths and skills of an individual
- any other specific learning difficulties an individual may have

Dyslexia can sometimes occur alongside other specific learning difficulties such as:

- Dyspraxia (impairment of the organisation of movement)
- ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)

Approximately 10% of the population has some degree of dyslexia – that's around 6 million people in the UK. Of these, around 2 million individuals are severely affected.

Dyslexia is a congenital lifelong condition. This means that it is present at birth and throughout life.

The exact causes of dyslexia are not known. Evidence suggests it may be linked to genetic (hereditary) factors that cause problems in the language processing areas of the brain.

## **SIGNS THAT TELL YOU A CHILD MAY HAVE DYSLEXIA**

The signs of dyslexia will be different for individual children. This section will give you an idea of some of the signs that can help indicate a child may have dyslexia. It's important to remember that a child without dyslexia can also show some of these signs.

If a parent or carer has any concerns about their child they should contact their health visitor, doctor, teacher or SENCO.

If a professional working with a child in a school has any concerns about a child they should follow their school policy. This usually involves raising concerns with the appropriate staff member (e.g. the SENCO), who will contact the parents to discuss the matter.

## **WHAT TO LOOK FOR**

Difficulties with reading may include:

- difficulties sounding out words
- difficulties recognising phonemes and rhyming
- confusion with letters that look similar
- reading a word on one page, but failing to recognise it on another
- difficulties with time and tense
- reading very slowly
- having poor concentration when reading

Difficulties with writing may include:

- putting letters and/or numbers the wrong way round e.g. b for d, 'era' for 'are', 12 for 21
- spelling a word several different ways in one piece of work
- poor handwriting
- having a poor standard of written work compared with oral ability
- producing written work with lots of crossed out or trialled spellings
- difficulties copying accurately
- writing very slowly / tiring quickly when writing / writing very little
- difficulties organising written tasks (e.g. stories, essays)
- problems sequencing (e.g. in forming sentences)

Other difficulties may include:

- processing spoken language slowly
- having difficulties remembering a list of instructions
- poor short term memory
- difficulties with maths
- confusing left and right
- having poor motor skills
- exhibiting behavioural issues that relate to work avoidance or frustration
- low self esteem

## **ASSESSMENT OF DYSLEXIA**

It's important that children with dyslexia are recognised and officially assessed and diagnosed as early as possible because this will give them access to appropriate support.

Early intervention is important because difficulties with literacy skills are much easier to overcome at an earlier age, and if difficulties are not addressed effectively they can affect learning in all other areas.

Most children with dyslexia are diagnosed between the ages of 5 and 9, when difficulties with reading and writing become apparent at school.

Screening tests can be used to indicate the possibility or probability of dyslexia. These tests can be computer based or teacher led. If a screening test indicates a likelihood of dyslexia, then a full diagnostic assessment can be arranged to identify the precise nature of dyslexia and other related difficulties.

Full diagnostic assessments can be arranged by schools or parents. They are performed by certified teachers specially trained in diagnostic assessments or chartered educational psychologists who have specialised in learning difficulties. Assessments include:

- An examination of background information such as family history and any relevant developmental issues.
- Literacy and numeracy tests that assess reading, writing, spelling, general language development, vocabulary, and number skills.
- Cognitive tests that assess visual and spatial skills, reasoning skills, logical thinking, memory and speed of processing.

Assessments will identify the degree and nature of dyslexia, strengths and areas that need to be developed.

Recommendations will be made that can be used to develop a tailored programme of support.

## **SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH DYSLEXIA**

The vast majority of children with dyslexia are educated in mainstream schools with some level of support. With effective support, dyslexia is not a barrier to learning or success.

Children with mild dyslexia are likely to be supported through the use of suitable teaching strategies and resources.

More severe forms of dyslexia are likely to be supported using additional targeted interventions which may include:

- Support from teaching assistants in class (one to one or in small groups)
- Support from teaching assistants outside class (one to one or in small groups)
- Guidance to parents on how to provide additional support at home
- Support from a SEN teacher outside class (usually in small groups)
- Use of specialist computer programs or technologies

## SYNTHETIC PHONICS METHODS

Synthetic phonics is a way of teaching reading and developing literacy skills. Synthetic phonics methods are used in most early years educational settings, and are also used to improve the literacy skills of children at all ages.

English words are made up of different **phonemes** (the smallest identifiable speech sounds) which can be represented by **graphemes** (letters or groups of letters).

Synthetic phonics involves teaching phonemes and graphemes in an organised manner.

Phonemes and their graphemes are taught one at a time at a quick pace (around one a day). As soon as the first few phonemes and graphemes have been taught, simple words are introduced that only contain the learned phonemes and graphemes.

For example, once s, a, t, i and p have been learned the pupils can be introduced to words such as sat, tap, pat, sit, tip, pats, taps, and sips.

Pupils are encouraged to sound out words using the sound of the phonemes (this is called blending), and they are encouraged to both read and write words made from the phonemes and graphemes they have learned so far.

As a child's confidence grows and they learn more phonemes and graphemes, longer words can be introduced.

The first and main strategy for reading unknown words is sounding out and blending.

More difficult, irregular words are introduced gradually and in an organised way.

Irregular words are still sounded out through blending, but the irregular parts are noted.

### **EXERCISE 6.1**

Do some further research into phonics and make a list of graphemes that are used to represent English phonemes.

For each grapheme write a word next to it that illustrates the sound the grapheme represents, e.g. sh (ship), p (pen).

*An example answer can be found at the end of the module*

## REMINDER

Have you completed the following exercises?

- Exercise 6.1
- Exercise 6.2
- Exercise 6.3

Tick each box when you have completed the exercises.

## SUMMARY

1. You know what dyslexia is.
2. You know the key areas of difficulty experienced by individuals with dyslexia.
3. You know some of the signs that tell you a child may have dyslexia.
4. You understand how a child with dyslexia is assessed.
5. You have considered different methods of supporting pupils with dyslexia.
6. You know what the synthetic phonics method is.
7. You understand what structured teaching and learning is.
8. You know what multisensory methods are.
9. You know about different technologies used to support dyslexia.

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Well, that's the end of the extract. If you want to know more, you'll have to register!

We look forward to welcoming you on to the course..