Children with literacy difficulties

Warrender Primary school
19.11.2024

Outline and aims

- How literacy difficulties including dyslexia impact on a child's learning
- Reflect on how these issues impact on home
- Activities and tools that can support children with literacy difficulties
- The role of the Educational Psychologist in supporting children with literacy difficulties
- Planning for secondary school

Hillingdon Educational Psychology Service

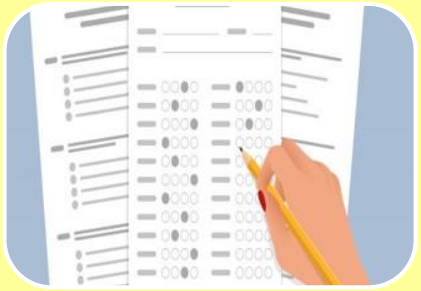
The Hillingdon Educational Psychology Service (EPS) works with children aged 0-25.

We apply psychological theory to support children, families and schools concerning a child's:

- Learning
- Play and friendships
- Emotional wellbeing

The role of the Educational Psychologist (EP)

Consultation



Assessments and Individual work

Interventions (individual work with children or as a group)

workshops

Research

A child’s experiences and learning are influenced by the multiple layers in their environment. This is illustrated in the ecological systems diagram.

Educational Psychologists (EPS) understand the child’s learning by looking at their experiences across the environment (e.g. parent’s views of their child’s learning, the classroom, how research and understanding of literacy difficulties and access to support for these needs have developed over time).

Achievements of people with literacy difficulties

Art	Computer science	Design	Drama
Electronics	Maths	Mechanics	Music
Physics	Sales	Sports	

What are literacy difficulties?

- Children that have a particular difficulty in acquiring literacy skills (the ability to read, write and spell)
- Literacy difficulties affect:
- Phonological awareness (the ability to identify the small units of sound in a spoken word e.g. the ‘p’ sound in ‘pat’)
- Short-term verbal memory
- Verbal processing speed (the time it takes to process information such as letters and digits)

Literacy difficulties also includes dyslexia

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia effects learning to read, spell or write which persist despite learning interventions.

“Best thought of as a continuum (no distinct category) with 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. (British Dyslexia Association)

How can an Educational Psychologist support a child with literacy difficulties?

Identification

Assessment

Support and intervention

Access to intervention, assessment , appropriately planned and monitored intervention is the most important action for a child or young person with literacy difficulties.

What are some things that a child with literacy difficulties may find challenging?

What are some things that children with literacy difficulties find challenging?

Writing	Reading	Spelling	Memory and Concentration
Speaking and listening	Reasoning and understanding	Organisation	Handwriting
Behaviour	Numeracy	Motor co-ordination (eye to hand co ordination	

Reading

Here are some of the skills that children with literacy difficulties experience when reading:

- Decode (ability to recognise words on printed page) and language comprehension (vocabulary and understanding of words)
- Slow reading progress with many inaccuracies , fluency or speed can interfere with reading comprehension
- May lose the point of the story being read or written
- Hesitant and laboured reading
- Finding it difficult to blend letters together
- Misreads words, eg ‘tried’ instead of ‘tired’

Spelling

- Continuing to find it difficult to remember spellings:
  - May have strange spelling patterns
  - Letter addition, omission
  - Transpositions (misordering letters e.g. ‘lable’ instead of ‘label’)
  - lack of knowledge of spelling rules (orthographics)
- **Encoding**: Hearing the sound that is spoken out loud, writing it down using the appropriate (grapheme)
- Or hearing a spoken word, breaking this word down into its phonemes (unit of sound) using graphemes.
- **Decoding**: is reading by understanding and blending the sounds in a word.

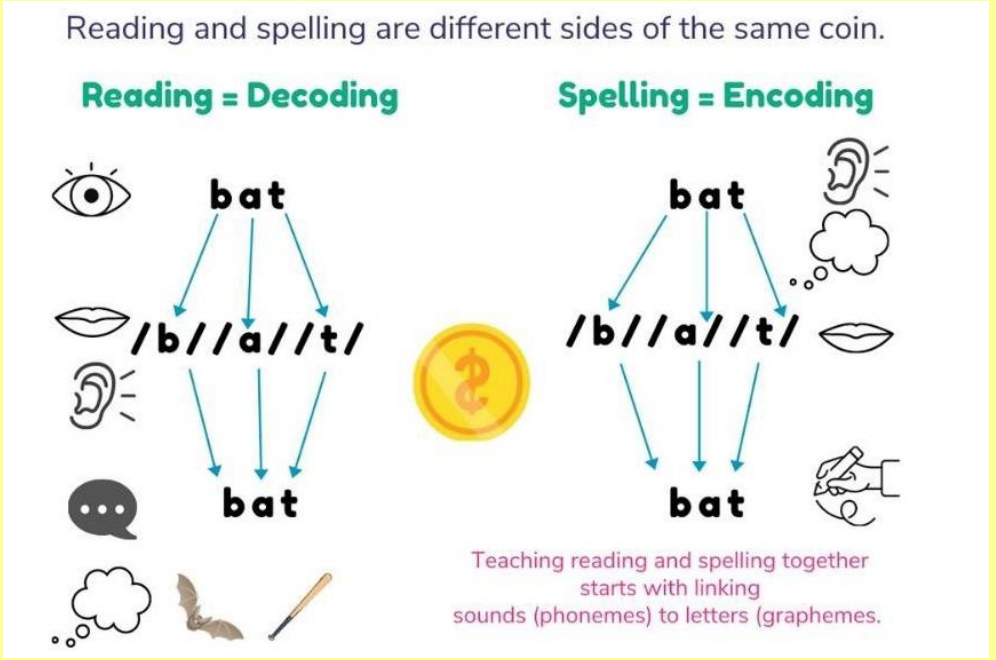
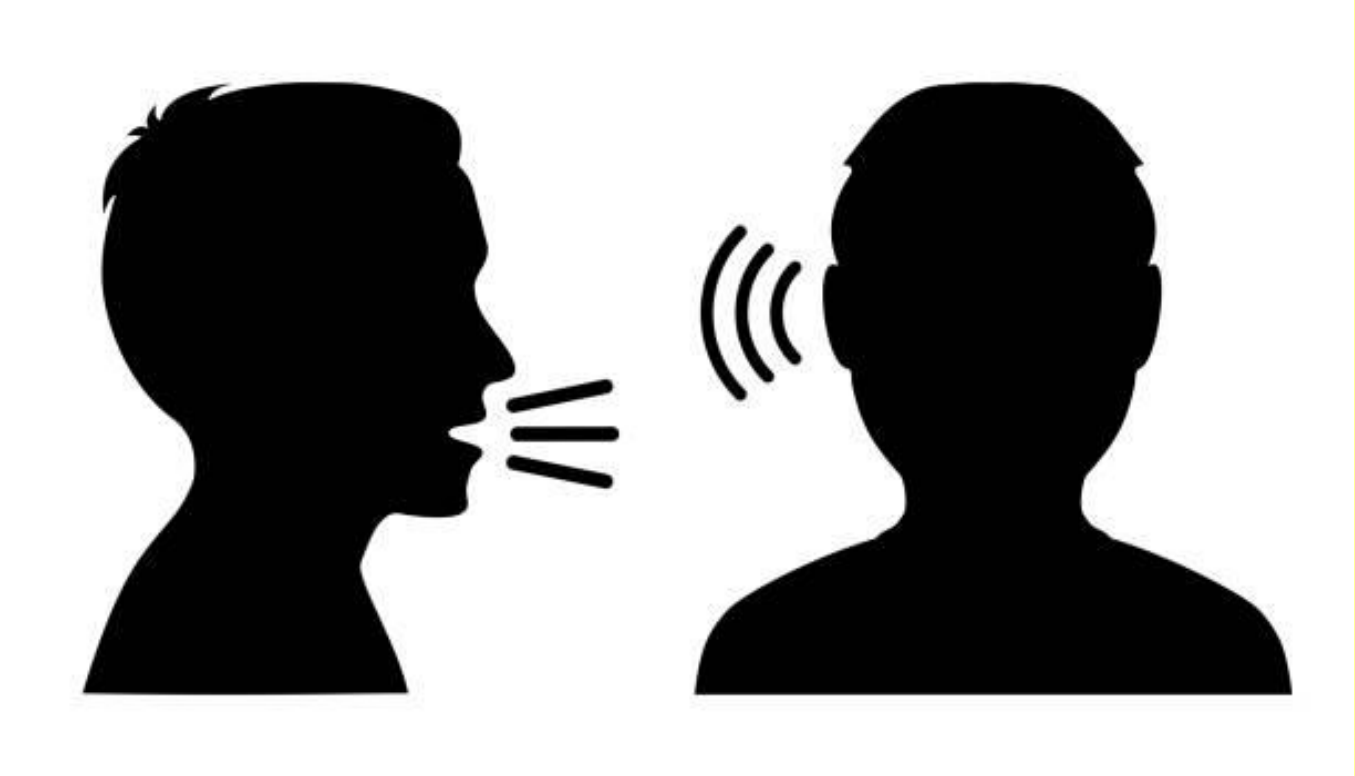


Image: The Dyslexia Classroom



Speaking and listening

- Still mispronouncing or misuses some words

(‘Hecilopter’ instead of ‘helicopter’)

- Word finding can be difficult
- Difficulty following instructions

Organisation

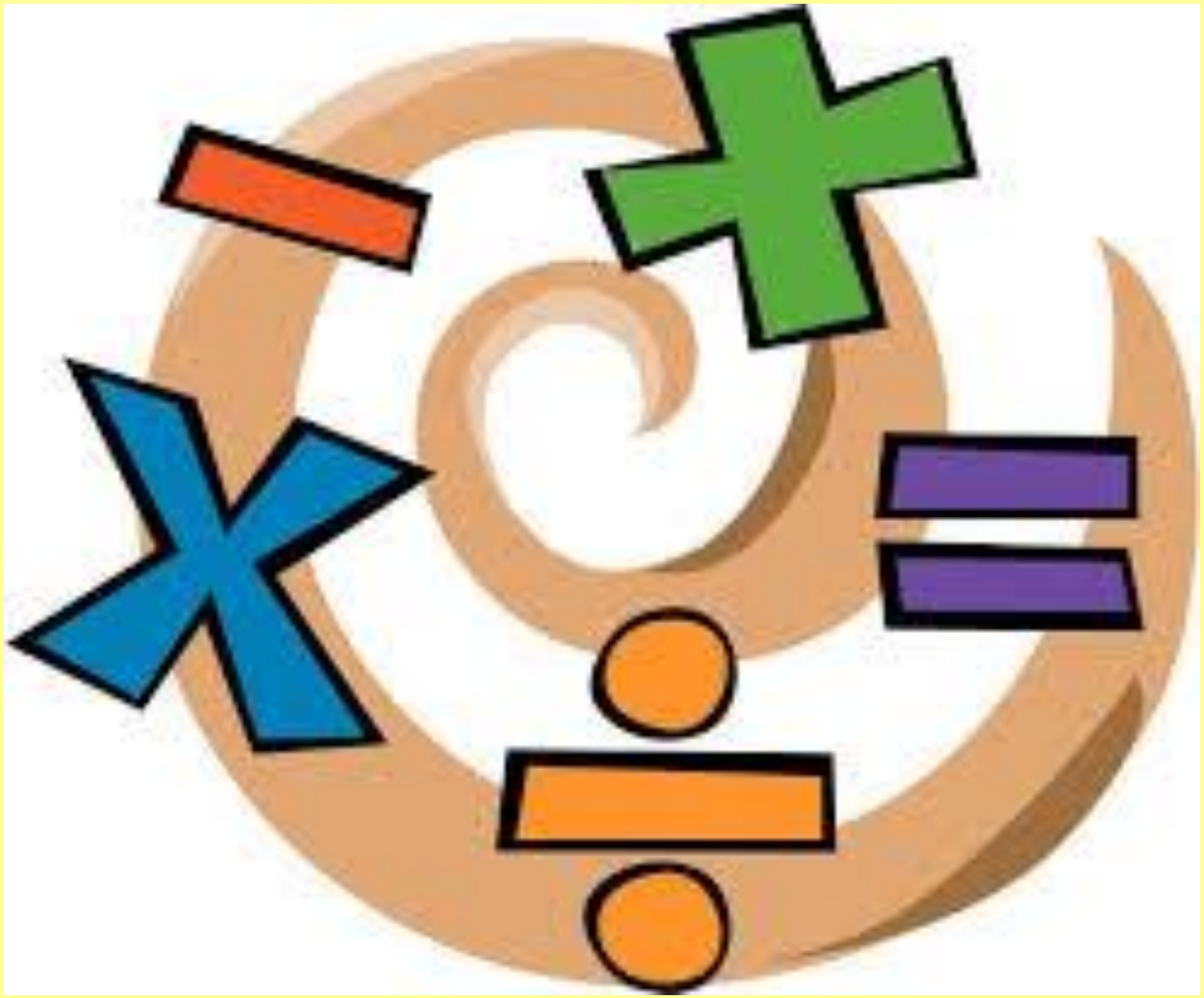
- Difficulties with time keeping
- Finding planning and organising themselves difficult
- Has difficulty learning to tell the time
- Frequently forgetting equipment (pens and pencils, books etc)
- Difficulty with concepts – yesterday, today, tomorrow or up and down or left and right.

Reasoning and understanding

- Has poor planning and organisational skills
- Has poor time management skills
- Has trouble with non-literal or figurative language, eg idioms, proverbs

Memory and concentration

- Finds it difficult to retain learning (remembering what they see and hear)
- Has difficulty remembering what they have just read.
- Retaining instructions.
- Has problems recalling the names of some words or objects
- Zones out
- Difficulties with multi tasking
- Sensitivity to glare



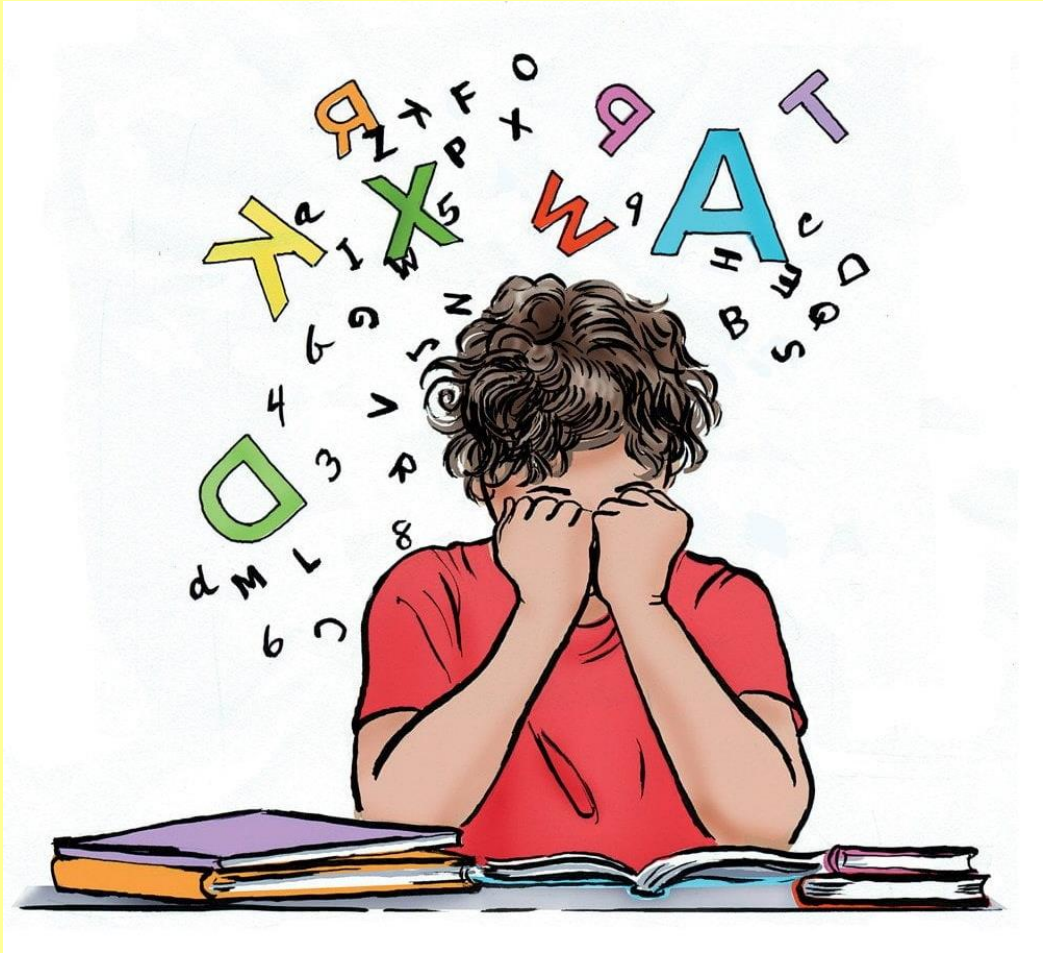
Numeracy

- Children with literacy difficulties can also experience the following:
- Difficulties with working memory, processing speed
- Numeracy skills - linked to working memory, speed of processing, rapid retrieval
- Difficulties with understanding place value, units, tens, hundreds
- Confusing symbols such as + and x signs
- Remembering sequences (days of the week, alphabet)
- Forget previously mastered skills quickly

Emotions and behaviour

40-60% children with literacy difficulties and dyslexia experience difficulties with their emotional wellbeing Policy Research Unit Children and Families, 2020)

- Easily distracted, daydreaming – doesn't appear to be listening
- Worried about school and completing schoolwork
- Refusing to complete written work, homework and reading activities
- Avoids activities (e.g. reading)
- Withdrawn
- Disruptive
- Tired due to the concentration and effort required



Motor coordination (eye to hand co ordination)

- Differences in standard of written work compared to child's oral ability
- Difficult handwriting – hard to understand what the child has written
- Crossings and rubbing outs spelling attempts , work is messy
- Awkward pencil grip
- Hand ache from awkward pencil grip

How does having a literacy difficulty affect a child within the classroom?

Excessive tiredness due to the amount of concentration required

Difficulties sitting still, appears to be daydreaming, appears easily distracted

Remembers best when shown what to do rather than told what to do

Restricted work in comparison to their ability to express themselves

Performance is uneven

Sensitivity to glare

Family history or literacy difficulties or Dyslexia

Activities and tools that can help support your child

Reading

Spelling

Handwriting

Reasoning and understanding

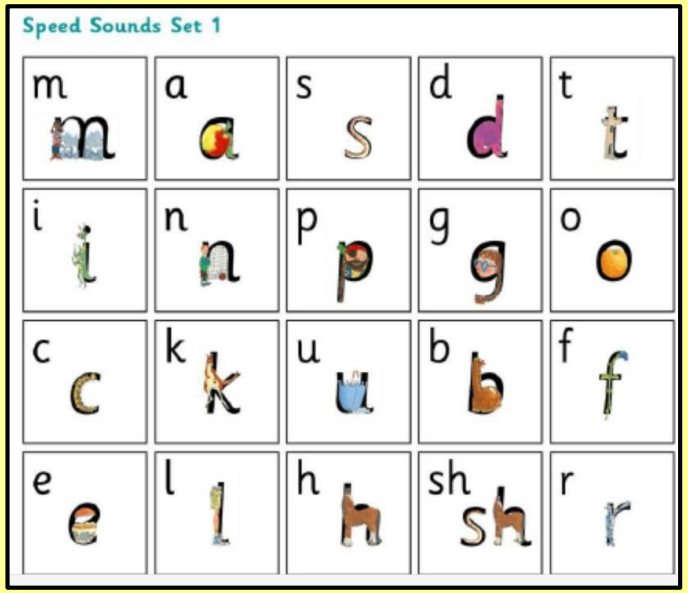
Motor coordination

Behaviour

Planning , organising & homework

Reading & understanding

Examples of the approaches and interventions at Warrender Primary school

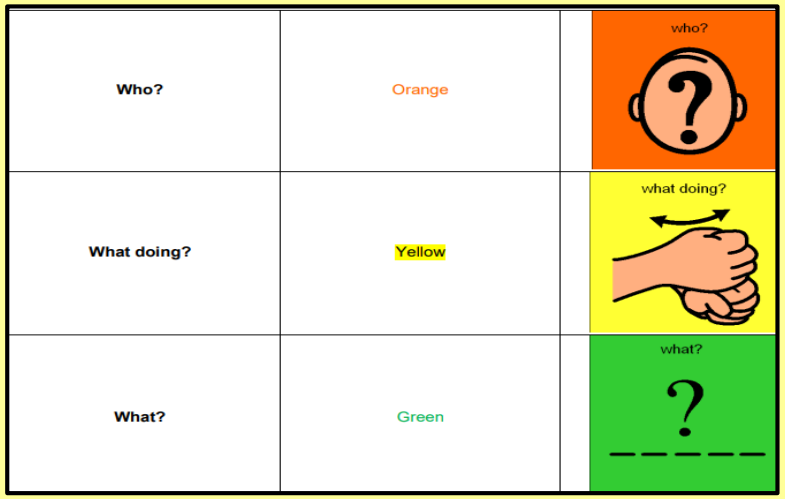


Phonics

sounds-support-sheet.docx

Read Write Inc

- the sounds in English the letters that represent them
- how to form the letters when writing.



Colourful Semantics

- is a system for colour coding sentences according to the role of different words
- Helps children to break down sentences and understand the individual meaning of each word and its role in sentences

Reading

- Helps develop language, listening, imagination and understanding.
- Allow your child to choose a book they want to read
- If they make a mistake, give them a few seconds to have a go, then say the correct word yourself
- If the book is too hard, read at the child's pace
- Arrange a signal they can use when they want you to carry on reading.
- 10 mins each day – (focus on sharing the book together)
- Talk about stories you are reading
- Audio books (keep the child interested in the story if reluctant to read)
- Look at BBC bitesize, visit your local library for free audio stories, reading activities and games

Reasoning and understanding

Explore your child's understanding through asking questions such as

What's happening in the story?

Who are the characters? (can you describe them)

What do you think is happening?

What do you think will happen next?

Assisted technology

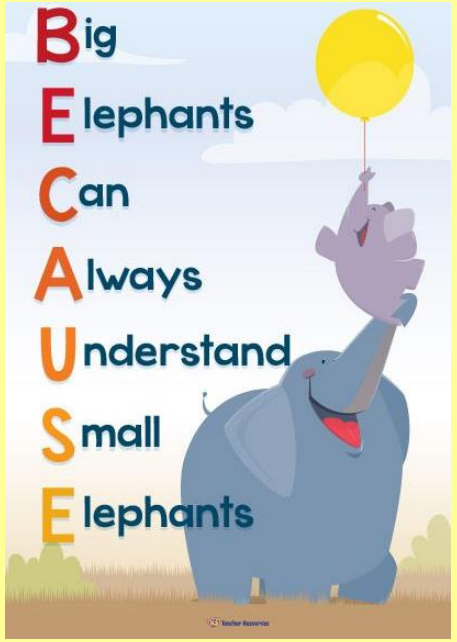
Screen readers

(software that converts speech to text) more suited to older children – available on some phones and computers, and tablets

Reading pens

Can be useful as they are easy to carry around, but they tend to be better for small pieces of text, or individual words

Spelling



Mnemonics

towel	shirt
carpet	bicycle
car	hat

Flash cards

Highlighting words

Multisensory approach (playdough, sand tray, writing letters in the air with their finger, foam, string, tracing paper

Repeat spelling rules together (‘q’ is always followed by ‘u’)

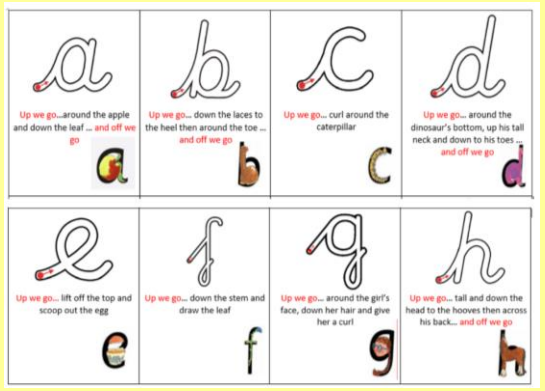
Writing

Keep activities short

Tripod grips

Consider using a slanted writing surface

Playdough, putty or other hand exercises – strengthen muscles in their hands

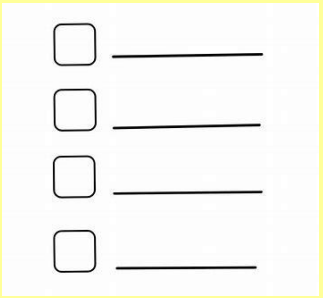


Warrender school's handwriting sheet

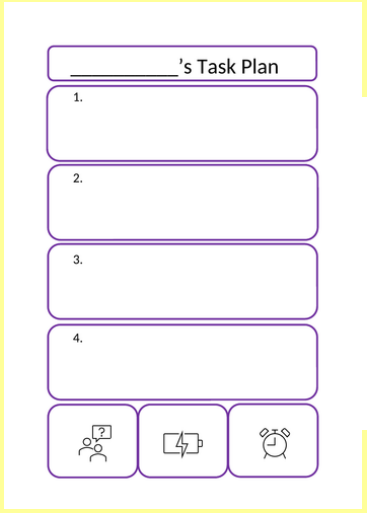
Planning, organising and homework

Establishing a routine –use a little and often approach

Home – school communication (e.g. clarify homework and methods used with the class teacher)



Making a list of frequent spellings, punctuations and grammar mistakes to practice



First	Next	Then	Finally
1	2	3	4

Task planners

Behaviour and confidence

- Children with literacy difficulties are more likely to practice their reading and writing when they know they will receive praise
- Continue to show empathy and understanding
- Using a “have a go” approach when completing reading or writing tasks
- Encourage “positive self talk”
- Modelling – share things you found difficult and how you overcame them
- Teach them that everyone has their own unique strengths

Visual stress

Visual stress is also known as Irelen syndrome it can occur in children with literacy difficulties and dyslexia

Signs of visual stress

- Headaches
- Eye strain
- Tiredness after reading
- Blurring or movement of print
- Letters changing size
- Illusion of colour on the page

An overlay is prescribed with a tint unique to each child

Orthoptist Vision Assessment

- Parents can request a sight test for their child at their local Opticians
- An orthoptist can assess, diagnose and treat visual problems relating to reading and writing skills
- They can offer advice and guidance for parents, schools and at post 16
- The following websites provide further information on visual stress tests:
- Visual Processing Difficulties - British and Irish Orthoptic Society
- Visual difficulties - British Dyslexia Association
- The eyesite website (eyesite.co.uk- Visual Stress Test) also provides example of a visual stress test

Post primary school

Home – school communication	Talking and listening	Reading
Spelling and writing	Memory	Behaviour

Home – school support

My support plan

Communication with secondary school regarding your child’s progress

Checking the school website for important dates and events

Talking and listening

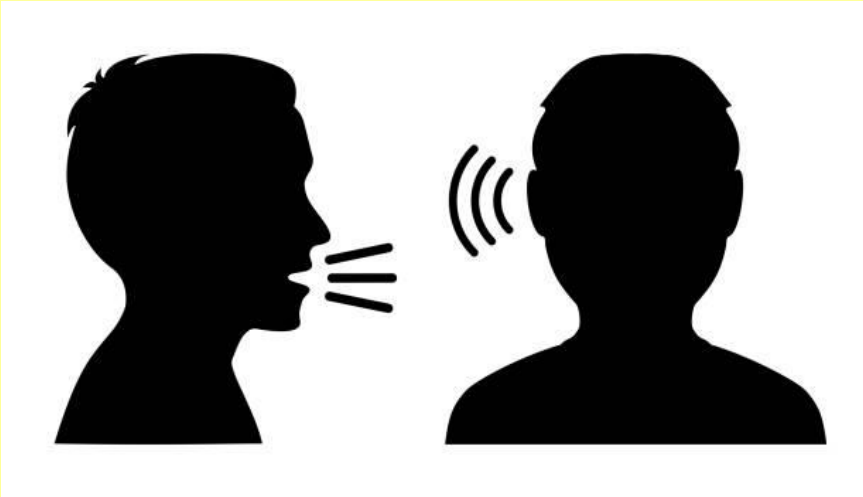
- Giving enough time for your child to respond to questions
- Give one step instructions
- Support your child to understand the instructions of homework with questions such as:

“What is the task asking you to do?”

“Have you seen something like this before?”

“What do you need to do first?”

“What do you have to do next?”



Reading

Assisted technology – working on a computer maybe easier (speech to text technology to dictate, audio)

Supplements to reading texts e.g. audiotapes, debates etc

Writing and spelling

Assisted technology
Working on a computer might be easier for the student – read aloud function can check work

Mind maps

Dictionaries

Memory, planning and organisation

- Visual timetable
- Checklist of equipment
- Task planners
- Planning and organising – folders for each subject (name, form subject)
- Practicing packing their own bags
- Developing independence (helping to organise and plan activities)
- Identifying a study buddy
- Check they have permission to take pictures of homework tasks or important information.
- Recording important deadlines

Emotions and behaviour

- Encouraging positive self talk
- Teaching your child to advocate for themselves- approaching teachers for help, asking questions to clarify and understand information
- Mental Health Support Team (speak to your child's school for a referral)
- Young Minds
- The Mix (www.themix.org.uk for under 25s)

Next steps

If you are concerned that your child is having difficulties with reading, writing or spelling speak with your child's class teacher & Mr Wright and Ms Cook (Special Educational Needs Coordinators)

References

- Barrington Stoke www.collins.co.uk/pages/barrington-stoke
- BBC Bitesize www.bbc.com/education
- British Dyslexia Association www.bdyslexia.org.uk
- Cbeebies Growth Mindset Growth Mindsets: help your child try new things – Cbeebies
- CNWL mental health support teams in schools www.cnwl.nhs.uk/services/mental-health-services/child-and-adolescent-mental-health/services
- Eyesite (Eyesite.co.uk) Visual Stress Test
- Hillingdon Educational Psychology service https://careandsupport.hillingdon.gov.uk
- Policy Research Unit Children and Families (2020).Dyslexia and allied reading difficulties and their relationship with mental health problems: A rapid review of evidence https://www.ucl.ac.uk/children-policy-research/sites/children_policy_research/files/cpru_dyslexia_and_mental_health_june_2020.pdf
- Visual Processing difficulties – British and Irish Orthoptic Society www.orthoptics.org.uk/patients-and-public/visual-process
- Young Minds (Mental health charity) www.youngminds.org.uk
- The Mix www.themix.org.uk