

Specific Literacy Difficulties (Dyslexia) – Check List

Name of Pupil:	
Is there a family history of dyslexia?	
Recent hearing/sight check?	

Area	Potential Signs/Behaviours	✓	Potential Causes	Suggestions
Reading	Reading Behaviours			
	Rubbing eyes, fidgety when reading, sensitivity to light, complains of headaches.		These behaviours may indicate visual stress or discomfort while reading.	Ensure the pupil has had a recent eye test. Consider the need for a coloured overlay or Irlen's assessment.
	Does not read for pleasure. Avoids choosing books for independent reading.		Could be linked to reading difficulties or a lack of motivation to read and/or exposure to books.	Provide adult support to help select books at the correct level. Predict together what the book might be about. Consider a reciprocal reading intervention. Provide access to dyslexia-friendly books tailored to their reading age and interest level, such as Barrington Stokes. Encourage reading of magazines, websites, etc.
	Avoids any reading activity. Reluctant to read out loud.		Anxiety or lack of confidence or reading ability.	Focused reading intervention to develop fluency and confidence (20-20 Reading, Repeated Reading, Precision Teaching). Daily reading with a partner, parents, or an adult in school using paired reading approaches . Only ask pupils to read if they are confident, provide pre-warning and time to practise reading the passage before the lesson.
	Lack of Reading fluency/Accuracy			
	Unable to read high-frequency words as well as peers.		Difficulties with visual/whole word recall.	Use precision teaching strategies to teach high-frequency words. Use flashcards. Teach a few words at a time, practice daily, and add words to personalised word mats. Play spelling games on apps or the computer.
	Confuses words that are visually similar (e.g., was/saw).		Weakness in visual processing.	Sorting and matching games using words they confuse. Encourage pupils to check for meaning when reading and to look carefully at letters when they are unsure. Encourage the use of tracking devices to help them focus on words when reading.
	Struggles to blend sounds in order, muddles sounds in words.		Difficulty with phonological processing affecting decoding skills.	Focused phonological awareness sessions to develop blending, segmentation, rhyming, and syllabification skills. Teach strategies for reading words with vowel digraphs (e.g., they usually make the long

Area	Potential Signs/Behaviours	✓	Potential Causes	Suggestions
				sound of the first vowel). Teach pupils to "flex it," i.e., check if it sounds right.
	Sounding out each word.		Over-reliance on decoding slowing reading speed.	Repeating Reading and Precision Teaching approaches will develop reading speed. Daily reading with a partner, parents, or an adult in school using paired reading approaches .
	Slow reading speed		This could be linked to word decoding or comprehension difficulties.	Repeating Reading and Precision Teaching approaches will develop reading speed. Daily reading with a partner, parents, or an adult in school using paired reading approaches . Support the development of reading comprehension using reciprocal reading approaches / focused guided reading activities.
Difficulties with comprehension				
	Needs time to process information		Can be linked to difficulties in decoding, processing difficulties, or weaknesses in receptive language	Allow time to preview the book, look for tricky words, and explore vocabulary and language. Talk about what they think might happen. Talk about each page after they have read it. Support the development of reading comprehension using reciprocal reading approaches and focused guided reading activities. Consider whether audiobooks or immersive reader would help.
	Doesn't read for meaning or use context as a strategy		Overreliance on decoding, affecting the ability to process meaning, or difficulties with receptive language, or not realising the link between written words and meaning	Walk through the books together, looking for tricky words and talking about what they think will happen. Talk about what has happened after one or two pages. Explore vocabulary. Ask questions beforehand that they have to find answers to. Support the development of reading comprehension using reciprocal reading approaches / focused guided reading activities. Consider the need for focused reading intervention to develop fluency and confidence (20-20 Reading, Repeated Reading, Precision Teaching). Daily reading with a partner, parents, or an adult in school using paired reading approaches. Consider whether audiobooks or immersive reader would help.
	Needs to read several times to understand meaning		Can be linked to processing difficulties, or weaknesses in receptive language	Walk through the books together, looking for tricky words and talking about what they think will happen. Talk about what has happened after one or two pages. Ask questions beforehand that they have to find answers to. Use interventions such as reciprocal reading approaches and focused guided reading to provide small group support. Encourage daily reading with a partner, parents, or an adult in school using paired reading approaches. Consider whether audiobooks or immersive reader would help.

Area	Potential Signs/Behaviours	✓	Potential Causes	Suggestions
Spelling	Inaccurate Spelling			
	Omits letters within words		Difficulties with phonological awareness and/or visual word recall.	Practise sounding out words, identifying sounds and matching them to graphemes. Consider alternative spellings. Use phoneme frames. Use precision teaching approaches, focusing on word families and spelling patterns. Spelling Made Easy by Violet Brand may be a useful resource.
	Errors in discriminating individual sounds, e.g., middle sound		Difficulties with phonological awareness and segmenting words.	Practise sounding out words, identifying sounds, and matching them to graphemes. Use phoneme frames. Use multi-sensory alphabet arc activities focusing on building words.
	Letters in words in the wrong order.		Sequential visual memory difficulties. Lack of visual word recall and memory of word patterns and spelling rules.	Use phoneme frames to help the pupil break down words into individual sounds and place the letters in the correct order. Teach spelling through word families and patterns. Understanding common patterns can help pupils predict the order of letters in new words. Use Precision Teaching, focus on specific words or patterns that the pupil struggles with.
	Bizarre spelling		Lack of phonological awareness and letter/sound correspondence.	Use alphabet arc activities and phoneme frames to develop phonological awareness and strengthen the pupil's ability to hear and manipulate sounds in words. Activities like rhyming, segmenting, and blending sounds will be helpful. Use precision teaching, focusing on only two or three words each week. Provide visual aids like word mats, spelling charts, and flashcards to help pupils remember the correct spelling of words.
	Cannot recognise spelling errors		Lack of visual word recall and memory of word patterns and spelling rules.	Use strategies to focus on developing spelling errors and teach proof reading skills. Provide flash cards with one or two words they are learning and get them to check the spelling of those in their works.
	Spells phonetically, unaware of alternative spellings and spelling rules.		Lack of visual word recall and memory of word patterns and spelling rules.	Teach spelling through word families and patterns. Also, teach spelling rules. The SEN Spelling Rule book is a good resource. Provide word mats with alternative spellings and key words they struggle with.
Writing	Content does not reflect ability			
	Good at thinking of ideas, but cannot get them down on paper		This could be due to difficulties with fine motor skills, processing speed, or translating thoughts into written words/spelling.	Support and develop handwriting skills as needed. Provide access to assistive technology, consider text-to-speech, enhanced spelling tools (word prediction), and voice recognition tools. Explore alternative methods of recording, such as mind maps, digital posters (e.g., on PowerPoint, Google Slides, Canva, Adobe Spark), videos, and cloze procedures.

Area	Potential Signs/Behaviours	✓	Potential Causes	Suggestions
	Uses simple ideas/vocabulary that doesn't reflect ability.		This might be due to word-level spelling difficulties, which can limit the use of more complex vocabulary.	To enhance writing and vocabulary skills, provide word banks, sentence starters, writing frames, Clicker apps, and writing scaffolds. Use tools like Thesaurus.com or vocabulary-building apps to expand their word choices (e.g., Word of the Day, Quizlet, Vocabulary.com). Additionally, use Elklan Word Maps and vocabulary games that include a focus on spelling.
	Written work often not completed		Difficulties with writing stamina/spelling/processing speed and / or organization.	Use guided writing sessions to support the development of planning and organizing ideas. Provide additional time or alternative methods of recording. Provide writing frames to help structure and break work into paragraphs, and support each paragraph with sentence starters and vocabulary
	Difficulties in structuring writing			
	Problems with grammar and punctuation e.g., tenses or words muddled, incorrect use of punctuation.		Difficulties with grammar	Focus on irregular verbs and check their correct usage. Play grammar games. Use Colourful Semantics to support sentence structure. Work on specific areas of difficulty one at a time, such as verb tenses or punctuation usage. Provide grammar and punctuation guides and use punctuation reminders.
	Problems sequencing ideas, organizing writing. Ideas not logically linked together – rambling style.		Difficulties with sequencing, expressive language, and developing and expressing ideas	Provide opportunities for oral storytelling using sequencing cards. Use tools like writing frames and graphic organizers to help structure thoughts and improve communication. Tools such as Colourful Stories , Pie Corbett's approaches, and Colourful Semantics will be useful.
Phonological Awareness				
	Struggles with phoneme/grapheme correspondence		Difficulties with phonological awareness and letter recognition	Use the alphabet arc to consolidate/develop 1:1 letter-sound correspondence. In the classroom, provide alphabet strips and phonetic code mats. Use personalized prompts for letter confusion (e.g., 'bed' prompt for b/d, sandpaper 'b' for beach, pink 'p')
	Inability to manipulate individual sounds in words (beginning, middle, or end sounds).		Difficulties with phonological awareness	Use a phoneme frames, clapping sounds, and sound button activities to develop segmenting skills.
	Difficulties blending sounds		Difficulties with phonological awareness	Play sound blending games, use blending boards and push-and-say activities.
	Unable to identify rhyming words		Difficulties with phonological awareness	Sharing books with rhymes. Sort objects or pictures by rhyme. Play pairs or lotto games with rhyming pictures/words.

Area	Potential Signs/Behaviours	✓	Potential Causes	Suggestions
	Struggles to identify syllables in words		Difficulties with phonological awareness	Teach syllables and syllable patterns. Use activities like clapping syllables in words to help pupils break down and understand word structure.
Processing and Memory	Slow to process instructions/questions/information		Difficulties with processing	Break tasks into smaller steps, use visual aids, provide written instructions, include step-by-step guides and allow extra processing time.
	Problems note-taking		Difficulties organising and processing information	Use bullet points, provide printed notes to highlight, use audio recording devices, employ mind-mapping techniques, and provide note-taking templates.
	Easily distracted		Difficulties with attention and concentration	Consider using timers, create structured task plans by breaking tasks down into manageable chunks, arrange seating to minimise distractions, use visual checklists, provide differentiated work with clear models, and incorporate regular breaks.
	Difficulties remembering sequential information (e.g., times-tables, alphabet, days and months)		Possible weaknesses in sequential, short-term, and working memory	Use visual aids and reminders, provide overlearning activities incorporating precision teaching, use daily drills, and create mnemonics with pupils.
	Forgetting rules, unable to follow procedures with multiple steps		Possible weaknesses in sequential, short-term, and working memory	Use visual task plans and checklists, provide step-by-step instructions, and ask the pupil to repeat instructions.
	Forgets ideas when writing		Possible weaknesses in sequential, short-term, and working memory and attention	Use voice recorders, mind mapping, story maps, and graphic organisers, and provide writing scaffolds organised clearly into sections with key points to cover in each.
	Forgets what has been asked to do		Possible weaknesses in short-term and working memory and attention	Use visual task plans and checklists, conduct post-task check, encourage peer support.
	Forgets equipment		Difficulties with organisation and memory	Use visual task plans and checklists, carry out post-task checks, encourage peer support, and provide regular reminders. Use visual cues and prompts, and ensure instructions are clear and concise.
	Difficulty using and understanding a timetable		Difficulties with organisation and memory	Provide a visual timetable, ensure the pupil has a personal copy, teach them how to use it effectively, and review the timetable regularly.

Area	Potential Signs/Behaviours	✓	Potential Causes	Suggestions
Maths				
	Difficulties telling the time		Lack of familiarity with clock faces, difficulty with abstract concepts of time, possible issues with spatial awareness	Draw attention to certain times of the day and revisit them regularly. Use colours for the hands on a clock and incorporate time-telling into daily routines. Display digital and analogue clocks side by side to help with understanding'
	Difficulties with mental maths		Working memory challenges, anxiety around maths	Allow the use of jottings and model different methods. Encourage the pupil to explain their methods. Use visual aids like number lines, grids, and multiplication squares. Break problems into smaller, manageable steps.
	Confusion of visually similar numbers (e.g. 6/9), number reversals (e.g. 21 for 12)		Visual processing issues	Identify and highlight similar-looking numbers, using number lines for self-checking. Create multi-sensory number lines and use a place value grid to help with two-digit number reversals. Emphasise the distinguishing features of numbers and provide activities to practice recognising these differences, including creating visual aids.
	Forgets maths concepts if not practised regularly		Long-term memory and working difficulties, lack of reinforcement	Use prompt cards for certain procedures to promote independence. Create a picture dictionary of rules and processes using photos, pictures, and examples. Regularly review and practice key concepts, and use repetition techniques.
	Misreads signs		Attention to detail, visual processing issues	Encourage self-monitoring and use multi-sensory strategies. Create a picture dictionary of signs and symbols. Highlight and practice common signs and symbols. Create visual reminders and posters with pupils that they can keep on their desks..
	Misreads written instructions and maths problems		Reading comprehension difficulties, working memory difficulties, deductive reasoning	Use a reader and highlight key vocabulary in problems. Break instructions into smaller, manageable parts and use visual aids to support understanding. Create visual reminders and posters with pupils that they can keep on their desks. Break down complex problems into smaller steps, use visual aids like diagrams and charts, and encourage jottings. Model problem-solving, use manipulatives, and teach various strategies. Practice word problems, encourage discussion, use technology, provide scaffolding, create a positive environment, and relate problems to real-life situations.
	Difficulties using column methods, e.g. starting at left		Procedural memory issues, lack of practice	Use rule cards and visual reminders, and model methods step-by-step. Create a picture rule dictionary and practice with scaffolded support, gradually reducing help

Area	Potential Signs/Behaviours	✓	Potential Causes	Suggestions
	Difficulties remembering times-tables and mathematical procedures		Working and sequential memory challenges, lack of practice	Use precision teaching and daily drills, and create times-table cards together. Teach pupils how to quickly create their own times-table squares for exams and tests. Provide multiplication squares and use iPad apps to reinforce learning. Play times-table games and use songs, rhymes, and games to make learning fun.
	Confuses similar sounding numbers, e.g. thirteen and thirty		Auditory processing issues	Use visual aids like number charts and flashcards to highlight differences. Engage in auditory discrimination activities, such as listening exercises and repetition. Use both visual and auditory cues together; for example, show the number on a flashcard while saying it aloud. This reinforces learning through multiple senses. Use precision teaching to ensure clear understanding of each number.
Motor Coordination				
	Poor handwriting		Fine motor skill difficulties, lack of practice	Use a cursive script to improve fluidity and legibility. Use programs like Write from Start by Teodorescu and SpeedUp by Lois Addy to develop handwriting skills and writing speed. Use ergonomic pens, bubble writing, and provide handwriting line guides in all books. Provide fine motor activities like threading beads and playing with clay to strengthen motor skills. Teach typing skills using programs like BBC Dance Mat Typing. See the Physical and Medical Team's resources and advice sheets on BSO for more ideas.
	Difficulties copying from the board		Reading and spelling difficulties, visual processing issues, attention difficulties	Provide notes to highlight, use gapped tasks, put notes on a small whiteboard, let pupils take a photo on an iPad so they can copy from their desk/read and make notes of key points. Colour code lines in different colours
	Problems in having/finding necessary equipment in school		Organizational and memory difficulties	Clearly label equipment around the classroom with visuals. Use subject-specific equipment checklists. Send a checklist of needed equipment home and share the timetable with parents so they can support ensuring the right equipment is brought to school. Provide a brief reminder at home time about what is needed for the next day. Additionally, parents could consider using a visual schedule and setting up a designated area at home for school supplies to help with organization.
	Difficulties executing tasks in the right order		Executive function issues, memory and attention difficulties	Use task plans, step-by-step guides, and allow time to plan/discuss the best order to carry out activities to complete a task.

Area	Potential Signs/Behaviours	✓	Potential Causes	Suggestions
	Forgetting or not doing homework		Memory issues, lack of organizational skills	Use a planner, give opportunities to complete homework in school, create a homework timetable for parents, and send email reminders and/or alerts on iPads. Use visual reminders and checklists to help the student keep track of assignments. Communicate regularly with parents to ensure they are aware of homework expectations and can provide support at home. Encourage parents to help pupils establish a consistent homework routine and designate a specific time and place for homework completion.
	Difficulty using and understanding a timetable		Visual processing issues, spatial awareness, maths difficulties	Provide a visual timetable. Ensure pupils have a copy and know how to use it. Use color coding to differentiate between subjects and activities. Teach the student how to read and interpret the timetable, and provide practice sessions. Use reminders and alarms to help the student transition between activities. Regularly review the timetable with the student to ensure they understand and can follow it independently.
Behaviour				
	Has low self-esteem generally and/or as a learner		Dyslexia, past academic struggles, lack of confidence	Use positive praise and consistently draw attention to the pupil's strengths. Ensure they have alternative methods to record their work, allowing them to demonstrate their successes and learning effectively. Discuss openly that it is okay to struggle—everyone has strengths and weaknesses. Refer to positive role models with dyslexia to inspire and motivate them. Consider metacognition by discussing with the pupil how they learn best and what strategies help them most. Additionally, provide regular opportunities for success through achievable tasks, celebrate their achievements, and create a supportive classroom environment. Encourage peer support and collaborative activities to build confidence and social skills. Monitor their emotional well-being and provide counseling or additional support if needed.
	Uses work avoidance tactics.		Dyslexia, frustration with difficult tasks, lack of engagement	Ensure tasks are differentiated to engage the pupil's learning. Remove barriers—e.g., difficulties with reading and writing. Provide alternative methods of recording and adjust time and content of tasks accordingly.
	Often off-task.		Attention difficulties, lack of engagement, dyslexia	Use clear and consistent routines, provide structured activities, and use visual and auditory cues to maintain focus. Break tasks into smaller, manageable steps and provide regular check-ins.

Area	Potential Signs/Behaviours	✓	Potential Causes	Suggestions
	Reluctant to contribute in lessons.		Low self-esteem, fear of failure, dyslexia	Create a supportive classroom environment, use positive reinforcement, and provide opportunities for the pupil to contribute in low-pressure situations. Encourage peer support and collaborative activities.
	Relies on other pupils for help.		Lack of confidence, dependence on peers, dyslexia	Encourage independent work by providing clear instructions and scaffolding tasks. Use peer tutoring and cooperative learning strategies to build confidence.
	Withdrawn		Low self-esteem, social anxiety, dyslexia	Foster a positive and inclusive classroom environment, provide opportunities for social interaction, and use activities that build self-esteem. Monitor the pupil's well-being and provide support as needed.