

Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD)

What is it?

SpLD is the term used most often to describe Dyslexia. This is a life-long disorder, which can affect all aspects of learning. The cause is unknown and it varies in severity. It is often diagnosed when a child has failed to acquire the level of literacy which would be expected for their ability. It can also affect speech, memory, sense of direction, co-ordination and the ability to recognize and learn sequences e.g. days of the week. Dyscalculia is 'Numerical Dyslexia'.

How is it recognized?

- When reading, a Dyslexic may: Miss out or replace words, not recall what was read, find it stressful, not make connections between sounds and letters e.g. confuses b/d.
- When writing, a Dyslexic may: Spell phonetically, not be able to express ideas clearly or logically, not be able to copy correctly, find spelling and writing physically tiring, quickly forget taught spellings, produce work which does not reflect their ability, be very untidy.
- A Dyslexic may also: Be very disorganized, forget instructions, be unable to use a dictionary or learn timetables, have very little self confidence, show very good oral knowledge, develop strategies to avoid or cope with class-work rather than ask for help.

NB: *Dyslexics may also have ADHD, Dyspraxia, Speech and Language Difficulties or Irlen Syndrome (i.e. they need a coloured overlay or lenses for reading).*

How to help?

- Use displays to remind students of key words for a topic.
- Provide writing frames and vocabulary for written work.
- Allow students to use colour and diagrams to reinforce written work.
- Give plenty of time for reading and writing.
- Avoid asking students to copy from a board.
- Provide key words or ideas before asking to read from text books.
- Repeat and reinforce instructions.
- Concentrate on a few subject specific words for spelling correction.
- Give plenty of guidance for tasks to be completed at home.
- Students may have been loaned a spell-checker or dictaphone - please make sure they are using them.
- Allow access to a word processor for long pieces of work.

Irlen Syndrome (Scotopic Sensitivity)

What is it?

It is a reading problem caused by high sensitivity to black and white contrasts on paper and classroom boards. When diagnosed it is easily corrected with a coloured overlay/lenses but it is quite common for students who have it to be unaware that they have a recognised problem.

How is it recognised?

Irlen Syndrome can cause:

- The white background on paper to appear much brighter than normal.
- Words and letters on a page to move, merge and distort.
- Headaches.

The student will:

- Frequently miss out words/lines when reading.
- Show signs of discomfort when reading e.g. blinking, squinting or rubbing eyes.
- Be unable to copy from a board unless coloured chalk/pen has been used.

How to help?

- Ensure students with coloured overlays or lenses; use them in class.
- Avoid asking students to copy from a board.
- If copying is necessary, use two colours of chalk or pen to make lines of writing clear.
- Provide worksheets on coloured paper so students can read and write on them.
- Ask undiagnosed students who appear to be having problems to describe what they see when reading.