**Handout 4**

**Dyslexia – telltale signs**

Do any of your pupils struggle with spelling, writing, reading or mathematics? Do they not progress as quickly as their classmates – or worse, do they not seem to progress at all?¹ There are obvious inconsistencies in these individuals, many of them exhibiting abilities alongside weaknesses.

You have been teaching well and hope that this pupil will improve their basic skills; however, you see little or no change compared with the rest of the class.

How can you tell if this pupil might be dyslexic? Look out for these signs, but remember that not all dyslexic pupils have the same cluster of difficulties and abilities. Watch out for strengths in areas of creativity and/or highly developed verbal skills.

**General signs**

- Speed of processing: spoken and/or written language slow
- Poor concentration
- Difficulty in following instructions
- Forgetful of words
- Difficulty in remembering anything in a sequential order, eg. tables, days of the week, the alphabet.

**Written work**

- Poor standard of written work compared with oral ability
- Messy work with many crossings out
- Persistently confused by letters that look similar, particularly b/d, p/g, p/q, n/u, m/w
- Poor handwriting, possibly with reversals and badly formed letters
- Spells a word several different ways in one piece of writing, eg. wippe, wype, wiep, wipe
- Makes anagrams of words, eg. tired for tried, breaded for bearded
- Badly set-out written work, doesn’t stay close to the margin
- Poor pencil grip
- Phonetic and bizarre spelling: not age/ability appropriate
- Unusual sequencing of letters or words.

**Reading**

- Poor reading progress
- Difficulty in blending letters together
- Difficulty in establishing syllable division or knowing the beginnings and endings of words
- No expression in reading
- Comprehension poor
- Hesitant and laboured in reading, especially when reading aloud

¹ You might, for instance, be aware of a puzzling profile of strengths and weaknesses in a pupil’s responses.
• Misses out words when reading, or adds extra words
• Fails to recognise familiar words
• Loses the point of a story being read or written
• Difficulty in picking out the most important points from a passage.

Mathematics
• Shows confusion with number order, eg. units, tens, hundreds
• Confused by symbols such as ‘+’ and ‘x’
• Difficulty remembering anything in a sequential order, eg. tables, days of the week, the alphabet
• Difficulty learning and remembering times tables
• May write ‘2’ when they mean to write ‘5’, or write ‘5’ instead of ‘2’.

Time
• Difficulty in learning to tell the time
• Poor timekeeping and general awareness
• Poor personal organisation
• Difficulty remembering what day of the week it is: birth date, seasons of the year, months of the year
• Difficulty with concepts – yesterday, today, tomorrow.

Skills
• Poor motor skills, leading to weaknesses in speed, control and accuracy of the pencil
• Limited understanding of non-verbal communication
• Confused by the difference between left and right, up and down, east and west
• Indeterminate hand preference
• Performs unevenly from day to day.

Behaviour
• Employs work-avoidance tactics, such as sharpening pencils and looking for books
• Seems to dream, does not seem to listen
• Easily distracted
• Plays the class clown or is disruptive or withdrawn (these are often cries for help)
• Excessively tired due to amount of concentration and effort required.

We are grateful to the British Dyslexia Association for permission to reproduce this guidance from its pack, ‘Dyslexia-friendly schools’.