Guide to supporting pupil's with dyslexia

A pupil with Dyslexia will have many strengths and weaknesses. Each pupil is different. Dyslexia is a different way of learning and we need to address the profile to ensure pupils receive the best support to achieve their potential. Many of the recommendations given will also improve the learning of all pupils. There is also an overlap on the advice given below between different headings as many areas of learning are linked.

Also, many of the cognitive processing difficulties are also experienced by other SpLDs, so pupils with ADHD, autism, DCD, and Language issues will also usually benefit from similar support.

From the Dyslexia Portfolio report any scores below 90 standardised score will need support and scores below 84 are of greater concern. The dyslexia index given by the screener is higher if there is a difference between ability and the other scores.

Working Memory

This the ability to hear information and retain it to be able to process it – like forming a sentence, remembering spellings, organising ideas. It is a common cognitive weakness experienced by most pupils with a SpLD and may mean that pupils cannot copy information from the smartboard as they have difficulty remembering the information and also relocating their place back on the smartboard. It will help a pupil's learning if they can use over-learning to transfer information into long-term memory which is easy to recall from.

- Reduce the amount of information a pupil has to remember and chunk information
- Keep instructions to one or two
- Support instructions with brief written and picture prompts, eg Next, I need this.
- Give the pupil a 'buddy' who can repeat the information
- Give a visual prompt – eg a visual timetable,
- Write information in small chunks on a whiteboard beside them so that they do not have to 'find' information on the smartboard. Wipe out any information they have already copied/used.
- Keep text in a dyslexia friendly font – like Comic Sans MS, Dyslexie, Arial
- Use double or 1 ½ line spacing.
- Use different coloured text for each point or paragraph (can alternate colours) to make reading and relocation easier.
- Use writing frames, to help with organisation
- Give pupils a wordbank of words to use with a task.
- Programmes can be followed to improve working memory – see Gill Davis Developing Memory Skills in the Primary Classroom –
- games like
    - Kim's game where you have objects to remember and add or remove,
    - repetition games where you increase the number of items eg I went to the zoo and saw an elephant, giraffe,. Keep repeating and adding items.
    - Try chunking information to remember eg a phone number split into digit groups 123 456 789
    - Chain or link information to help remember it.

- Link information to a route you are familiar with. As you describe your route, add the information you need to remember to it. Eg I go upstairs and I see a town, Pompeii buried in lava from a volcano called Vesuvius. Essential to talk through the walk.

- Photocopiable sheets of visual pictures help develop memory and sequencing- from Auditory Memory Skills' and Visual Memory Skills by Mark and Katy Hill (LDA).
- Use all the senses to reinforce learning.

Reading (useful to link reading and spelling together)

a) Phonological awareness training – this is a precursor skill to reading and specific training should be given in the following areas
    a. Find rhyming words
    b. identifying sounds in words– eg ask which words have the 'd' sound at the end – hand, bird, ant. Start with initial sounds, then end sounds and lastly medial sounds.
    c. blending sounds, eg ask what word do I get from these sounds 's n a ck'. Progress through 2 phoneme, 3 phoneme, 4 phoneme and 5 phoneme sound words.
    d. segmenting sounds, eg What sounds do you hear in train – eg t r ai n.
    e. deleting sounds from words, What word do I get if I take the 'g' sound from the beginning of 'gold' - old. What word do I get if I take the 'm' sound from farm – far.
    f. Transposing (changing) sounds. What word would I get if I change the b to a f in bold – fold. What word is 'nip' backwards – pin.

    g. There are support programmes like Sound Linkage by Peter Hatcher (5 mins a day) or a set of books on Phonological Awareness by TES. Books 4 and 5 most useful and have picture exercises too. Also, My Special Alphabet Book by Valerie Muter has some phonological awareness exercises.

b) Phonics – Follow a recognised programme like Little Wandle, ReadWrite Inc or Letterland (designed for dyslexics, recently updated and uses characters and stories to support phonics knowledge). Make sure you do not try to cover too many phonemes in one lesson or week and keep repeating previously learned sounds.
c) Read Min a Day (Based on Precision Learning – word lists to read based on same phonemes).
d) Read Race around from TES. (Based on Precision Learning – word lists accompanied by pictures to read based on same phonemes).
e) Learn word families – eg light, fight, night, bright, flight etc.
f) Support learning with pictures of words.
g) Overlearning (the same phoneme should be taught using a variety of multi-sensory methods, and constantly reviewed/repeated until fully secure).
h) Finger pointing (when reading books encourage children to point under the words with their fingers as they read – this will help orthographic recognition).
i) Audio books (These will help a child to hear books which are too difficult for them to read and so will aid comprehension. It is important to start this early as they will need to be secure with this skill by Secondary school. Free books can be obtained from Borrowbox, part of Cumbria Library Service. Also, Kindle or Apple Books.

j) Paired reading (Two children or a child and adult will read a book together, alternating text – paragraphs or pages – give unknown words and don't force decoding. Child may initially only want to listen to the book which is fine until their confidence is built up).

k) Comprehension – important to question child so that they understand the text they are reading and are not putting all their effort into decoding words. Useful strategies are to use existing knowledge which the child has so 1) What is the title, (what do you know about this?), 2) What are side-headings, 3) What do any pictures show us. 4) Start reading and then summarise what you have read after each paragraph. 5) Once you get to questions, then skim through the text, looking for key words and slowly read the answer. – this is 'scan and stab' technique.

l) Coloured overlays. It's very important to get a proper eye test from an ophthalmologist but a child might find using a coloured overlay to read with will help with glare or tired eyes,

Spelling

Many dyslexia pupils have difficulty remembering phonic sounds, suffixes etc. They still need a phonic approach but also need a multi-sensory approach – a dyslexic pupil will need to go over something at least 10 more times than a pupil without dyslexia. When a pupil is ok with reading but struggles with spelling, it is known as orthographic dyslexia.

a) Multi-sensory.
The more senses that are involved, the more connections between the neurons of the brain.
   a. Use plastic letters to help pupils feel the shape of letters and how to form them. Encourage them to make words with plastic letters using a phoneme frame and then push up the plastic letters as they segment the sounds in the word. .
   b. Encourage pupils to sound out and say out-loud the sounds that phonemes make – they learn more from hearing their own voices than hearing someone else say the sound.
   c. Get pupils to say and listen to rhyming sounds in words. – You can use Minute a Day or Race Around for word lists
   d. Learn spellings in word families so that there is repetition of a key sound.
   e. Support learning with pictures.
   f. To learn a phoneme, trace over the phoneme saying the sound. Trace saying the letter names. Can also use sense of touch by writing the phoneme in sand/glitter/lentils/feely book (made from pages of different textures like fleece, sandpaper, shiny, textured card)
   g. To learn the spelling of a word. Close eyes and visualise the word. (This can be helped by writing the word on a card and holding it up top left of eyes while closed, so can see in their minds eye).
   h. Write the word, saying letter names as write out. Check this carefully against a master and tick each letter or phoneme. (A feely book or different textures can also be used to add extra senses).
   i. Give the child 1 or 2 short dictated sentences containing the word to learn to help develop their memory and apply spelling knowledge. 1) They repeat the sentence 2 or 3 times to get it in their memory. 2) They say each word as they write the sentence.
   j. Use mnemonics to help learn tricky words eg for could – cats only upset little dogs.

k. Use a spelling voice to help learn words as they sound eg Wednesday – say it as 'wed nes day'.
l. Look for words within words to help learn spellings and highlight tricky parts in colour . Eg I believe the lie.
m. For tricky, high frequency words, the trace, visualise and say letter names before writing and then checking is a useful routine.

b) Using a phonics approach

- Any phonics programme can be followed, but overlearning and multi-sensory are key to success.
- Try to teach words with the same phoneme or suffix. This will reduce the demands on memory. Eg all words with 'oa' phoneme. You can link the words into a story or a labelled picture illustrating the sound. Eg Toad wore a soapy coat, ate toast and sat on a sack of coal as the boat floated along the coast.

- (for older pupils, the learning can be made vertical and introduce polysyllabic words or suffixed words with the same 'ai' phoneme. Eg words like waistcoat,

- When learning suffixes-it is useful to also explain the spelling rule to help remember. Eg 'tion' – usually has a long 'a' sound before it eg population, or a 'c' sound eg fraction.

c) Using syllables.

a. Chunk words into smaller blocks. This will reduce the demand on working memory.
b. Make sure pupils are confident with most phonemes.
c. Make sure they understand that each syllable will be a nonsense part and the word only happens when the syllables are put together.
d. Encourage pupils to say a word slowly and stretch it to hear the syllables. Or they can clap to hear the different syllables or put their hand under their chin. Their hand will be pushed down for each syllable they say – I like this one best as its unobtrusive in class.
e. It is essential that pupils understand that vowels can be 'short' as in 'cat' or long as in 'emu' and that vowels can be in a syllable on their own. All syllables need to contain a vowel or vowel digraph. There are rules which can be followed with vowels and syllables which helps teachers understand, but probably too complicated to explain to children! Eg Long vowel sound is at the end of a syllable and when the vowel is on its own. Eg Short vowel sound is at the beginning of a syllable and in the middle of a cvc word.

rhi nos er ous

Pop u la tion

e. Use different colour or repeating colours to make syllables stand out.

d) Using Morphology

This is particularly useful for older pupils and is best used once pupils have a good understanding of phonemes. It involves splitting words based on the meaning of parts – prefixes, roots and suffixes. It can be used to explain syllable division for polysyllabic words as the meaning of the syllable is explained. However, pupils with weak working memory may find the extra task of remembering the meaning of a syllable harder.

Eg Trans means across, through, over. Words which include this are: transact, transport, transfer, translate, transit.

There are books which cover this in more depth and courses available for interest. Eg Morph Mastery

d) Over-learning.

Pupils will need constant revisiting of all the phonemes previously learned to ensure that knowledge is embedded. This can be done at the start of a lesson or elsewhere in the day with a quickfire 5/10 minute. There are phonic cards which have phoneme, picture and rhymes or sentence associations, eg by ReadWriteInc (Speed Sounds Cards, sets 2&3 – eg 'Goat in a boat', 'care and share'. Also Sound cards by Little Wandle eg Tail in the rain. I ask pupils to use a whiteboard to say and write the rhymes.

e) Learn spelling rules

For KS2 pupils learning spelling rules is very important. Many spelling rules relate to the difference between short and long vowels- short vowel, the vowel says its sound and a long vowel the vowels says its name. eg for doubling letters – the sound after a short vowel single syllable word doubles eg stop- stopping, clap- clapped. Long vowel, no doubling paint – painting.

f) Games

Support both reading and spelling with fun games to reinforce phonemes. Eg 1) SWAP games published by GAMZ (now out of print but can be bought on EBay). 2) Similar ones are GOTIT – based on Letters and Sounds phases 2 – 5. (It's like Uno). 3) Bingo games. 4) SMART games.

Useful books on Spelling are Spelling Rules and Memory tricks for Ages 8-9 by Joanne Rudling. Also same for Ages 10-11.

Spelling Rules, Riddles and Remedies by Sally Raymond.

The Spelling Rulebook

- Free Nessy download book on spelling and rules which you can get from the Nessy.com website. https://www.nessy.com/en-gb digital-spreads-impoov-yor-smelling-the-rules-of-reading-and-spelling-british-english-uk.pdf

Slow Processing speed

1. Speak slowly when giving instructions and any information
2. Repeat information
3. After 20 minutes review/reinforce all learning.
4. Only give 2/3 instructions at once.
5. Support learning with pictures
6. Play Dobble – card game which improves speed of processing and visual memory.

IT Support

- Keep text in a dyslexia friendly font – like Comic Sans MS, Dyslexie, Arial
- Use double or 1 ½ line spacing.
- Use different coloured text for each point or paragraph (can alternate colours) to make reading and relocation easier.
- Nessy- several games programmes, including phonics (reading and spelling) and writing. . https://www.nessy.com/en-gb
- IDL – a multi-sensory phonics programme
- Wordshark – a reading and spelling programme with game activities.
- Windows Free Accessibility tools with Office 365 , Spell check, text prediction, Text to speech (Immersive Reader). Dictate tool.
- Text to speech software like Claro read.
- Read&Write toolbar by Texthelp.– a toolbar offering 'text to speech' dictionary https://www.texthelp.com/en-gb/products/read-and-write-education/for-windows/
- Clicker (Story writing support) – word banks, graphics, https://www.cricksoft.com/uk/clicker
- Scanning Pens. Text in a book can be highlighted and read back. Also includes a dictionary and language translation. A special exam version can be used without the dictionary. https://www.scanningpens.co.uk/
- Dragon is a dictation programme of speech to text.
- BBC bitesize. Has fun very visual computerised information

- Call Scotland. Lots of IT support and courses available. They have a useful link to show a wheel of Apps for Dyslexia. www.callscotland. Org
- https://www.callscotland.org.uk/blog/updated-dyslexia-app-wheel-now-live/

Mind mapping and work organisation

Many dyslexic learners are visual learners and will respond to diagrams and information set out with colour and pictures.

- Use a mind map with a central box for the main idea and then branches from this for sub ideas and links – each one in a different colour often supported by pictures. It is then important to talk through the information and add more detail verbally.

There are computer mind mapping programmes and Apps. Inspiration 11 can be used on a laptop. https://www.inspiration-at.com/

Inspiration Maps an App (based on the desk top version by produced by a different company) - get it through Apple or Google Apps.

Poplet a free App.

- Colour coded Post it notes can be used for organisation. Ideas can be jotted down quickly and then more detail can be added later on other notes. It is also useful to use post it notes as part of mind maps as the notes can be moved around easily.

Encouraging a Growth Mindset. Focus on the positive. Don't give up – find another way if the first doesn't work for you. A mantra is I can't manage this yet, what can I do?

There are books on dyslexia, which include useful information on working memory and organisation.

- Working Memory and Learning: A teacher's guide (2008), Sue Gathercole and Tracy Packiam Alloway.
- Understanding Working Memory, Tracy Packiam Alloway and Ross Alloway.
- 100 ideas for Primary teachers. Supporting students with Dyslexia – Gavin Reid and Shannon Green.
- Supporting children with Dyslexia, Hilary Bohl and Sue Hoult.
- Help my child has Dyslexia by Judy Hornigold.
- Dyslexia Explained by Mike Jones (this can be downloaded for free from the nessy.com website).
- Developing Memory Skills in the Primary Classroom, Gill Davies.
- Auditory Memory Skills' and Visual Memory Skills by Mark and Katy Hill (LDA).
- Tricky spellings in cartoons for children by Lidia Stanton.
- Spelling Rules, Riddles and Remedies by Sally Raymond.
- Spelling Rules and Memory tricks for Ages 8-9 by Joanne Rudling. Also same for Ages 10-11.
- The Spelling Rulebook
- Free Nessy download book on spelling and rules which you can get from the Nessy.com website. https://www.nessy.com/en-gb digital-spreads-impoov-yor-smelling-the-rules-of-reading-and-spelling-british-english-uk.pdf
- Phonological Awareness Skills book 4 and 5 by Prim Ed.
- Sound Linkage, Peter Hatcher
- Mind Mapping in Primary Classrooms by Eva Hoffman and Yvonne Handford.
- Taking the Hell out of Homework, Neil Mackay
- Morph Mastery- a Morphological Intervention for Reading, Spelling and Vocabulary – Louise Selby
- Launch the Lifeboat to read and spell. (Graded books 1 – 10). A photocopiable multi-sensory Phonics programme from Reception to Year 6 - resource of lessons to teach reading, spelling and simple comprehension.
- Beat Dyslexia – a photocopiable Dyslexia support programme from Reception to year 6. Reading, spelling and comprehension.
- My special Alphabet Book by Valerie Muter and Helen Likierman – an introductory book on alphabet work and phonological awareness exercises.