

## **Secondary Hints and Tips**

### **Handy Hints for Secondary School Teachers**

We have all come across the situation. A young person struggling with aspects of reading, writing, spelling and perhaps numeracy. The learner who is struggling, despite clear ability in specific aspects of the curriculum. For some there may be slight improvement in time, but for many there will not. Your experience tells you that there is something different about this learner, that he/she needs specific support for learning in order to meet obvious potential. Normal provision is not helping. So, what is their problem? Who can help? How do you know whether or not a particular adolescent may be dyslexic? What should you look for?

Dyslexia is a combination of abilities as well as difficulties. It is the disparity between them that is often the give-away clue. The person who, despite certain areas of difficulty, may still be creative, artistic, sporting or orally very able and knowledgeable. However, alongside these abilities, will be a cluster of difficulties - individual for each person.

#### **Written work**

- Has a poor standard of written work compared with oral ability
- Has poor handwriting with badly formed letters
- Has neat handwriting, but writes very slowly indeed
- Produces badly set out or messily written work, with spellings crossed out several times
- Spells the same word differently in one piece of work
- Has difficulty with punctuation and/or grammar
- Confuses upper and lower case letters
- Writes a great deal but 'loses the thread'
- Writes very little, but to the point
- Has difficulty taking notes in lectures
- Difficulty with organisation of homework
- Finds tasks difficult to complete on time
- Appears to know more than can be committed to paper

#### **Reading**

- Is hesitant and laboured, especially when reading aloud
- Omits, repeats or adds extra words

Reads at a reasonable rate, but has a low level of comprehension  
Fails to recognise familiar words  
Misses a line or repeats the same line twice  
Loses his place - or uses a finger or marker to keep the place  
Has difficulty in pin-pointing the main idea in a passage  
Finds difficulty with dictionaries, directories, encyclopaedias

### **Numeracy**

Finds difficulty remembering tables and/or basic number sets  
Finds sequencing problematic  
Confuses signs such as x for +  
Can think at a high level in mathematics, but needs a calculator for simple calculations  
Misreads questions that include words  
Finds mental arithmetic at speed very difficult  
Finds memorising formulae difficult

### **Other areas**

Confuses direction - left/right  
Has difficulty in learning foreign languages  
Has indeterminate hand preference  
Has difficulty in finding the name for an object  
Has clear processing problems at speed  
Misunderstands complicated questions  
Finds holding a list of instructions in memory difficult, although can perform all tasks when told individually

### **Behaviour**

Is disorganised or forgetful e.g. over sports equipment, lessons, homework, appointments  
Is immature and/or clumsy  
Has difficulty relating to others: is unable to 'read' body language  
Is often in the wrong place at the wrong time  
Is excessively tired, due to the amount of concentration and effort required

**If you see a cluster of difficulties together with abilities in specific areas, the young person may be dyslexic.**

Your next step should be to consult the school Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) immediately and be given appropriate and immediate support.

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