



Dyslexia – What Can Be Done?

RANi Need to Know Guides | Diagnosis Advisory sheet 3

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Understanding, Identifying and Supporting Children and Young People with Dyslexia

What is Dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty (SpLD) that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent **word reading and spelling**. It is a lifelong condition that is **neurological in origin** and **not linked to intelligence**.

People with dyslexia often have strengths in other areas such as creativity, problem-solving, design, and practical skills.

Key features include:

- Difficulty with phonological awareness (understanding the sounds in words)
- Trouble with decoding (sounding out) unfamiliar words
- Problems with spelling and writing

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- Slow reading speed or poor reading fluency
- Short-term memory difficulties

Some individuals may also struggle with:

- Organisation and time management
- Sequencing and processing speed
- Learning times tables or following multi-step instructions

Recognising the Signs of Dyslexia

Dyslexia can look different from person to person, but some common signs include:

Early Years:

- Delayed speech or language development
- Difficulty learning nursery rhymes or clapping out syllables
- Confusion over direction (left/right)
- Struggles to remember sequences (days of the week, alphabet)

Primary School:

- Struggles to read fluently or sound out new words
- Poor spelling and handwriting
- Avoiding reading or writing tasks

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- Slow pace in written work or copying from the board
- Difficulty remembering instructions

Secondary School and Beyond:

- Limited reading stamina
 - Poor organisation or timekeeping
 - Difficulty with essays or written exams
 - Strong verbal ability but weak literacy performance
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How is Dyslexia Identified?

Dyslexia is usually identified through a combination of:

- Observation and screening tools in school
- Assessments by **Specialist Teachers** or **Educational Psychologists**
- Detailed analysis of reading, spelling, phonological skills, memory, and processing speed

A full diagnostic assessment is not legally required to provide support, but it can help clarify strengths and weaknesses and inform provision.

What Support is Available?

Children and young people with dyslexia may be classed as having **Special Educational Needs (SEN)** and can receive a range of support.

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1. SEN Support in School

This may include:

- Small group or 1:1 literacy intervention
- Use of structured phonics-based programmes (e.g. Nessler, Toe by Toe, Alpha to Omega)
- Spelling and memory strategies
- Additional reading support
- Use of laptops, speech-to-text, or coloured overlays

Support should follow the **Assess, Plan, Do, Review** cycle and be regularly monitored.

2. Reasonable Adjustments

Under the **Equality Act 2010**, children with dyslexia may be considered disabled and are entitled to reasonable adjustments, including:

- Extra time in exams
- Use of readers or scribes
- Assistive technology
- Adjusted homework or classroom expectations

3. Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans

If the impact of dyslexia is severe or progress is very limited despite SEN support, you can request an **EHC needs assessment**. An EHC plan sets out long-term outcomes and legally binding provision across education, health, and care (if relevant).

Helpful Strategies at Home

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Parents and carers can also support children with dyslexia at home by:

- **Reading together regularly** using dyslexia-friendly books (larger font, tinted paper, shorter chapters)
- Using **audiobooks** and **text-to-speech tools** (e.g. NaturalReader, Voice Dream)
- Practising **spelling with games** (e.g. Wordshark, flashcards)
- Encouraging **touch typing** (TypingClub, Nessy Fingers)
- Breaking tasks into **short, manageable steps**
- Using **visual timetables**, colour coding, and checklists

Emotional support is also key — reassure your child that dyslexia does not mean they are less intelligent and highlight their **strengths and successes**.

Can Schools Refuse Support Without a Formal Diagnosis?

No. A **formal diagnosis is not required** for a child to receive support. Schools have a legal duty to provide appropriate SEN support where a child is experiencing difficulty accessing learning.

Strengths Often Associated with Dyslexia

Many individuals with dyslexia demonstrate:

- Creativity and imagination
- Strong verbal communication

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- Innovative thinking
 - Emotional intelligence
 - Visual-spatial strengths (common in artists, designers, architects)
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What If I'm Not Happy with the Support Provided?

If you're concerned about the level of support:

- Ask for a **meeting with the SENCO** to review your child's provision
- Request a **copy of your child's SEN support plan or provision map**
- Ask the school to involve an **external specialist**
- Consider requesting an **EHC needs assessment** from your local authority

You can also contact SENDIASS or IPSEA for independent legal advice.

Useful Organisations and Resources

National Dyslexia Support:

- **British Dyslexia Association (BDA)**
www.bdadyslexia.org.uk
Helpline: 0333 405 4567
Offers assessments, training, factsheets, and a helpline.
- **Made By Dyslexia**
www.madebydyslexia.org
Campaigning organisation promoting dyslexic strengths.

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- **Patoss (Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties)**
www.patoss-dyslexia.org
Find local specialist tutors and assessors.

Assistive Technology:

- **Nessy Learning** – Literacy intervention and typing tools
- **TextHelp Read&Write** – Reading and writing toolbar
- **Speech-to-text tools** – Dragon NaturallySpeaking, Google Dictate

Parent Support:

- **RANi** – For help with understanding your rights and the process
- **SENDIASS** – Local impartial information and advice service for parents and young people www.iasmanchester.org
- **IPSEA** – Independent Provider of Special Education Advice:
www.ipsea.org.uk
- **Contact** – A national charity supporting families with disabled children:
www.contact.org.uk
- **The Dyslexia Shop** – Resources and learning tools

Summary Table

| What To Do | Action |
|---------------------|--|
| Suspect dyslexia? | Keep a log of concerns and discuss with school/SENCO |
| School not helping? | Ask for SEN support and a support plan |
| Need further input? | Request involvement from an educational psychologist |

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Struggling despite support?

Request an EHC needs assessment

Need help?

Contact RANi, SENDIASS, IPSEA, or the British Dyslexia Association

Remember:

Always keep a copy of all correspondence you send, along with proof of postage or delivery. If you send documents by post, we recommend using a **signed-for** service. If sending by email, request a **read receipt** if possible.

Get in Touch

If you need more information or have a question, we're here to help.

Email us: info@rani.org.uk

Please include:

- Your name
- Your child's name
- Your child's date of birth
- Your query

Or, if you prefer, you can fill out our online **contact form** and we'll get back to you as soon as possible

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