

## What is Dyslexia?

The word Dyslexic is based on two Greek words, 'Dys' meaning 'difficulty' and 'lexic' meaning 'with words'. Dyslexia is not a disease, it is a condition that you are born with, a difference in the way the brain works, a difference that will be present throughout your life. Dyslexia mainly affects reading and language skills and the effects can range from mild to very severe. The sooner dyslexia is spotted, the sooner suitable learning and coping strategies can be employed to minimise the effects of the condition.

## Dyslexia Symptoms

Research shows that the classic indicators of dyslexia are:

### - Working Memory or Short-Term Memory

People with dyslexia tend to have poor working memory, making some tasks like taking messages or mental arithmetic very difficult.

### - Phonological Processing Skills

People with dyslexia tend to have poor phonological processing abilities; this is the process of breaking words down into their component sounds and then understanding their meaning.

There are other possible differences including poor development of automatic skills, slower processing skills and problems connected with visual processing.

### - Other indicators

- Slow hesitant reading
- Difficulty in understanding written material
- Frequent re-reading, losing the place when reading
- Poor spelling
- Difficulty with organisation or time management, often mixing up dates and times
- Difficulty sequencing thoughts clearly

## Indications of Dyslexia

If a child has several of these indications, further investigation should be made. The child may be dyslexic, or there may be other reasons. This is not a checklist.

### 1. Persisting factors.

There are many persisting factors in dyslexia, which can appear from an early age. They will still be noticeable when the dyslexic child leaves school.

These include:

- Obvious 'good' and 'bad' days, for no apparent reason,
- Confusion between directional words, e.g. up/down, in/out,
- Difficulty with sequence, e.g. coloured bead sequence, later with days of the week or numbers,
- A family history of dyslexia/reading difficulties.

## **2. Pre-school.**

- Has persistent jumbled phrases, e.g. 'cobbler's club' for 'toddler's club'
- Use of substitute words e.g. 'lampshade' for 'lamppost'.
- Inability to remember the label for known objects, e.g. 'table, chair'.
- Difficulty learning nursery rhymes and rhyming words, e.g. 'cat, mat, sat'.
- Later than expected speech development.

Pre-school non-language indicators.

- May have walked early but did not crawl - was a 'bottom shuffler' or 'tummy wriggler'.
- Persistent difficulties in getting dressed efficiently and putting shoes on the correct feet.
- Enjoys being read to but shows no interest in letters or words.
- Is often accused of not listening or paying attention.
- Excessive tripping, bumping into things and falling over.
- Difficulty with catching, kicking or throwing a ball; with hopping and/or skipping.
- Difficulty with clapping a simple rhythm.

## **3. Primary school age.**

- Has particular difficulty with reading and spelling.
- Puts letters and figures the wrong way round.
- Has difficulty remembering tables, alphabet, formulae etc.
- Leaves letters out of words or puts them in the wrong order.
- Still occasionally confuses 'b' and 'd' and words such as 'no/on'.
- Still needs to use fingers or marks on paper to make simple calculations.
- Poor concentration.
- Has problems understanding what he/she has read.
- Takes longer than average to do written work.
- Problems processing language at speed.

Primary school age non-language indicators:

- Has difficulty with tying shoe laces, tie, dressing.
- Has difficulty telling left from right, order of days of the week, months of the year etc.
- Surprises you because in other ways he/she is bright and alert.
- Has a poor sense of direction and still confuses left and right.
- Lacks confidence and has a poor self image.