



Defining Dyslexia

Empowering individuals to overcome Dyslexia



Find out more.

Understanding Dyslexia in the Classroom

What It Is, and What It Isn't

Dyslexia is a neurological difference that affects reading, spelling, and processing at word level. Difficulties occur in accurately and fluently decoding and recognising single words, rather than in understanding language or ideas more broadly. It is lifelong, it is not related to intelligence, and it is not a result of poor effort or poor teaching.

At secondary level, dyslexia often looks different to how it presents in primary school. Avoidance, inconsistent work, and apparent lack of motivation can be signs of a learner working far harder than it appears — not signs of low effort.

What Is Dyslexia?

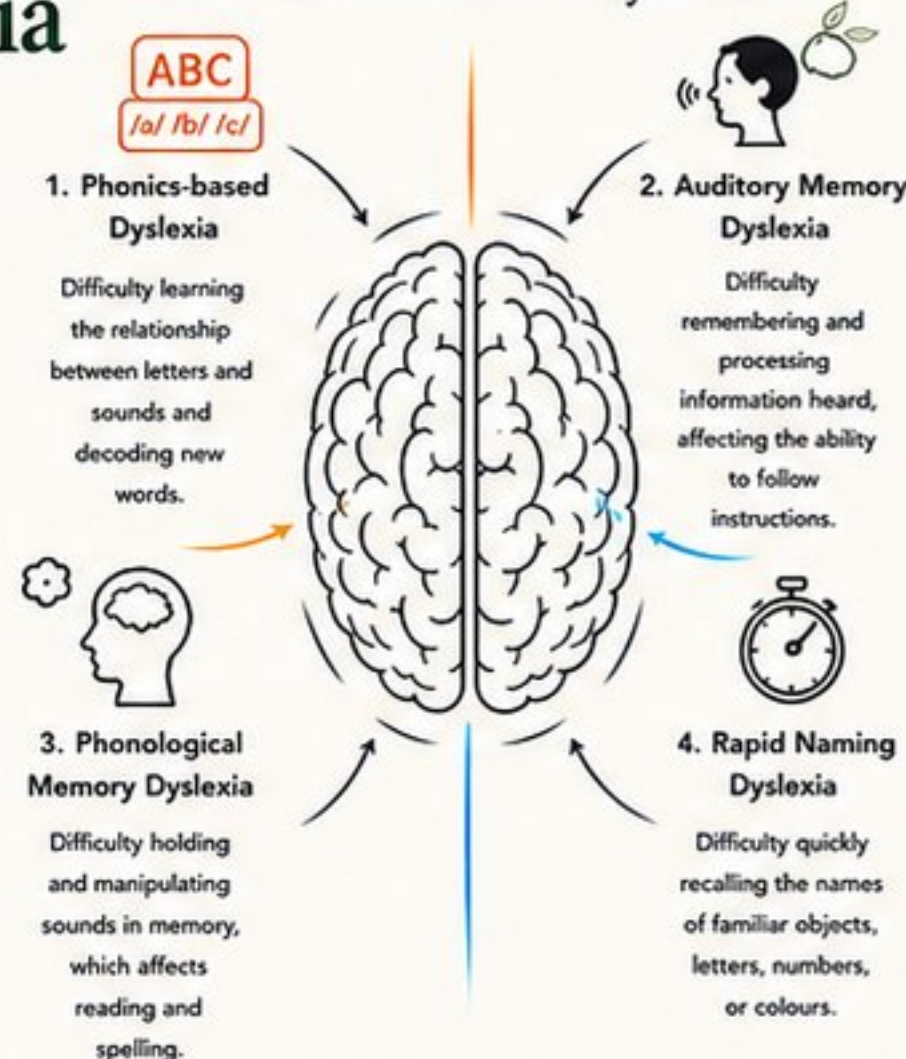
Dyslexia is a difference in how the brain processes language. It affects decoding, spelling, and processing speed.

It is not linked to intelligence, motivation or behaviour. With the right support, learners can build confidence, develop skills and achieve their potential.

Key Messages

- ✓ Dyslexia is not linked to intelligence
- ✓ Dyslexia is lifelong
- ✓ Difficulties occur at word level
- ✓ Every learner presents differently
- ✓ Effective support improves outcomes

The 4 Main Areas of Dyslexia



Dyslexia Rarely Travels Alone

Understanding co-occurring conditions leads to better support.

Around 50% of children with dyslexia meet criteria for at least one other neurodevelopmental condition. Identifying and addressing these can significantly improve outcomes and overall wellbeing.



ADHD
(up to 40%)

Difficulties with focus, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. Can impact organisational skills and time management.



DLD
(Developmental Language Disorder)
30 to 50%

Challenges with understanding and using spoken language including vocabulary, grammar, and narrative skills.



Dyspraxia
(up to 50%)

Affects fine and gross motor skills, planning movements, and coordination, often leading to clumsiness and difficulties with handwriting.



Dyscalculia
20 to 40%

Significant difficulties with numbers, calculations, and mathematical reasoning, distinct from general intelligence.



Autism
20 to 40%

Differences in social communication and interaction, alongside restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviour.

Isn't This Just Quality First Teaching?

Quality First Teaching Helps Everyone

- ✓ Clear explanations and explicit modelling
- ✓ Vocabulary instruction
- ✓ Chunking information
- ✓ Visual supports
- ✓ Retrieval practice
- ✓ Written instructions

These strategies benefit all learners and improve access to learning.

VS



Quality first teaching improves access to learning. Intervention develops the underlying skills that continue to create barriers. If quality first teaching alone were sufficient, the pupil would no longer be struggling.

Why Some Learners Need More

- ✓ Persistent difficulties with reading fluency
- ✓ Ongoing spelling difficulties
- ✓ Slow processing speed
- ✓ Reduced automaticity
- ✓ Weak phonological processing
- ✓ Working memory challenges

Targeted intervention develops the underlying skills that continue to create barriers.

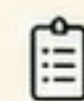
Curriculum Planning – The Inference Test

Inference is often like patting your head and rubbing your stomach at the same time. Break the skill apart before asking learners to do it all at once.



The Classroom Toolkit

Access Strategies – Remove Barriers in the Moment



Written instructions alongside verbal.

Reduces reliance on auditory working memory.



Pre-teach key vocabulary before lessons.

Removes the decoding barrier during actual learning.



Allow typed or verbal responses.

Removes the spelling bottleneck from demonstrating knowledge.



Use pastel paper or overlays.

Reduces visual stress for some students at no cost.



Avoid cold reading aloud.

Removes public anxiety from literacy tasks.



Seat away from auditory distractions.

Protects limited processing capacity for learning.

Strategies That Build Capacity – Independence Over Time



Chunk tasks with explicit modelling.

Reduces cognitive overload and makes expectations clear.



Use mind maps and visual planners.

Supports sequencing and planning for written tasks.



Celebrate verbal contribution.

Validates knowledge and understanding independent of literacy.



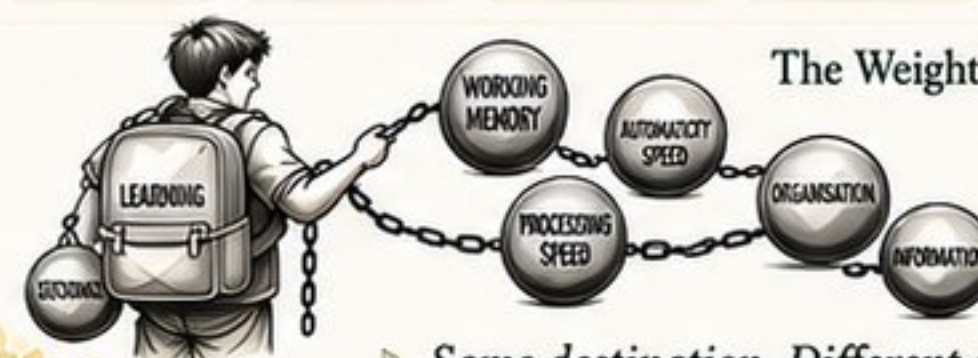
Spaced retrieval and interleaving.

Returning to content over time and mixing topics strengthens long-term recall.



Self-questioning and metacognition.

Pausing to predict, check and evaluate builds independent learning habits.



The Weight Learners Carry

Some learners carry additional invisible weight. This uses energy before learning has even begun.

The goal is not to remove the journey.

The goal is to remove unnecessary weight.

Same destination. Different support. Better outcomes.