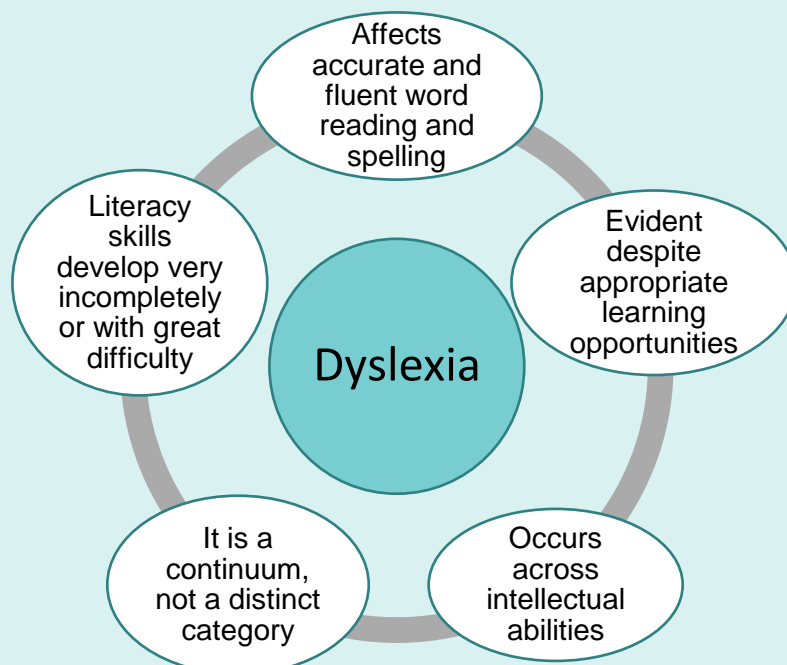


Dyslexia

Overview description

For the purposes of this toolkit, dyslexia* is understood by combining two common definitions from the British Psychological Society (1999) and the Rose Report (2009):



The British Dyslexia Association have created a video to share information about what dyslexia is, how it can impact different people and share the message of how common it is: <https://youtu.be/11r7CFIK2sc>

Currently it is thought that between 5 to 20% of the population have dyslexia, which means in every class of 30 there are roughly 1 to 6 students with dyslexia. Yet, there is a significantly lower percentage of people who have received a diagnosis of dyslexia as there are no clear cut-off points where an individual can be said to have dyslexia and it is difficult to assess without an agreed definition.

Therefore, a good indication of the severity and persistence of literacy difficulties can be gained through **Assessment Over Time**. This process is also referred to as **Response to Intervention** where the aim is to ascertain rate of progress in response to a well-founded intervention. This is accepted as the most effective way of identifying literacy difficulties, informing intervention, determining the rate of progress and signalling appropriate resourcing needs. The way in which this translates into practice, both nationally and in Manchester, is through the **Assess – Plan – Do – Review** (APDR) cycle detailed in the SEN Code of Practice (2015).

The interventions that are recommended for those who are experiencing literacy difficulties do not differ from the recommendations given for those with a dyslexia diagnosis. The same strategies and intervention work for individuals with and without a diagnosis.

Research evidence has found that, in comparison to peers who have typical literacy skills, those who struggle often require more individualised, more structured, more explicit, more systematic, and more intense support.

Key Messages

Simple View of Reading (Gough and Tunmer, 1986)

The definition above proposes that dyslexia primarily involves difficulty with reading and/or spelling at the word level. However, reading comprehension is a complex process that involves both word recognition and understanding the language used. Therefore, there are 4 main skills needed to be an effective reader:

1. Phonological skills / phonemic awareness (hearing and manipulating sound structures within words)
2. Sight vocabulary (words that cannot be decoded; they make up over 50% of all written material)
3. Phonic skills (initial letter sounds, blends, digraphs etc)
4. Vocabulary (to understand what is being read)

Factors which can positively impact on the development of these skills include (but are not restricted to):

- Environmental (e.g. appropriate learning opportunities, good school attendance, adults around us valuing the importance of reading);
- Emotional (e.g. motivation to read, confidence and good self-concept in literacy);
- Cognitive challenges (e.g. adequate visual and language processing speed, average working memory and phonological awareness skills);
- Speech and language (e.g. good vocabulary knowledge, average expressive and receptive language skills);
- Physical and sensory (e.g. good vision and hearing, good fine motor skills)

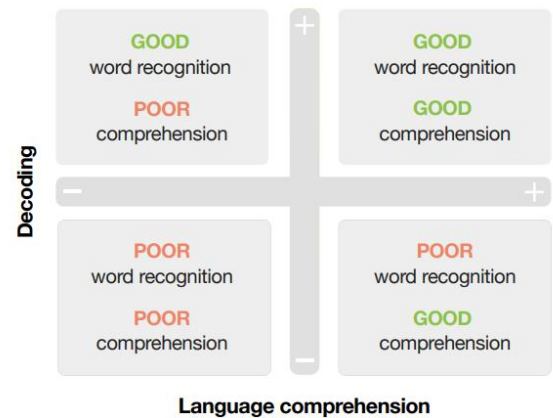
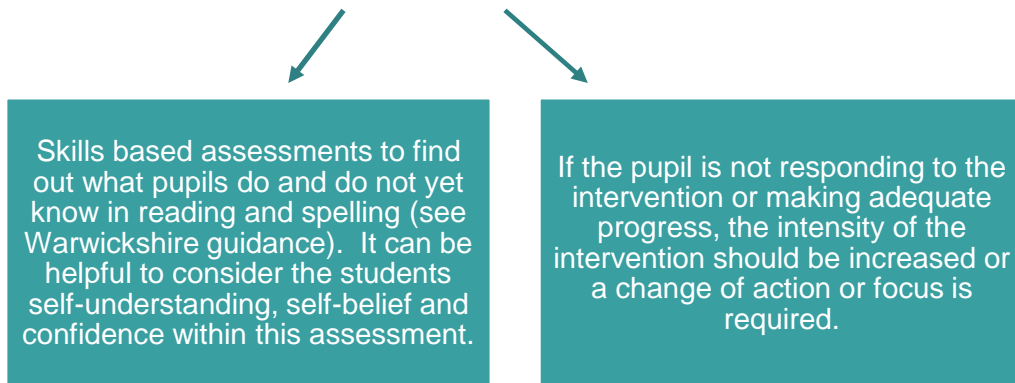


Figure 2: 'The Simple View of Reading' (Adapted from Gough, P. B. and Tunmer, W. E., 'Decoding, Reading, and Reading Disability;')"

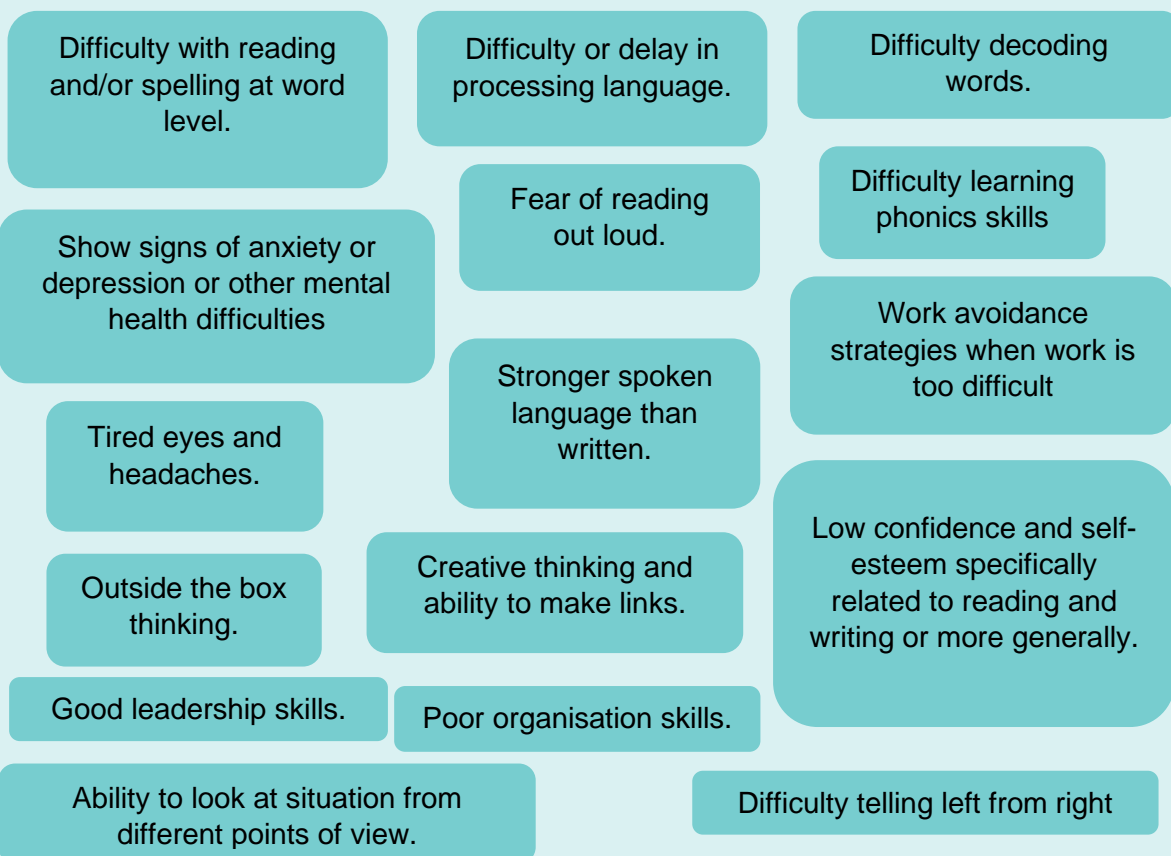
Assessment

Assessment of literacy difficulties is a process and must happen over time. It should consider an individual's strengths and needs through the APDR cycle. It is only through this process that the focus and level of intervention can be confidently identified:



It is generally agreed that the earlier literacy difficulties are identified and supported, the better chances children will make good progress and feel better about themselves as a reader/ speller.

It is also important to hold in mind that children with literacy difficulties and dyslexia can display a range of skills and difficulties and these should be considered within an assessment. Examples of characteristics dyslexics might display include (but are not limited to):



References: (Gough & Tunmer, 1986), (Eide & Eide, 2011), (Alexander-Passe, 2015)

Intervention: Universal Strategies

Effective support for dyslexic students is underpinned by an inclusive and person-centred ethos. By ensuring each student understands their diagnosis it will allow for them to express what they feel might help them within school/college.

- Ensure that all staff are aware of the different traits that dyslexics can display and that behaviour is communication.
- Speak to the student and explore how they understand their diagnosis and what they feel would help.
- Break work down into clear manageable steps to prevent students from being overwhelmed.
- Although more commonly used for students with Irlen syndrome, many dyslexics find coloured paper, coloured exercise books, coloured PowerPoint slides and coloured pens helpful for concentration. The contrast of black and white can often feel overwhelming, removing the brightness by adding a light pastel colour can increase concentration and reduce tired eyes and headaches.
- Ensure the students have a trusted adult who can regularly check in and support the student as required and provide adaptations as required
- Engage in communication with parents about what is happening in school/college and at home.
- Work with the student to explore ways in which they will feel confident to complete reading activities in the classroom (E.g. reading out-loud).

Intervention: Targeted Strategies

The psychological model underpinning the delivery of interventions is drawn from the Instructional Hierarchy (Haring and Eaton, 1978). This helps us to understand how skills develop, become automatic and applied across contexts and situations:

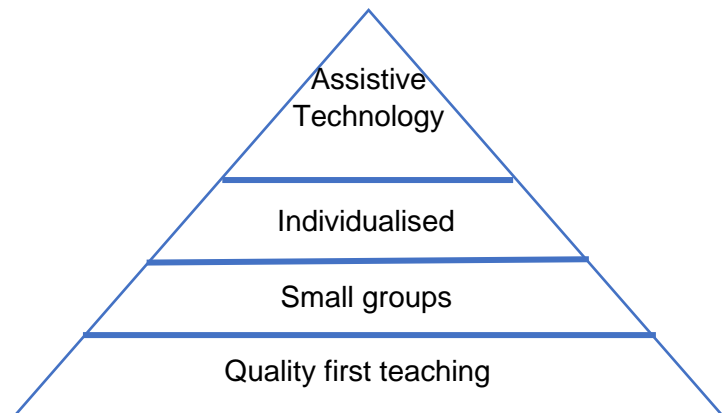
- 1. Acquisition**
 - a. Children are introduced to new skills, knowledge and concepts
- 2. Fluency**
 - a. Children become fluent in their use of new skills, knowledge and concepts
- 3. Maintenance**
 - a. Children can maintain their performance levels without further direct teaching
- 4. Generalisation**
 - a. Children learn to use their skills knowledge and concepts in different contexts
- 5. Application**
 - a. Children apply their skills to a wide range of contexts

This forms the basis of the most effective teaching strategies and interventions:

Strategy / Approach	Example
<p>Distributed practice i.e. short, frequent teaching sessions (little and often) that incorporates practise of identified skills.</p>	<p>Daily focussed intervention for 5 minutes is more than effective one 25 minute session per week.</p> <p><i>Practise makes progress!</i></p>
<p>Teaching skills to promote accuracy, fluency and generalisation by ensuring that there are sufficient opportunities to practise skills before moving on.</p>	<p><i>Fluency</i> - ask the child to read known words at speed and give opportunities to practise these.</p> <p><i>Generalisation</i> – use of ‘real books’ that include a diverse reading experience rather than over-reliance on highly decodable text. Pupils are more likely to accurately read and understand the meaning of words when the context in which the word is seen is more diverse.</p>
<p>A structured approach using task analysis that promotes the teaching of one new skill at a time, ensuring that skills are taught in a hierarchical sequence which includes mixing old and new learning e.g. Precision Teaching.</p>	<p>Target reading of certain words <u>or</u> sounds rather than reading and spelling together.</p> <p><i>Interleave</i> tasks (e.g. teach 2 new spellings and then go over words already learnt rather than 10 new spellings each week and no recap).</p>
<p>Teach more frequently used skills first.</p>	<p>Focus on the 100 most common words first (which account of over 54% of written English).</p>
<p>Direct instruction to introduce and practice skills.</p>	<p>Model-Lead-Test (my turn – read together – your turn) when teaching or correcting errors.</p>
<p>Ensure pupils are informed about the purpose of interventions, their achievements and rate of progress. This aligns with metacognitive skills which has a strong evidence base for supporting learning (see Education Endowment Foundation guidance on Metacognition and Self-Regulated Learning).</p>	<p>Explain why you are teaching the first 100 words and involve them in monitoring their progress (e.g. showing the number correct on a graph each time).</p> <p>Using motivating books and literature of their choice (some may benefit from high interest, low reading age books such as those from Barrington Stoke).</p> <p>Specifically praising effort over outcome.</p>
<p>Peer assisted learning</p>	<p>Paired Reading and Co-operative Learning</p>
<p>Utilising appropriately trained teaching assistants to implement well-founded interventions (see Education Endowment Foundation guidance on Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants)</p>	<p>Training and support to deliver Precision Teaching (for reading) and Reciprocal Teaching (for comprehension) across the school</p>

We can also consider this pyramid to identify the level of support needed. Following careful assessment, we first assess their response to quality first teaching. If adequate progress is not made (adequate being defined as a result of in-depth assessment and SMART outcomes), we can move up the hierarchy, as each step provides a more personalised and intensive form of intervention.

Some difficulties will be so severe and persistent that assistive technology is needed. This is even more important at secondary school, as ongoing frustrations with literacy can lead to reduced motivation, reduced confidence and at times, disengagement with literacy or learning. Examples include Clicker, dictation software, exam pens and read aloud software.



It is important to note that it is helpful to consider interventions to support self-esteem, confidence and self-identity. It is important for all students to understand their strengths/ what they are good at, their areas of needs/ what they are not as good at and what strategies they can use to support them to manage on a daily basis. This is applicable for all students but especially for students who have a particular difficulty or a diagnosed condition.

Interventions around self-understanding of a young person's identity are essential for young people to understand their place in society and have the confidence to be proud of their differences. It also reduces stigma often associated with an area of need: this stigma can impact how some young people view themselves. By helping young people understand their strengths and needs it will hopefully help to break down the stigma and allow each young person to accept who they are and that being different or finding something difficult does not need to be a barrier to their lives and chosen future.

Evidence base and 'myths' in dyslexia

Research has shown us that:

- Conclusions cannot be made about the cause of slower progress in acquiring literacy skills, and therefore on an appropriate intervention, on the basis of their cognitive profile. This discredits the 'discrepancy model' which has frequently been used in the past to diagnose dyslexia (which stated that children whose level of reading is significantly worse than would be expected on the basis of their intelligence could be considered as dyslexic).
- Cognitive interventions (e.g. computerised memory and 'brain' training measures, coloured lenses and working memory interventions) have yet to demonstrate effectiveness in improving reading skills.

- Beyond the general use of such activities as part of an overall educational programme, research does not indicate the use of specific multi-sensory approaches as key to improving the literacy skills of struggling readers (Brooks, 2007).
- The Rose Report identified that screening tests for dyslexia are unreliable. It is better to identify children at risk of literacy difficulties by closely observing and assessing their response to literacy activities compared to their peers.

The 'What Works' document provides an overview of the most current evidence base for specific interventions (see link below).

Top
Tips!

For Early
Years

In the early years children often show variations in the acquisition of literacy skills and this does not necessarily mean that they will have specific learning difficulties as they mature.

To support literacy skills in the early years, it is important to create meaningful, motivating and exciting opportunities and experiences to develop a love of reading and writing. For example, sharing books daily – those with attractive pictures, enticing storylines, sensory materials and repetition of language will help to engage young children and create interest.

The Book Trust recommend some of the 'best books for engaging children in print from birth – 5 years:

<https://www.booktrust.org.uk/books-and-reading/our-recommendations/best-books-for-0-5s/>

Children in the early years require a range of activities and ways of making marks before they write. Activities that build up fine motor skill and control are crucial in children later being able to have the strength and ability to hold and manipulate a pencil.

The following link gives some great reasoning and ideas to build up meaningful mark making and writing activities for early years children:

<https://www.family.co/blog/mark-making-early-years>

Post-16

Top
Tips!

It is important to consider that often at this stage students are required to study more intensively, to do larger amounts of reading, to produce longer, more complex pieces of written work and to independently organise their study and revision schedules.

Therefore, it is important to teach the student strategies to manage their dyslexia including problem solving skills, planning and organisational skills.

- Teach meta-cognitive skills i.e. 'knowing about knowing'. This is a useful website that might help: <https://www.highspeedtraining.co.uk/hub/metacognition-in-the-classroom/>
- Teach organisational skills: at this stage, it is often expected that students will have developed good organisational skills, however this may not always be the case. For example, teach them to use colour coding/pictures/diagrams, demonstrate how to use planners and filing systems and use IT short cuts such as recording devices, apps etc.
- Continue to teach reading techniques and study skills: encourage students to take time to read and read small chunks at a time, provide digital copies or photocopies of key documents, use assistive technology such as speech to text and text to speech and provide relevant word lists and demonstrate the use of these.
- Provide exam access arrangements: ensure that these are up to date and that students have appropriate opportunities using the access arrangements before their exams.

Useful Resources and Links

Assessment

Warwickshire Educational Psychology Service have devised a comprehensive skill based assessment that assesses fluency and generalisation of critical reading skills - [Warwickshire-EPS-Literacy-Guidance-October-2020-5.pdf \(netdna-ssl.com\)](https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/eps/literacy-guidance-october-2020-5.pdf)

Milton Keynes Dyslexia policy also lists a number of assessment tools that can be used by staff in school to identify literacy difficulties - <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/dyslexia-policy>

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The Reader Self-Perception Scale (Henk and Melnick, 1995) - [Henk_Melnick_1995_RSPS.pdf \(pbworks.com\)](https://www.pbworks.com/f/Henk_Melnick_1995_RSPS.pdf)

Intervention

[What-Works-5th-edition-Rev-Oct-2016.pdf \(interventionsforliteracy.org.uk\)](https://www.interventionsforliteracy.org.uk/what-works-5th-edition-rev-oct-2016.pdf)

Paired Reading guidance - [Paired Reading – Peer and Adult | HIGHLAND LITERACY](#)

Precision Teaching guidance - <https://www.edpsyched.co.uk/blog/what-is-precision-teaching-guide-for-primary-school-teachers>

Reciprocal Teaching - [Reciprocal Teaching | Classroom Strategies | Reading Rockets](#)

[Language and literacy | Education Endowment Foundation | EEF](#)

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/metacognition>

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/teaching-assistants>

Books

The Dyslexia Advantage – Eide and Eide

Dyslexia and Mental Health – Neil Alexander-Passe

The Gift of Dyslexia – Ronald D Davis

The Little Book of Dyslexia – Joe Beech

The Illustrated Guide to Dyslexia and It's Amazing People – Kate Power & Kathy Iwanczak Forsyth