

Frequently Asked Questions

Parents

You may also find the information you are seeking in our [Information for Parents](#)

We also offer short [courses for parents](#) in various cities round the country.

[Q. I think my child may be dyslexic, but the school doesn't seem to be interested.](#)

[Q. Can I go to my GP to get my child assessed for dyslexia?](#)

[Q. My school refuses to arrange for my child to be assessed for dyslexia. They say he/she is too young and/or they can't afford to do this.](#)

[Q. I think my child is dyslexic, but the school says he has behavioural problems and thinks he should be investigated for ADHD. He does not have behavioural problems at home.](#)

[Q. My school tells me that they have done a test in school and that my child is mildly dyslexic and so does not qualify for any help.](#)

[Q. My school says that there is no point getting my child assessed as this won't make any difference to what is offered in school.](#)

[Q. My child has fallen a long way behind and may have significant dyslexic difficulties. The help offered in school does not seem to be effective. What should I do?](#)

[Q. I feel that mainstream schooling is not able to offer my severely dyslexic child an appropriate education. Are there specialist schools for dyslexic children?](#)

[Q. My child has recently been diagnosed with dyslexia. How can I explain this to him/her?](#)

[Q. What can I do to help my child at home?](#)

[Q. I have heard that coloured overlays can help dyslexic children. How does this work?](#)

[Q. My child is learning to read and write, but really struggles with writing. How can I help?](#)

[Q. My child has very poor, untidy handwriting and is often criticised at school for poor presentation and insufficient content. How can they be helped?](#)

[Q. My child seems to find it very hard to organise information and put things down on paper. What strategies could they learn which might help?](#)

[Q. What help can a dyslexic pupil be offered for tests and exams?](#)

Q. I think my child may be dyslexic, but the school doesn't seem to be interested.

A. There are some schools in the country that are able to offer significant support for dyslexic pupils, but there are still many who have yet to receive training in specific learning difficulties, so signs of dyslexia are often missed or misinterpreted as low ability, laziness, inability to concentrate, slow development.

Ask the school secretary for a copy of the school's SEN policy. You would then be advised to make an appointment to see the Special Needs Co-ordinator (known as the SENCO) to discuss your concerns. A family history would be a strong indicator, and other indicators as listed on:

[Indications of Dyslexia](#)

[Indications of Dyslexia in the Primary School](#)

[Indications of Dyslexia in the Secondary School](#)

How the child responds to learning at home or any distress the child is experiencing would also be important factors.

Ask the SENCO for the child's difficulties to be assessed and appropriately supported. For further advice, see [Getting Help for Your Child](#).

Q. Can I go to my GP to get my child assessed for dyslexia?

A. Sadly no: dyslexia is not funded by the NHS and forms no part of medical training, in spite of being a genetic neurological difference which also frequently co-occurs with other specific learning difficulties.

Q. My school refuses to arrange for my child to be assessed for dyslexia. They say he/she is too young and/or they can't afford to do this.

A. There is no magic age when it appropriate to assess for dyslexia, although an assessment can be more detailed where levels of literacy are a factor. As soon as difficulties become apparent, and particularly where a child is becoming distressed or showing behavioural problems, an assessment should be carried out. Leaving a child to fail can be very harmful psychologically.

Specialist intervention at a young age is always recommended to enable the child to fully access the curriculum. At a later age, this will be harder to achieve.

Budget cuts both at school and Local Authority level are making it harder for parents to obtain an Educational Psychologist assessment. Contact your [Local Dyslexia Association](#) for local advice and for information about private assessments. If there is no local group, contact the BDA Helpline.

You could also contact the British Psychological Society for recommendations of Educational Psychologist specialising in specific learning difficulties in children: tel. 0116 254 9568

A private assessment with a Chartered Educational Psychologist specialising in specific learning difficulties would cost in the region of £400 or more.

A specialist dyslexia teacher with a Diploma in SpLDs is also qualified to carry out assessments (£3-400). Contact the Professional Association of Specialist Teachers, PATOSS, for recommendations, tel. 01386 712 650.

Q. I think my child is dyslexic, but the school says he has behavioural problems and thinks he should be investigated for ADHD. He does not have behavioural problems at home.

A. Where schools do not have in depth training in specific learning difficulties, misleading assumptions can sometimes be made.

Where dyslexia is not well understood in a school, it is not uncommon for children with unidentified and unsupported dyslexic difficulties to become frustrated, distressed and develop behavioural issues. Difficulties with maintaining concentration and focus, being easily distracted and having difficulty in processing information are very commonly associated with dyslexia. Behavioural problems can be a symptom of an underlying difficulty, not a problem in their own right.

Dyslexia frequently co-occurs with other specific learning difficulties including ADD/ADHD, dyspraxia and dyscalculia. It can also co-occur with Asperger syndrome and high functioning autism.

Your child may be referred to CAMHS (Community Mental Health Services) for investigation. However you should be aware that medical and mental health professionals are not usually trained to diagnose dyslexia and this may not be the most appropriate route for diagnosing specific learning difficulties. Make a firm request to the SENCO for a referral to the Educational Psychologist for an assessment for specific learning difficulties which may indicate dyslexia. You could also contact your Local Dyslexia Association for advice on getting an assessment.

Q. My school tells me that they have done a test in school and that my child is mildly dyslexic and so does not qualify for any help.

A. Tests conducted in school by a teacher may not be diagnostic assessments but only screening tests. These flag the probability of a pupil having dyslexic tendencies for further investigation. They are not 100% reliable in their diagnosis and do not give a detailed analysis of a child's profile of strengths and weaknesses.

Unfortunately some teachers have not received sufficient training to appreciate the limitations of screening tests. In addition, a bright child with significant dyslexic difficulties, on a good day may not show up as clearly as they should on this type of test. Discuss your concerns with the SENCO and request further investigation and dyslexia support.

Q. My school says that there is no point getting my child assessed as this won't make any difference to what is offered in school.

A. The point of a full diagnostic assessment is that it provides a full profile of the pupil's strengths and weaknesses, plus intellectual potential. A proper understanding of the child's difficulties will enable support to be more effectively targeted. A well informed school would be able to provide a number of effective interventions to support dyslexic pupils.

Schools have a duty under disability legislation (SENDA 2001, Disability Discrimination Act 2005, Equality Act 2010) to ensure that pupils with disabilities are not treated unfavourably and are offered reasonable support. Specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia are recognised difficulties under disability legislation.

There is an SEN Code of Practice which schools should follow. See [Code of Practice](#)

You should also ask the school secretary for a copy of the school's SEN policy. Lack of training and resources often limit what support a child may receive. Few schools have a trained dyslexia specialist on the staff, although the government is funding training for more specialist teachers following the Rose report in June 2009.

Q. My child has fallen a long way behind and may have significant dyslexic difficulties. The help offered in school does not seem to be effective. What should I do?

A. Currently you should take advice about applying for a Statement of Special Educational Need, where the funding for specialist support comes from the Local Authority, rather than the school. Unfortunately this is becoming very hard to achieve, usually for financial reasons, and some Local Authorities devise very stringent eligibility criteria, which may not be fair in all cases. You can still apply for a Statement if you feel that these criteria would be unfair, and challenge any adverse decisions in the SEND Tribunal. See [Getting a Statement of Special Educational Need](#).

Please note: The government is currently seeking to streamline the cumbersome Statementing process into a single assessment and plan: the Education, Health and Care Plan. It is proposed for this to be in place by 2014. Until then, the existing system of Statements of Special Educational Need will continue to apply.

Q. I feel that mainstream schooling is not able to offer my severely dyslexic child an appropriate education. Are there specialist schools for dyslexic children?

A. Ask the Local Authority for a list of specialist schools. Mark any giving support for specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and visit them. Specialist independent schools supporting dyslexic pupils can be found on www.crested.org.uk These range from the specialist school to schools with specialist support available. It may be possible to get a Statement of Special Educational Need to cover the fees, although you may have to take the case to the SEND Tribunal. See [Getting a Statement of Special Educational Need](#).

Q. My child has recently been diagnosed with dyslexia. How can I explain this to him/her?

A. There are books which you can read to a child to explain dyslexia, listed on [Books on Dyslexia](#).

Q. What can I do to help my child at home?

A. There are a number of excellent books for parents: see our list of [Books on Dyslexia](#).

For pre-school children, see [Early Help, Better Future](#).

Have a look at [Homework Tips](#).

For help with phonics, see [Focus on Phonics](#).

For resources and games see [LDA Learning](#) and [Cambridge House](#).

Some [Local Dyslexia Associations](#) have parent support groups and a few offer Saturday schools.

To supplement what the school may be offering, you may also wish to arrange private tuition with a specialist dyslexia tutor. Email the BDA Helpline for a list for your area and also ask your Local Dyslexia Association for recommendations. helpline@bdadyslexia.org.uk

There are a number of software programmes which can help at home, such as Wordshark and Numbershark. See [the BDA online shop](#).

For software aids, see the website of the [BDA Technologies Committee](#).

The BDA also offers short courses for [parents](#).

Q. I have heard that coloured overlays can help dyslexic children. How does this work?

A. Around 35-40% of people with dyslexia suffer with a visual stress difficulty where text appears to move around or look distorted in some way. Coloured filters, either as overlays or glasses with coloured tinted lenses have been found to be helpful. Coloured filters can help to make the text visually clearer and more comfortable to see, and therefore can aid the learning process, but they will not teach a child to read. For information on eyes and dyslexia and specialist practitioners, see [Eyes and Dyslexia](#).

Q. My child is learning to read and write, but really struggles with writing. How can I help?

A. Writing is a very different skill from reading, and requires a certain amount of fluency in being able to encode the sounds in a word into the symbols on the page. Coupled with any slow development or weakness in fine motor movements (often associated with dyspraxic difficulties) you may end up with a frustrated child who will devise any number of excuses to avoid having to write. Allowing a child to dictate a piece of work or a story can be helpful. Teaching a child to write in a cursive script is recommended, see [Help with Handwriting](#).

For information on dyspraxia see [Dyspraxia Foundation](#).

Q. My child has very poor, untidy handwriting and is often criticised at school for poor presentation and insufficient content. How can they be helped?

Learning to touch type and using a computer for school work can be a sensible way forward for a child with poor or illegible writing, where the act of writing on paper involves too much effort and

concentration, compromising the content of the piece. Tapping a key instead can free up the thought processes to address the content. If a pupil's normal way of doing much of school work is on a computer, the school can apply for this to be offered at GCSE and A Level, which may make a significant difference to grades.

For CD Rom Touch Typing tutors for dyslexic pupils, see the [BDA online shop](#). Enter touch typing in the search box.

Q. My child seems to find it very hard to organise information and put things down on paper. What strategies could they learn which might help?

A. There may be a number of difficulties here, including remembering what is important, holding information in your head while you organise a structure, not understanding what is required, difficulties with organisation and sequencing.

Mind mapping techniques can be helpful, where information is organised in a pictorial way. This often suits the dyslexic learning style. There are a number of excellent books on study skills, including mind mapping: see [Books on Dyslexia](#).

Coming up to GCSE and A levels, help from a specialist dyslexia teacher on study skills and structuring a piece of written work could be helpful.

Q. What help can a dyslexic pupil be offered for tests and exams?

A. Accommodations in tests and exams can be put in place to mitigate dyslexic difficulties and create a more level playing field. Extra time is usual (+25%) and any other arrangements as recommended by an appropriate qualified professional. Arrangements that are put in place for normal school work, e.g. using a computer, can be implemented for tests and exams.

If you are unsatisfied with the arrangements proposed for your child, you could arrange a private access arrangements assessment with a specialist teacher assessor. For recommendations contact PATOSS: tel. 01386 712 650.

See [Access Arrangements](#).

For access arrangements in SATS, contact the Local Authority special needs department.