

Dyslexia

a language based reading disorder

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a word-level reading disability stemming from an impairment in the phonological component of language. It is characterised by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition, decoding, poor spelling, and reading comprehension difficulties.

Dyslexia is a spectrum disorder with mild through to significant learning and functional impact. Dyslexia affects approximately 5-10% of the school age population in all literate countries.

How is dyslexia identified?

Schools can access the expertise of speech pathologists, literacy support teachers and guidance officers to develop a profile of strengths and challenges in reading. The Reader Profile is compiled by a speech pathologist and informs differentiated teaching and targeted intervention strategies. The Reader Profile reflects a differential diagnostic process that can accurately identify students with persistent word level reading disorder (dyslexia).

A diagnosis of Specific Learning Disorder – impairment in reading (dyslexia) may be applied by an educational psychologist or speech pathologist external to the department. While parents may choose to access these services, this is not required for students with dyslexia to access support within the department.

Is a diagnosis required?

The department recognises dyslexia as a disability and implements targeted supports and adjustments to enable students with dyslexia to access and participate in education. Schools are allocated resources to support all students with disability whether they have a diagnosis or not.

Risk and protective factors

Individuals with similar risk factors for dyslexia (e.g., phonological deficits, language difficulties) can have very different outcomes. These differences in outcomes have been explained in terms of protective factors and may include a growth mindset and adaptive coping strategies. Protective factors promote positive outcomes for all students, but have the greatest impact for those at risk. The most notable protective factor for dyslexia is high quality differentiated reading instruction, and interventions targeted to the individual student's profile of strengths and challenges in reading.

Co-occurring difficulties

Persistent word-level reading difficulties (dyslexia) may co-occur with other learning and developmental difficulties, for example:

- Executive functioning difficulties, such as ADHD or working memory weaknesses
- Developmental language disorder (DLD)
- Autism Spectrum Disorder.

A case management approach with an inclusive education team is essential to support all students experiencing difficulties learning to read and write.

The Language and Literacy Team

For more information, contact your school speech language pathologist or the Reading and Writing Disorders Advisory Service. The Advisory service may be accessed by telephone or email on weekdays between 8:30am and 4:30pm.

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