

## 2 Assessment in early years and primary school

### Chapter overview

This chapter will:

- highlight the importance of early identification
- discuss the factors that can prompt concern
- discuss the 'overcoming barriers to learning' approach to supporting young children with dyslexia
- discuss other signs of young children in early years or primary school being at risk of dyslexia
- discuss areas that overlap with dyslexia
- provide information on observational assessment
- discuss legislation for early identification.

### Early identification

The importance of early identification of dyslexia was introduced in Chapter 1 (page 7). There is widespread opinion based on long-standing and current research that early identification is in fact the key to successful intervention. It is therefore important that teachers are able to identify those pupils who may either be close to failing, or show signs of being at risk of failing.

Reid (2017) suggests that early identification can be seen in two key factors:

1. identifying those pupils who have challenges with learning and literacy
2. monitoring and observing those pupils who appear resistant to intervention and as a result lag behind their peers.

It is well-established that early identification is really about raising concerns and does not necessarily imply that a diagnosis should result. It is also important to individuals who are resistant to intervention.

### *Identifying a profile*

It is important to identify a high-risk profile that can indicate dyslexia. Indicators such as letter and sound knowledge, short-term and working memory skills, alliteration and rhyming abilities, speedy naming of objects, and sequencing, often along with possible difficulties, in accessing known words for objects, organisation skills and motor difficulties, should all be noted. With this information, a profile for the pupil can be developed and the main purpose of this is to develop an intervention plan to prevent failure. Early identification should have a preventative aim and not necessarily a diagnostic purpose. Early identification should therefore consider the pupil's learning profile and further assessment can take place if this profile of strengths and difficulties matches that usually associated with dyslexia.

**Fig. 7.3:** Specifying the concern

Nature of concern	Information required	Possible diagnosis/further action
Reluctance to read	<p>Is the reader reading at the correct age range?</p> <p>Is the book relevant and motivating?</p> <p>Does the student have a schema for the story?</p> <p>Are the background of the story and the context of the story known to the student?</p> <p>Does the student experience lack of confidence?</p>	<p>Try easier texts with vocabulary below the student's age.</p> <p>Try to use books with larger typeface.</p> <p>Possible dyslexia but further testing is necessary.</p>
Numeracy difficulties	<p>Can the student identify numbers readily?</p> <p>Check basic arithmetic – adding, subtracting, multiplying and simple divisions.</p> <p>Note the type of errors the student makes? Is there a processing difficulty, e.g. makes arithmetic errors? Or a difficulty in technique and understanding what is to be done?</p> <p>Does the student misread the symbols, e.g. adding for subtracting?</p> <p>Is there a difficulty in mathematical concepts (e.g. understanding what is actually being asked and how to carry out the task)?</p> <p>Is there a reading comprehension difficulty?</p>	<p>Try reading the question to the student.</p> <p>Provide examples for each of the tasks.</p> <p>Ask the student to think aloud as he or she is responding to the question. This can help to track how he or she is tackling the problem, and any inefficiency in technique and working can be discussed.</p> <p>Possible diagnosis of dyscalculia but further testing necessary, e.g. dyscalculia screener.</p>
Social/emotional concerns	<p>How does the student react in groups?</p> <p>Can the student be described as being socially isolated?</p> <p>How is the student's demeanor, e.g. happy, sad, etc.?</p> <p>Is the student comfortable in a one-to-one situation?</p> <p>Does the student enjoy and participate in extra-curricular activities?</p> <p>Are there signs of stress and anxiety?</p>	<p>Try structured group work.</p> <p>You can also use the SNAP behaviour assessment tool (Long and Weedon, 2017), see Chapter 2 (page 22) and Online Resources.</p>
Organisation/memory	<p>Poor organisation – student omits key points in written work and in homework.</p> <p>Student forgets to bring items to school, e.g. PE kit.</p> <p>Student needs a lot of repetition.</p> <p>Student needs help to organise written work.</p> <p>Student cannot find things in his or her backpack or school bag.</p> <p>Student has difficulty following instructions.</p>	<p>Further testing – possibly cognitive testing, e.g. a psychologist using the WISC-V test (see Chapter 4) or teachers testing using WIAT-T or WIST (see Online Resources).</p>
Attention	<p>Student is easily distracted irrespective of what he or she is doing.</p> <p>Needs information to be repeated.</p> <p>Needs a lot of mobility and can be impulsive.</p> <p>Can become frustrated easily.</p>	<p>Further testing – use tests for ADHD (see Chapter 9).</p> <p>Can be associated with dyslexia or dyspraxia – or can be attention difficulties (ADHD or ADD).</p>

# Appendix 1

## Pre-assessment questionnaires

Pre-assessment questionnaire: parent/carer

<b>Date</b>	
<b>Name of pupil/student</b>	
<b>Name of person completing the form</b>	
<b>Relationship to pupil/student</b>	
What are the pupil's/student's interests at home?	
Does he/she like reading at home?	
What kind of writing activities does he/she prefer?	
What aspects of school does he/she like?	
What aspects of school does he/she dislike?	
Has he/she ever had difficulties with hearing?	<i>If yes, please describe</i>
Does he/she have difficulties with hearing now?	<i>If yes, please describe</i>
Has he/she ever had difficulties with eyesight?	<i>If yes, please describe</i>
Does he/she have difficulties with eyesight now?	<i>If yes, please describe</i>
Has he/she ever had difficulties with speech development?	<i>If yes, please describe</i>
Does he/she have difficulties with speech now?	<i>If yes, please describe</i>
Has he/she ever had difficulties with coordination?	<i>If yes, please describe</i>
Does he/she have difficulties with coordination now?	<i>If yes, please describe</i>
Does he/she seem more tired than normal after school?	
Is he/she willing and able to do homework independently?	
Does he/she have extra tuition outside of school?	
Has he/she expressed any views about his/her abilities?	<i>If yes, please describe</i>
What are his/her strong points?	
Would you like any information from the school?	