

**Dyscalculia** is recognised as *"A condition that affects the ability to acquire arithmetical skills. Dyscalculic learners may have difficulty understanding simple number concepts, lack an intuitive grasp of numbers and have problems learning number facts and procedures. Even if they produce a correct answer or use a correct method, they may do so mechanically and without confidence."* DfES 2001

Research in this area is ongoing and the definition is not fixed.

**Dyspraxia** is *"A form of developmental coordination disorder. It is a common disorder affecting fine and / or gross motor coordination in children and adults. It may also affect speech. It occurs across a range of intellectual abilities. Individuals vary in how their difficulties present; these may change over time depending on environmental demands and life experiences."* The Dyspraxia Foundation 2018

Dyspraxia can be diagnosed by a paediatrician in consultation with other medical services.

**Dysgraphia** is a term sometimes used when a student presents with significant handwriting and spelling difficulties. Recognition and diagnosis are contentious because there is not a recognised and agreed list of core symptoms / indicators and it is not listed as a specific learning difficulty in the SEND Code of Practice 2014

### **Hertfordshire SpLD Specialist Teacher Outreach Service**

*Promoting the expertise of schools to meet the needs of learners with specific learning difficulties through advisory work, training and exemplar teaching.*



## **Hertfordshire Specific Learning Difficulties Specialist Teacher Outreach Service**

**A 'high needs' funded service to schools in Hertfordshire**

We are a team of experienced teachers who have postgraduate qualifications in, and experience of, assessing and working with learners with specific learning difficulties (SpLD).

Specific learning difficulties affect one or more specific aspects of learning e.g. reading, spelling, handwriting, number etc. They encompass a range of conditions such as dyslexia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia. Learners with SpLD may have differing characteristics along a continuum and may be affected to varying degrees.

SpLD Outreach Specialist Teachers **recognise** rather than diagnose specific learning difficulties. We are a **teaching focused service**, so, in line with the Code of Practice for SEND 2014, we are focused on the 'assess - plan - do - review' cycle to ensure that provision is closely matched to need.

We support schools by providing advice on suitable resources, strategies and interventions, in line with the latest research and developments, to enable them to meet the needs of pupils with a range of specific learning difficulties.

Schools can access our specialist training for teachers, SENCos and teaching assistants to develop knowledge, understanding and practical strategies to meet the needs of learners with a range of specific learning difficulties.

We provide additional support to schools for pupils with the most significant specific learning difficulties, where the school has already identified difficulties and put in place a carefully tailored programme of support and reasonable adjustments, but progress remains very slow.

Following a service request from a school, in consultation with parents, support from the team can help schools to interpret assessments and put targeted interventions and / or teaching strategies and adjustments in place.

If a learner has more significant and persistent difficulties, and progress remains very slow despite implementing advice, schools, in consultation with parents, can request further support which may last between a term and a year. This can include:

- Assessments to identify more precisely the underlying barriers to progress
- Very specific advice and targets to meet the needs of the learner in school
- Help in adjusting or setting up extra support to accelerate progress and improve access to the curriculum
- Observation of some teaching to enable us to give tailored advice which meets the needs of the learner.
- Teaching a few exemplar sessions to train a member of staff in how to use new techniques or resources.
- Advice to support the learner out of school

Schools can request support more than once for a named child if difficulties change.

Schools can access support for a longer time to meet the needs of pupils with an EHC which identifies SpLD as the main presenting need.

The school remains responsible for teaching the student, monitoring progress and keeping parents informed about progress, targets and reviews.

## What are specific learning difficulties?

**Dyslexia** is the most common type of learning difficulty that pupils are likely to experience, with about 10% of the population having some form of dyslexia.

*"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 organisation, 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."*

*Sir Jim Rose, 2009*

Short term memory, mathematics, personal organisation and speaking may also be affected.

Dyslexia presents as a continuum of need ranging from mild to severe and individuals have different profiles of need.

Recognition of dyslexic difficulties does not automatically mean that learners will have access arrangements for exams. These are specific and tightly regulated by the DfE and exam boards. SENCos will coordinate these arrangements at schools.

Recognition of dyslexic difficulties at school also does not automatically mean a student will qualify for Disabled Students Allowances. This is assessed separately post 16, and specific criteria apply to the nature and extent of difficulties that qualify.