

Dyslexia

Dyslexia can affect anyone at any age. It is estimated that 10% of people over 16 in the UK alone have dyslexia. Sometimes learning may be challenging and frustrating. If dyslexia is undetected, it can effect learning and achievement.

There are however all sorts of dyslexia friendly tools and techniques that can be used to make teaching and learning fun, easy and effective for dyslexia learners and ALL learners!

Children with dyslexia have the potential to achieve wonderful things (as do all learners), provided they have the right tools and learning opportunities.

What is Dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a learning difference. It comes with a combination of strengths and challenges which affect the learning process of reading, writing, spelling and sometimes numeracy.

Learners with dyslexia can sometimes have weaknesses in short-term memory, sequencing and the speed at which they process information. They often find it difficult learning to read, write and spell because of these learning differences.

Some of the most famous and successful people in the world have dyslexia! This is because they have built on their strengths- Walt Disney, Jamie Oliver, Steve Redgrave, Albert Einstein, Winston Churchill to name just a few!

How can you spot your child may have dyslexia?

The following characteristics may be seen at home and/or at school.

- Finds spelling and reading difficult.
- Puts letters and figures the wrong way round.
- Confuses b and d and words such as on and no.
- Takes a long time to write things down.
- Written work does not match oral language skills.
- Unable to copy from the board successfully.
- Struggles with handwriting - letters and numbers.
- Needs lots of support to complete written activities.
- Has difficulty remembering sequences and facts.
- Finds it hard to remember spoken instructions.
- Has difficulty hearing sounds - p,f,v,th.
- Uses bizarre spellings, omits letters or puts them in the wrong order.
- Has problems understanding what he/she has read.
- Problems with sight vocabulary and phonic development.
- Mispronounces words or jumbles up words.
- May appear to learn things, but forget everything the next day.
- Can have poor concentration or gets tired easily.
- Has difficulty tying shoes laces, dressing, cutting.
- Surprises you because in other ways she/he is bright and alert.
- Can lack confidence and may have a poor self image.

- Has difficulty in remembering and organising.
- Dislikes reading and writing.
- Messy work with lots of attempts, uses the rubber lots!
- Has problems with co-ordination - left/ right, up/down.
- Can be very artistic and creative.
- May have tantrums/ signs of frustration for no given reasons.

How can you support your child with dyslexia?

Some of these resources are used in school too.

- iPads are an excellent interactive resource, with lots of free/ low cost apps to help develop literacy skills. Dyslexia friendly apps can be found easily. Word processing rather than writing can help.
- Pencil grips help to reinforce correct pencil grip and provide comfort when writing.
- Reading rulers have been found to help children with visual dyslexia. They also help to stay focussed when reading by keeping track on the line that is being read.
- Highlighters are a key tool in the classroom or for homework- to highlight patterns in sounds and key pieces of information.
- The alphabet arc is a super tool to teach letter names and the alphabet order. School use this with selected pupils.
- Comic Sans is the easiest font on the computer for a dyslexic child to read!
- If writing instructions for your child write each line a different colour or underline every other line in a colour.
- Cursive handwriting should be taught/used to help spelling, fluency, neatness and speed. Ask your child's class teacher for a copy of what Ankermoor's cursive alphabet looks like.
- Don't be cross if your child is unorganised and forgetful, provide them with a checklist, keyring or visual timetable to ensure they remember the things they need.
- Remember they might need help in other subjects such as maths (reading a question) or Geography (spelling a word). Dyslexia is not just apparent in English - it is with them all of the time.
- A special dictionary called the 'Ace' dictionary is an excellent way for your child to check their spellings. Once they know how to use this special tool they will have no problems in checking their spellings. Making them become more independent in editing and work.

Dyscalculia

Dyscalculia is a specific learning difficulty in mathematics. People with dyscalculia have difficulties in solving operations in mathematics or arithmetic. It could be described as an extreme difficulty with numbers.

The DfES defines dyscalculia as: 'A condition that affects the ability to acquire arithmetical skills. Dyscalculic learners may have difficulty understanding simple number concepts, lack an intuitive grasp of numbers and have problems learning number facts and procedures.'

Dyscalculia is like dyslexia for numbers. But unlike dyslexia, very little is known about its prevalence, causes or treatment. Current thinking suggests that it is a congenital condition, caused by the abnormal functioning of a specific area of the brain. People with dyscalculia experience great difficulty with the most basic aspects of numbers and arithmetic.

Counting:

Dyscalculic children can usually learn the sequence of counting words, but may have difficulty navigating back and forth, especially in twos and threes.

Calculations:

Dyscalculic children find learning and recalling number facts difficult. They often lack confidence even when they produce the correct answer. They also fail to use rules and procedures to build on known facts. For example, they may know that $5+3=8$ but not realise that $3+5=8$ or that $5+4$ would equal 9.

Numbers with zeros:

Dyscalculic children may find it difficult to grasp that the words ten, hundred and thousand have the same relationship to each other as the numerals 10, 100 and 1000.

Measures:

Dyscalculic children often have difficulty with operations such as handling money or telling the time. They may also have problems with concepts such as speed (miles per hour) or temperature.

Direction/orientation:

Dyscalculic children may have difficulty understanding spatial orientation (including left and right) causing difficulties in following directions or with map reading.

Dyscalculic children may be particularly vulnerable where teachers follow an interactive, whole-class method of teaching as recommended by the National Numeracy Strategy. Asking dyscalculic children to answer apparently simple maths questions in public will inevitably lead to embarrassment and frustration.

Top Tips for Parents

Maths should be fun! In fact maths is fun...it's just playing with numbers.

1. If it's difficult and lacks excitement our brains will switch right off.
2. Let it be O.K to make mistakes in the classroom or at home - fear of failing can sometimes mean a fear of even trying.
3. Practise makes perfect - not all learners will understand concepts straight away, give them time to practise their new skills.
4. Play lots of games, play and explore - the children won't even think they are working!
5. Use ICT resources , there is a website for every mathematical concept - they are also exciting too.
6. Use practical resources to teach and support - being able to see or do can help the brain make links.
7. Step by step learning - ensure the basics of number are firm and then build on these.
8. Differentiate accordingly - allow all ability groups to succeed and celebrate their work with others.
9. Make it real - Maths can be found in everyday life - give your tasks a real life purpose.
10. Sing songs - rap - make silly rhymes - all will help your child remember key concepts.