

Indicators at Secondary Level

At secondary level, earlier difficulties may persist as well as new problems which arise when coping with the increased demands of the curriculum. Learners may show many of the following features:

Reading

- Inaccuracies, for example, when reading examination questions
- Poor speed of reading
- Poor skimming and scanning
- Difficulty in getting the main idea
- Difficulties coping with heavier reading demands

Writing

- Persistent spelling difficulties
- Difficulties in copying from the board
- Difficulty organising and structuring written work
- Choosing simple vocabulary that is easier to spell
- Difficulty in spotting errors and proofreading
- Problems with legibility and speed of handwriting
- Difficulty with punctuation

Listening

- Problems with note-taking, unable to listen and write at the same time
- Difficulty in following more than one instruction at a time
- Difficulty with concentration and attention

Language

- May be good verbally, thus a discrepancy between oral and written skills
- Word retrieval problems
- Difficulty in acquisition of topic words
- Slow to answer questions as processing skills may be weak
- Unable to cope with a fast pace of verbal input, particularly if the sentence structure is complex

Organisation

- Poor organisational skills, e.g. problems with having the right equipment and materials, time keeping and meeting deadlines
- Problems coping with more homework and lengthier assignments; often unsure of the precise requirements of homework set

General

- Difficulties with memory
- More easily tired than peers because of failure to achieve automaticity with many everyday activities
- Prone to examination stress
- Difficulty with studying foreign languages, in particular, French
- Often better at practical subjects where less reading and writing is involved, preferring HE, IT, Sciences, Maths, Art, Drama and Music
- Low self-esteem, leading possibly to behaviour problems and truancy.
- More easily distracted by environmental noise

Conclusion

As dyslexia can exist on a continuum from mild to severe, difficulties may not be noticed in the early years particularly with bright children who may unconsciously be compensating for difficulties. The root cause of a reluctance to attend school or unacceptable behaviour in the classroom may be a learning difficulty such as dyslexia.

It is now generally recognised that people with dyslexia often have co-occurring difficulties such as dyspraxia and ADHD. Often the symptoms may look similar; for example the dyslexic pupil may look as if they have an attention deficit when the explanation may well be that they are finding it difficult to attend because of the nature of the work they are being asked to complete.

