

Removing Dyslexia As A Barrier To Achievement

Dyslexia is:

“A specific learning difference which, at any level of ability, may cause unexpected difficulties in the acquisition of skills”

In the mainstream classroom, dyslexia is a specific learning difference which becomes a difficulty when ignored, dismissed or badly addressed.

Simply a difficulty with words or language which can be in the form of; spelling, writing, speaking, reading, processing, organisation and/or memory.

Accompanying weaknesses may be identified in areas of speed processing, short term memory, sequencing and organisation, auditory and or visual perception, spoken language and motor skills. It is particularly related to mastering and using written language, which may include alphabetic, numeric and musical notation. Some have outstanding creative skills, others strong oral skills while some will have no outstanding talents, however all will have strengths.

What is the learning difference?

Dyslexic learners are often imaginative and creative lateral thinkers who develop original solutions to problems. They may be skilful in design and construction, IT etc, often seeming to know how things work without reading the instructions. (Those who set up the Wii in a flash on Christmas day!).

One learning difference maybe the ability to “think in pictures” Some having talent in art, often with a strong visual preference in terms of learning and processing information.

Many dyslexic learners are sociable and verbally able and may enjoy drama and sport. Typically they will demonstrate ability and appropriate interest in science, technology or current affairs, often with a general knowledge to match. Some learners will be curious, eclectic and creative, identifying links and patterns unclear to others. They can create the big picture despite elements being missing or not quite appropriate. However we know other learners with similar ability.

Famous dyslexics include Steve Redgrave, Jamie Oliver, Richard Branson, Walt Disney, Agatha Christie, Winston Churchill, Leonardo da Vinci but to mention a few. Dyslexic learners may tire easily as they are having to work five times harder than their peers just to keep up so be patient and supportive.



There are scientifically researched learning differences in

- Patterns of brain activity
- Genetic make up
- How the cerebellum and corpus callosum function
- The development of neurons
- Neural connections
- Processing styles
- Brain reaction to phonological and visual information

The nature of Dyslexia may cause unexpected problems with the acquisition of basic literacy and or numeracy skills, requiring children to be taught in the way they learn in order to minimise problems and maximise potential.

A priority is to recognise and compensate as teachers for possible problems with working memory, information processing and hearing the sounds and syllables in words.

At Priory we school we recognise children learn in different ways and as teachers aim to harness these learning styles and preferences to optimise teaching and learning.

As teachers we need to recognise that a child may have a learning difference which will respond to a change in methods, materials or approaches. These can be dealt with through the **carefully differentiated curriculum plans**. These learners do not function well in a didactic environment as they often think faster than they read, write, spell or do number work. Requiring encouragement to present evidence of their learning and understanding in their preferred style.

Our aims at Priory are to support children to approach their learning in a calm, confident way, where the most vulnerable learners are set up to succeed. All children are encouraged to work in their comfort zones for much of the time, forming a secure platform of strength and competence. When challenged they are able to respond with confidence because of their previous success. This emotional security will manifest itself in the positive way children approach assessments.

At Priory we recognise the importance of being learning friendly, seeking empowerment for all pupils to be the best they can be. There is an old saying the two most valuable things we can give our children are...

The 4 key problem areas for dyslexic learners **(Weaknesses)**

1. Visual sequential working memory

Remembering what you see, in the order in which you see it, long enough to do something with the information.

A weakness in this area contributes to **poor reading accuracy and identifying spelling errors**

2. Auditory sequential working memory

Remembering what you hear, in the order in which you hear it and being able to hold it long enough to make an appropriate response.

Following instructions may be a challenge, as will chunking complex words into syllables in order to decode.

3. Phonological awareness

Being able to hear sounds in words and to associate the sounds with appropriate letter combinations. **The ability to break down and rebuild words (segmenting and blending).** Spelling and/or reading complex jargon words are often challenging to dyslexics, but if they can clap the rhythm, stretch the word, the parts become clearer and can often be written in a way which if not correct, is close enough not to be a barrier to communication.

4. Information processing

The ability to process information and present it in an appropriate form. This information may need to be **remembered** from recent instruction or **retrieved** from previous knowledge and then **selected and ordered** to perform a task. Using a climate graph to write a holiday postcard about the weather requires information processing to select order and present the graphical information in narrative form.

Support Strategies

Support strategies which work in the classroom for very busy, often non specialist teachers alongside the needs of every child in the class. There are three interconnecting elements of safe learning that all teachers can provide **Climate, Relationships** and **Opportunities**. If we develop these then pupils will feel that it is okay to take learning risks, and begin to unlock their potential heightening their **self-belief**.

Climate

We can provide a safe learning climate where all learners feel safe to take risks and possibly make mistakes. Failure is seen as part of the learning process rather than the end product of an unsuccessful learning experience.

Relationships

We can nurture safe relationships between ourselves and pupils, and among pupils in the class. These relationships are founded on respect for individuals and belief in their potential.

Opportunities

We can create opportunities which take into consideration the needs of dyslexic learners building upon their strengths to weaken their dyslexic weaknesses.

Dyslexics often struggle to believe positive things about themselves as learners. This leads to **low self esteem and self-confidence**. We know this affects learning and dyslexic difficulties get worse under stress and negative self belief limits performance. Emotionally these pupils may have feelings of **failure** in class, **isolation**, being **overwhelmed** or **lack motivation**. We can support our dyslexic learners when we nurture safe learning.

Emotional security

Fear has a dramatic effect upon learning triggering a fight or flight response where the learner experiences stress and learning becomes more difficult. In the classroom dyslexic pupils often fear failure and humiliation

Minimising the fear of disapproval

- ❖ Let the child know we understand/appreciate the problem
- ❖ Communicate its OK to be dyslexic, be aware of your body language and tone
- ❖ Use the language of possibility
- ❖ Use effective strategies consistently
- ❖ Mark for success, ticking words spelt correctly, tick the number of correct letters in a word etc

Minimising a fear of failure a key to raising self esteem

- ❖ Use the language of success. Responding to I can't do it" with Perhaps you can't do it yet. Try this... Acknowledging current difficulties in a positive way. Phrases like "It is a bit tricky-are there any bits I can help you with?" Offer help with phrases "may I help you? Or would it help if..."
- ❖ Create error free learning situations while confidence develops
- ❖ Stress mistakes are cool because they mean that somebody tried.
- ❖ "there is no failure only feedback" Be aware a pupil may be having a 'dyslexic day' when nothing seems to be going right making learning even more of a real challenge. Accepting the work at face value and involving the learner in the marking and feedback is supportive, which bits do you like/disappoint you, think I will be pleased with/worried about? Would it help if I gave you a sentence to get you started?, If you don't mind lets leave this bit and move onto ...

Initially this does take time but the consistent use of these responses reinforces the message of no failure only feedback and learning.

Another message to relay is nobody is perfect all of the time, next time I want you to try... Dyslexic learners can get hung up on success and then find themselves paralysed with fear, or decide if they don't join the race they cannot come last.

The fear of not being able to keep up

- ❖ Differentiate by task or outcome as appropriate (all must, most should, and some could)
- ❖ Organise a scribe (buddy training)
- ❖ Set up shared writing- pupil, does some of the writing
- ❖ Encourage the use of mind maps, story boards flow charts and mark for content and ideas.
- ❖ Never dictate passages!
- ❖ Minimise copying from the board replace with individual copy

Minimising a fear of reading aloud

- ❖ Invite all to read but build in the right to pass
- ❖ Promise not to ask certain pupils to read aloud in front of the class in return they read to you.
- ❖ Allow pupils to record reading on tape
- ❖ Set up paired reading/group/choral speaking.

This right to pass approach gives the reluctant reader dignity and control within their class that they often later surprise themselves by saying 'I think I will today'

Minimising a fear of tests

- ❖ **Call them quizzes**
- ❖ **Give choices**
- ❖ **Show me you know** Using a mind map, flow chart, bullet points, storyboard, or paragraphs.
- ❖ **I bet you can't challenges** (remember 5 interesting facts about ...) or 8/12 items on a shopping list. Providing they use their knowledge of how they learn best with a realistic challenge these children can rise to the challenge, and recall their learning weeks and months later.

Information overload

Dyslexics often experience problems with their short term memory. A particular challenge is remembering what is seen or heard, in the correct order, long enough to do something with it. Once described by one learner as like a net with different sized holes I never know which bits of information will be caught and stored.

- Make instruction clear and concise, deliver in one or two chunks (if a dyslexic day less than one chunk may be manageable). Use hook on symbols/pictures
- Give one sound bite at a time- as processing time is required
- Ask pupils to repeat/paraphrase to a buddy, TA/Teacher
- Be prepared to repeat instructions. Thank pupils for asking for help/clarification give praise for asking (stress reducing)
- Be specific "write on the line" is better than "take care with your writing"
- Home work instructions are best given in a written copy form to stick into folders.
- Allow dyslexics to record instructions

Differentiation

- Differentiate by task
- Differentiate by outcome
- Differentiation by learning style and preferences

Differentiation by task

This is about curriculum access and supporting the learner to operate effectively in less favoured styles of information processing. It is important to remember weak basic skills do not imply weak reasoning skills.

'all **must**'- the core element

The task should be aimed at the top but access for all via oracy
Weakest may take all lesson to finish or becomes homework.

'**Most should**'- first extension activity

Oracy activity to start off the next activity

Report back after first part before moving on/ finish for homework

'**Some could**'- second extension activity

High level extension activity- aimed at top thinkers (to include some dyslexics). Organised as for the first extension with a higher challenge, material from a higher age range or key stage.

This leads pupils to 'best past the post', moving onto further work when the **quality** of work dictates even if finished quickly. It is important to consider the range of tasks, and ensure that all pupils have equal access as some learners cannot finish enough tasks to qualify, i.e. research on the web as an extension.

Differentiation by outcome

The theme of the lesson will be presented to all pupils then group activities will take the task forward. The tasks will match the learners preferences, abilities and skill levels. However work can simply be differentiated on quantity of work or better still the form in which the evidence will be presented e.g. Paragraphs, through to story boards to mind maps, with learners having a choice of style or being told. It is important all learners provide evidence in a range of styles over time. This gives pupils self belief as they produce work they are happy with and soon they are ready to take on the next challenge.

Differentiation by outcome through learning styles and preferences

The self-prescribing approach
The key question

“What is the best way for you to show me what you know?”

Dyslexics often think much faster than they write therefore need to be empowered and not penalised for their current problems with recording. Peer tutoring/buddy systems can be effective with a little training. This is best organised so one learner dictates to the other, often leading to discussion and amendment however ensure ideas and language patterns are accurately recorded. To pair children look at their strengths and weakness in terms of lateral thinkers, creative thinkers as well as recording skills.

Shared writing

Best used for the reluctant writer best used with an adult.
Negotiation is key, with the adult striking a bargain regarding the amount and nature of writing each will do.

You write a line I write a line

I'll do first 2 lines you do the rest

You do the first 2 lines tell me the rest and I'll write it

I'll write the first paragraph and you the next

I'll write ideas on post its/strips you organise and I'll write up
or you can paste into your book

Scaffolding, fear of not being able to start

A flexible way of providing support for less confident writers as the support structure can be gradually dismantled as the learner builds firm foundations and generally is able to work independently with an odd wobble.

- ❖ Always give paragraph/ sentence starters
- ❖ Give key words
- ❖ Use a writing frame
- ❖ Provide a mind map skeleton
- ❖ Ask a buddy to write the opening sentence
- ❖ Ask a pupil to dictate the opening sentence to a buddy who writes it in
- ❖ Ask the pupil to make a plan and talk it through
- ❖ Present information on strips to be reordered and then copied/stuck in their book.

Be prepared to accept work presented in different forms

- Mind map
- Story board
- Flow chart
- Bullet points

Mind map

The mind map supports learners to put their own words and ideas into compartments assisting in organising ideas. This can then be used as a writing skeleton. Who, what, where, when, how, and why questions. Often too many ideas can stop you getting start "I can't get started" often means I don't know which idea to use. An effective way to support planning is to work through strengths which for dyslexic learners often means a strong visual and kinaesthetic element.

First level <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Picture○ Label○ Speech bubble	
Second level Space for 1 or 2 sentences with scribe/buddy	Third level Independent 1 or 2 sentences
Fourth level A sequence of paragraphs and how to start them	Fifth level A sequence of paragraphs

A basic storyboard (above) on A3 requires the learner to remember organise and order information to a significant level and provides concrete evidence of thinking in pictures. They can be made more of a challenge by requesting speech bubbles or labels as appropriate.

They can then move up level requiring further sentences. When confident the pupils will be ready to take the short step from cartoon to plan their free writing. Although this approach appears to limit options, in reality it frees off the thinking and allows a focus on what is to be said rather than how to start.

Multi-sensory Learning VAK OR KAV

The most successful learning occurs when we use as many different senses as possible. These methods are effective in strengthening the weaker skills of students with dyslexia and can be used in all subjects.

Visual - Seeing and observing

Pictures, graphs, colours, diagrams, mapping, visualisation film

Auditory - Hearing and saying

Talking, listening, audio recording, music singing, chanting, rapping, discussion, explaining

Kinaesthetic-Feeling and movement

Handling items 2D and 3D representations in clay wood sand plastic etc. tracing with finger, making models, sorting, making representations in movement (dance drama).

As many as 37% of learners will be **kinaesthetic** in a class. They need to get their hands on what they are learning and are effective when processing information on flash cards, post-it notes and strips of paper. They tend to remember what they do. They prefer linear logical ways and are the fiddlers! Refer to brain gym and don't be afraid get up and walk or make an exercise routine while learning new information.

Auditory/linguistic learners are traditional learners (34%) and are suited to didactic teaching. They remember what they hear and learn well when they have to explain ideas to others. "Tell your partner what you have to do, how you did that..." are valuable tasks for all learners developing memory.

Visual/perceptual learners (29%) need to draw diagrams, charts cartoons etc to lock in their learning. Visual skill can be developed by actively teaching pupils to process information

using highlighting and colour coding. Concept mapping is another important learning tool.

Logical/ Mathematical are step by step thinkers who prefer to work in a structure. Processing information with flow charts is often preferred once the skill is taught. Information on post-its and strips of paper supports this development opening up multi sensory opportunities across the curriculum.

Musical Rhyme and rhythm, learners are sensitive to rhythm and rhyme and are influenced by the emotional content of their learning. Children often pick up the lyrics to a song quickly. Also early language and EAL is most effective when done through rhyme and song. This learning can be supported by requesting learners to look for rhythm and rhyme in words, phrases to present work in the form of a rap or tune, background music or beats i.e. heart rate to assist in knowing about the heart can aid learning.

Interpersonal/social Enjoy working with others working well in groups. Pair share scenarios develop these skills important for the workforce "a good team player". Cooperative learning and peer tutoring activities strengthen skills and groups develop skills to ensure all learners take part.

Intrapersonal/intuitive are motivated by their personal drive and are clear of their abilities and strengths. Often private people who preferring to work in their own ways, persistent and motivated. However they can feel vulnerable in group situations. To take control of learning is important allow time to reflect and consolidate ideas before sharing.

Emotional feel safe and secure and have a clear idea of their balance of strengths and weaknesses. Positive self esteem seems common as is the ability to learn from failure, without becoming discouraged. All learners need to work from their

comfort zone s before being challenged to move out.
Developing a passion for learning usually begins from a platform of emotional security and success, working from within a comfort zone and if necessary in an error free learning environment. Your best is good enough for me both in spoken and body language.

Our challenge as teachers is to develop skills and techniques across the range of preferences empowering learners to move from areas of strength to areas of weakness with confidence and certainty.

So how best to teach

Teach all learners as if they are dyslexic. Use a multi-sensory mind friendly approach, based on an understanding of learning styles and preferences to develop confidence, self esteem and emotional well intelligence.

Classroom strategies

- ❖ Find out learning styles and preferences
- ❖ Point out the task in terms of processing, use clear language/instructions
- ❖ Use clear words and phrases
- ❖ Positive and affirmative language saying what to do
- ❖ Use language of success and possibility
- ❖ Teach a range of information processing strategies to a high level so learners can select and use techniques well.
- ❖ Work effectively within comfort zones set goals to work in less comfortable ways (inside out)
- ❖ If a work sheet is to be used make it maximise thinking and minimise writing
- ❖ Suggest alternatives to record and demand different ones throughout the year.
- ❖ Invite learners to choose appropriate learning styles, question choice
- ❖ Set targets for the next lesson

Further information

Websites

<http://www.dyslexia.uk.net/>

www.beingdyslexic.co.uk

www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk

www.support4dyslexia.co.uk

Books

The dyslexia friendly tool kit by Neil Mackay

Teaching children with dyslexia by Philomena OTT

Dyslexia pocket book by Julia Bennett

A final note if you have a pupil in your class you think maybe, or is dyslexic and you'd like further advice on how to move forward with an assessment or in making appropriate provision you can do the following

- ❖ Speak with the school SENCo (Special Needs Coordinator) and or the Literacy or Assessment Coordinator

- ❖ Read the dyslexic friendly school pack material (see the SENCo)

- ❖ See the further information list, some books are in school for reference and further suggested reading materials

The impact of dyslexia is real. It affects many millions of children and adults around the world in the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills and in the way they function in every day life.

By reading this pack you are well on your way to supporting all learners

Many thanks
Michelle Neal (Priory school SENCo)

Reading

Dyslexics often have tracking problems which may mean they lose their place within a line, ext or paragraph. Using a finger, line marker, and clear tinted line guide may help please see SENCO for individual resources. Children at Priory are able to access reading through specialised books which are designed for the struggling, under-confident, or disengaged reader at key stage 2 level, these are stored separately to class collections. When providing work typing is best read at a minimum of 12 point or 14 point font size. Underlining can make text blur for some dyslexics. To emphasise a word us bold or a change of colour. Always us lower case as capitals are all the same height and it is less easy to distinguish the letters.

The best fonts used for dyslexics are Arial, Comic Sans, Trebuchet, Verdana and Tahoma. Special fonts include Sassoon and Sassoon primary www.clubtype.co.uk APhont a typeface specially designed for low vision readers. www.aph.org Another specially designed for people with dyslexia is Read Regular www.readregular.com when planning text on a page keep it uncluttered and limit the possible visual disturbances by incorporating space. Spacing should be 1.5 and it is best if unjustified.

Paper some dyslexics experience visual disturbance made worse by black on white paper. Therefore at Priory we encourage the use of buff paper. Ensure the paper is not too thin and previous page work is not showing through to visually distract learners. **Matt** paper or laminated writing does not create a reflection making reading easier.

Dyslexic learners have difficulty checking their work and identifying their own mistakes. You can however train pupils to proof read more efficiently, using **COPS**.

Capitalisation

Omissions

Punctuation

Spelling



This can also be used as a marking strategy-mark for only **one** thing at a time so as not to overwhelm the pupil in feedback.

Many dyslexics have difficulty reading to obtain information one way into a text is to first

SURVEY THE TEXT: Get a feel for the text, read the blurb look at pictures diagrams graphs etc.

QUESTION: Set a question, goal aim. Sometimes it will be simple does this text tell me about volcanoes in Italy?

READ: the text and underline keywords, use highlighters.

RECALL; the question, refer back to the aim of reading the text. Can your question be answered,. Recall information read.

REVIEW: Consider what has been read. Look back over it.

Spelling

A variety of techniques can be used to teach spelling however the key is to teach your learners and their parents to make the method as multi sensory as possible.

Many dyslexics appear to be visual-kinaesthetic learners who need to be able to see and touch what they are learning. They often prefer top down preferring the whole word to part word and restoring to chunking and syllabification as a measure of last resort. Phonics is unfortunately a bottom up method working from part to whole, and auditory based.

Good phonics will encourage every learner to communicate in writing, whole word/whole phrase reading is the key. These learners need word attack strategies in order to decode unfamiliar words.

There is a disparity between spoken, read/written vocabulary and a dyslexic friendly teacher will find ways to move the learner on. CVC words can be difficult for the visual learner to learn as they all look the same. Making words like hospital easier to spell than saw or was.

Dictionaries will not be a helpful resource as it requires alphabetic, phonic and sequential knowledge as well as a good working memory available to use. However the ACE dictionary (LDA) alongside a standard diction can be useful for some. This is a hand on approach requiring the use of letters and the learner to have knowledge of letter sounds and symbol correspondence with the ability to clap the rhythm of a word. Give a word, clap the syllables now make and break.

Make and break

- ❖ Make the word - using all the letters given
- ❖ Break the word - into syllables
- ❖ Make the word - sound out the syllables
- ❖ Break the word - jumbling letters
- ❖ Make the word - saying letter names during the rebuild

Magical spelling-based upon the understanding of eye movements and visualisation of words to teach spelling (further information is available from www.magicalspelling.com).

LSCWC Look Say Cover Write Check

Look means using as many senses as possible to take in a word: Drawing around the word shape, highlighting easy bits of the word, tracing the spelling, copy out and place in the room to come back to, identify familiar unfamiliar clusters ck. Focus on prefixes/suffixes e.g. *acceptable*. Using a white board to practice, print and cursive script.

Say the word looking at it, sing the word, letters or sounds, say unusual parts Wed-nes- day. Saying and tapping syllables, use different voices, parrot whisper, policeman, romantic etc.

Cover means cover the word to try to visualise or hear it.

Write Keeping it covered try and write it, Try using different coloured pens, folded pieces of paper, big letters whiteboards. Uncover the word and check.

Check Uncover the word and check try moving the two versions together using a **VAK** technique.

Letter reversals

Dyslexics often have trouble reproducing letters and numbers such as b, d, p, q 5 and 2. This is related to visual memory and the ability to flip letters in the mind's eye. BED left hand b right hand d, magic glasses make ok with both hands to make glasses.

Multi sensory mnemonics

These are helpful for learning odd spelling words and linking words to meaning.

ISLAND =an island is land

BECAUSE= Big Elephants Can't Always Use Small Entrances

Combined with VAK , by acting it out , say it, do it, feel it think it write it in the air, on a partners back, joined up, trace it sing it, laugh it and remember it!

Some helpful responses to how do you spell...?

1. Just give the word- so as the learner is not interrupted in their flow.
2. You have a go and I'll help- encourage chunking
3. Can you clap it- or stretch it into syllables
4. You spell and I'll write- reduces overload, looks right encouraging proof reading.
5. Is it using familiar letter combinations? (Thraxs chart)
6. Give words that rhyme- word families
7. Look for words within words- de part ment.

Numeracy

$$1+5 \quad 2=3$$

Some dyslexics but not all may have difficulty with aspects of math. Issues involve directional, sequencing, reading the language of maths and symbols but a few!

DYSCALCULIA This is a term used to describe a specific learning difficulty with maths but not language.

It is important that the multi sensory approach is used in Maths teaching for dyslexics. They need to work with concrete objects to grasp abstract concepts. Make sure they have access to straws, pencils, cubes, Cuisenaire rods etc.

Music

Difficult aspects of music include the language of music, timing, laterality, sight reading, and notation, directionality, sequencing forwards and backwards, theory and recall difficulties. Further information is available online at www.abrsm.org/resources/libretto/libretto0501.pdf an article by Sheila Oglethorpe.

ICT as a tool

There are a range of resources available on the market for assisting dyslexic pupils. All classrooms at Priory have recordable equipment in the form of CD/tape decks, speak-eazi microphones, cameras and access to lap top computers. This is a good time to consider are you using them effectively in your lessons for your dyslexic pupils. In addition we are able to provide specialist touch type programmes for individuals.

Handwriting

A b c d e f g h I j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

Dysgraphia is the term used to refer to a specific difficulty with handwriting.

Dyslexic learners often produce handwriting that is hard to read.

Handwriting focuses on the movement used to create letter shapes. A kinaesthetic approach is vital for younger pupils. Air writing, washing up bottles with water on the playground, water and large paint brushes.

Hand tracing- Trace the letters with the finger onto the palm of the hand. Ascenders on the fingers, body of the letter on the palm and descenders on the wrist. Improving handwriting be specific.

- ❖ Parallel ascenders, descenders
- ❖ Uniform spacing between words, letters
- ❖ Body of letters sitting on the line
- ❖ Correct letter formation
- ❖ Joining of particular letters
- ❖ Slope of writing