

ASSESSING AND SUPPORTING DYSLEXIC LEARNERS

DEFINING DYSLEXIA

The BDA use the following definition of dyslexia, presented in the Rose Report 2009:

- Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling.
- Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed.
- Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities.
- It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points.
- Co-occurring difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organization, but these are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia.
- A good indication of the severity and persistence of dyslexic difficulties can be gained by examining how the individual responds or has responded to well-founded intervention.

The British Dyslexia Association provides an addition to this definition:

"Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty that mainly affects the development of literacy and language related skills. It is likely to be present at birth and to be life-long in its effects. It is characterised by difficulties with phonological processing, rapid naming, working memory, processing speed, and the automatic development of skills that may not match up to an individual's other cognitive abilities (BDA, 2007).

ASSESSING DYSLEXIA

There are several assessments that can be conducted in school, to give the SENCO or class Teacher a good indication as to general areas of difficulty. They will not however, cover phonological awareness or rapid naming:



York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension (YARC) - Early Years and Primary Edition (A secondary version is available as well)

Detailed Assessment of Speeded Handwriting (a new version is being released in the autumn) - The current version is for 9-16 year olds and there is a 17+ version available but the new version will have a wider age range I believe. (£166)

Helen Arkell Spelling Test (HAST 2) - Word Spelling Test 5 years+ (£55)

There are non-standardised assessments that schools can carry out where phonological awareness is concerned and submit these as evidence alongside the standardised assessments listed above.

Hertfordshire County Council has produced this pack for Primary, and this for Secondary.

With thanks to Clare Barclay (SENCO and Dyslexia specialist) for the information provided.

If you would like to contribute an article to the Southwark inclusion and SEND newsletter, contact us at selainclusionandsend@southwark.gov.uk