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• Example of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for children with Dyslexia	Inside Front Cover
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Introduction

If you are looking at this book, it is a safe bet that you have an interest in dyslexia. Perhaps in a professional capacity, you are working with a child who seems to have difficulties with his literacy skills, and you wonder whether dyslexia has something to do with it.

Whatever your reason for picking up this book, I hope you will find answers to some of your questions about dyslexia, and ideas for things you can actually do to support the child in managing his difficulty. The book is a starting point and it gives you background information and practical suggestions for action you can take.

Remember you are not on your own. Your setting should have an inclusive special educational needs (SEN) policy in place, and a designated Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) who should work closely with you to help the child achieve his potential. While it is not the job of the SENCO to work on a one-to-one basis with the child (unless, of course, he also happens to be the child's key practitioner), he is there to offer you support and advice. Even if he does not know the answers to your questions, he will know where to go and whom to ask.

There are also organisations such as Dyslexia Action

(formerly known as the Dyslexia Institute), the British Dyslexia Association and parents' support groups that will help you. You will find contact details of these and other supporting organisations at the end of the book. Take the opportunity to get in touch and listen to their advice and suggestions. They have excellent websites, with loads of help and guidance for you as the child's practitioner.

Scattered through the book are case studies which serve as examples to illustrate a point being made. They all feature real children whose names have been changed. You will also come across a Pause for Thought section every so often, where an issue will be introduced that gives you an opportunity to ponder practice a little more deeply, and which you can possibly discuss and share with your colleagues.

Before we move on to the main body of the book, allow me to say a few words about terminology. I still hear people referring to a dyslexic child, or, less positive, a dyslexic. It behoves us as professionals to relentlessly pursue and model the correct approach, ie. that the child is a child first and foremost who happens to have a condition or disability known as dyslexia. So you will find this book refers to a child with dyslexia or a child with dyslexic traits.



How can dyslexia be recognised?

It is important to remember that only an educational psychologist or another specialist professional can identify whether the child you have concerns about actually has dyslexia.

This section describes some of the signs you can look out for to help you decide whether you ought to refer the child for further observation and identification of possible difficulties. By keeping careful records of

your observations, you will have a description of the child and the way he presents himself in the setting that will help the outside agents in any assessment or testing that may be done.

You also need to bear in mind that no two children are the same. It does not follow that all children will experience all the problems, nor to the same degree of severity.

What signs do I need to look out for?

Dyslexia is not usually spotted until the child is at school and formally starts to learn to read and write. It is then that the problems begin to show themselves.

But there are still things to watch for if the child is below statutory school age. In this section, we will look at the signs to spot at various ages. It is important, however, to bear in mind that these are only generalised signs, and you may find a child of a particular age showing signs usually exhibited by a child of a different age. As with all these things, there is no hard-and-fast rule.

Babyhood, infancy and pre-school

Here, you may have to ask the child's carers to help you. Ask them to tell you about their child as a baby, a toddler and an infant. Their descriptions may help you to decide what action (if any) to take next. Some of these questions may apply to the child in the setting, so compare notes with the carers and see whether the child is the same at home as with you.

Find out whether the child

- did not crawl but shuffled on his bottom or wriggled on his tummy, or even walked early, leaving out the crawling stage altogether;
- developed speech later or slower than the carer expected;
- found it hard to remember nursery rhymes, or rhyming words such as cot, hot and pot (does that still happen in the setting?);
- found it hard to clap a simple rhythm (is he still like that?);
- could not remember the names of everyday things such as car or coat, (is that still the case?);
- jumbled up phrases regularly, such as cobblers' club instead of toddlers' club (how about now?);
- substitutes similar words, such as toothbrush for toothpaste;

- likes to be read to and enjoys stories etc., but is not interested in letters and words;
- often trips up, bumps into things or falls over;
- cannot kick, catch or throw a ball properly, cannot hop or skip;
- finds it hard to dress himself or put his shoes on properly;
- often seems to be ignoring adults who are looking after him; not listening or paying attention.

Age 5–11 years

Watch for whether the child

- has difficulty getting dressed, tying shoelaces, bows, etc.;
- is unusually clumsy;
- has poor concentration;



- does not have much confidence or has low self-esteem;
- finds it hard to talk to you in an organised way, or to hold a rapid conversation;
- finds it difficult to pronounce words;
- reverses words or substitutes them;
- cannot hear the difference between similar words, such as ten and tin;
- cannot carry out three instructions one after the other;
- finds it hard to understand time and tense;
- cannot remember his tables, spellings, the alphabet, etc.;
- mixes up right and left;
- has a poor sense of direction;
- finds it hard to recognise rhyming words;
- can tell you the answers to questions but cannot write them down;
- finds reading and spelling very hard;
- mixes up letters and figures, or puts them the wrong way around or upside down, such as d for b, q for p, 81 for 18, 6 for 9, was for saw, nut for fun, etc.;
- leaves letters out of words altogether;
- reads a word correctly then gets it wrong further down the page;
- spells the same words in several different ways, often not recognising the correct spelling;
- finds it hard to understand what he has just read;
- has difficulty with the order of the days of the week or the months of the year;
- needs to use his fingers to add and subtract;
- is bright and alert in areas not connected with reading and spelling.

Age 11– adult

Clearly this stage is well beyond the early years level, but it is still useful for you to have an idea of how a child with dyslexia may perform at a later stage of his development.

Check whether the child

- mixes up direction words such as backwards and forwards, in and out, up and down;
- still has difficulty with sequences such as the days of the week, months of the year, numbers, etc.;
- mixes up times, dates and places;
- continues to have problems with reading and spelling;
- finds it hard to remember what he has just read;
- has difficulty in concentrating when reading or writing;
- gets muddled when using long words;
- has to have telephone numbers and instructions repeated;
- has difficulty in taking notes accurately;
- finds it hard to plan and write essays or assignments;
- is bright and alert in areas not connected with reading and spelling;

- does not have much confidence or has low self-esteem.

Use the results of your observations during discussions with the carers; compare notes, experiences and anecdotes. Often a pattern or similar picture emerges, where the child is having the same difficulties both at home and in the setting.

It is particularly useful to watch how the child reacts when he is looking at books, and when he is doing his writing. The expression on his face can give away a great deal about what is going on in his head. For example, if he appears to be in pain or uncomfortable, ask him – children with dyslexia may get headaches when they are reading.

Track his eye movements when he is reading: do his eyes flit all over the page? A child with dyslexia may feel that the text moves about on the page, and he finds it difficult to focus on the words.

See what his reaction is when he has to do something involving a specific orientation. Does he appear confused? Does he watch the other children and then copy where they go, or what they do? Children with dyslexia often confuse left and right, and suffer torments when deciding which is required.

It is crucial to keep in mind that all children, including the one you may be concerned about, have some skills they can shine at. Take the trouble to see what the child's talents are, and help him to feel good about it.

