

What Is Dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty that alters the way that the brain processes the written word and is characterised by difficulties in recognising, spelling and decoding words. As such, children with dyslexia also have problems with reading comprehension.

Dyslexia is not linked to intelligence, but it is a genetic condition that is neurological and cannot be cured. It's estimated that between 10 and 20 per cent of people in the UK have some degree of dyslexia.

Dyslexia affects people from all ethnic backgrounds, although a person's first language can play an important role. A language where there is a clear connection between how a word is written and how it sounds, and consistent grammatical rules, such as Italian and Spanish, can be easier for a person with mild to moderate dyslexia. English is undoubtedly more difficult to learn owing to the irregularities in spelling structures and pronunciation.

Dyslexia isn't just delayed reading development; it can impact on academic progress more widely. Dyslexia can cause a delay in, or lack of advancement of:

- development of language (frequent mispronunciation of words);
- developmental milestones (crawling and walking later than peers);
- hand-eye coordination;
- concentration span;
- ability to sequence and order things (including sense of direction).

Dyslexia can also put people at higher risk of suffering from autoimmune conditions, such as hay fever and allergies.

The sooner a child is diagnosed, the better; this will enable the teacher and other professionals to make adjustments to ensure that the child reaches their potential, both academically and in daily life.

There are many compensatory strategies that can be used to enable those affected by the condition to cope with the demands of school, including

- 1:1 sessions with a specialist teacher;
- phonics support;
- speech recognition software;
- extra time in reading/writing tasks.

