

## What are cognition and learning difficulties?

The category of Cognition and Learning difficulties is one of the four broad areas of need in the Special educational needs and disability code of practice 0 to 25 years (July 2014). It is described in the Code as:

*6.30 Support for learning difficulties maybe required when children and young people learn at a slower pace than their peers, even with appropriate differentiation.*

*Learning difficulties cover a wide range of needs, including moderate learning difficulties (MLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD), where children are likely to need support in all areas of the curriculum and associated difficulties with mobility and communication, through to profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) where children are likely to have*

*6.31 Specific learning difficulties (SpLD), affect one or more specific aspects of learning. This encompasses a range of conditions such as dyslexia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia.*

Children with cognition and learning difficulties may have: low levels of attainment across the board in all forms of assessment, difficulty in acquiring skills (notably in literacy and numeracy) on which much other learning in school depends; difficulty in dealing with abstract ideas and generalising from experience and a range of associated difficulties, notably in speech and language (particularly for younger children) and in social and emotional development.

### Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)

Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) is an umbrella term which emphasises the differences that pupils display across their learning. Pupils with SpLD may have a particular difficulty in learning to read, write, spell or manipulate numbers so that their performance in these areas is below their performance in other areas. Pupils may also have difficulties with short term memory, organisational skills, visual processing and coordination. Pupils with SpLD cover the whole ability range and the severity of their impairment varies widely. The difference in 'Learning Difficulties' and 'Specific Learning Difficulties' is that the term 'Learning Difficulties' is generally applied to people with global (as opposed to specific) difficulties, indicating an overall impairment of intellect and function.

Examples of specific learning difficulties are: Dyslexia, Dyspraxia/DCD, Dyscalculia.

#### Dyslexia

There has been much discussion about the nature of dyslexia and historically there has been no single agreed definition. In 2009 Sir Jim Rose's Report on 'Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties' gave the following description of dyslexia, which was adopted by the British Dyslexia Association (BDA) Management Board, but with the addition of the further paragraph shown below, which should always appear with it:

The description of dyslexia adopted in the report is as follows:

- *'Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling.*
- *Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed.*
- *Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities.*
- *It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are 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.'*

*In addition to these characteristics, the BDA acknowledges the visual and auditory processing difficulties that some individuals with dyslexia can experience, and points out that dyslexic readers can show a combination of abilities and difficulties that affect the learning process. Some also have strengths in other areas, such as design, problem solving, creative skills, interactive skills and oral skills.*

As a working definition, The British Psychological Society emphasises the need for a staged assessment process to take place. *'Dyslexia is evident when accurate and fluent word reading and/or spelling develop very incompletely or with great difficulty. This focuses on literacy learning at the 'word level' and implies that the problem is severe and persistent despite appropriate learning opportunities. It provides the basis for a staged process of assessment through teaching.'* (BPS 1999)

Pupils with dyslexia may learn readily in some areas of the curriculum but have a marked and persistent difficulty in acquiring accuracy or fluency in learning to read, write and spell. Pupils may have difficulties in concentration and organisation and in remembering sequences of words. They may mispronounce common words or reverse letters and sounds in words.

For further information visit:

<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/>

## **Dyspraxia**

Dyspraxia, a form of developmental coordination disorder (DCD) is a common disorder affecting fine and/or gross motor coordination, in children and adults. While DCD is often regarded as an umbrella term to cover motor coordination difficulties, dyspraxia refers to those people who have additional problems planning, organization and carrying out movements in the right order in everyday situations.

Dyspraxia can also affect articulation and speech, perception and thought. Although Dyspraxia may occur in isolation, it frequently coexists with other conditions such as Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), Dyslexia, language disorders and social, emotional and behavioural impairments.

Information on Halton's Children Occupational Therapy Service and how to make a referral:

<http://www.bridgewater.nhs.uk/haltonsthelens/childrensoccupationaltherapyservice/>

For more information visit about dyspraxia:

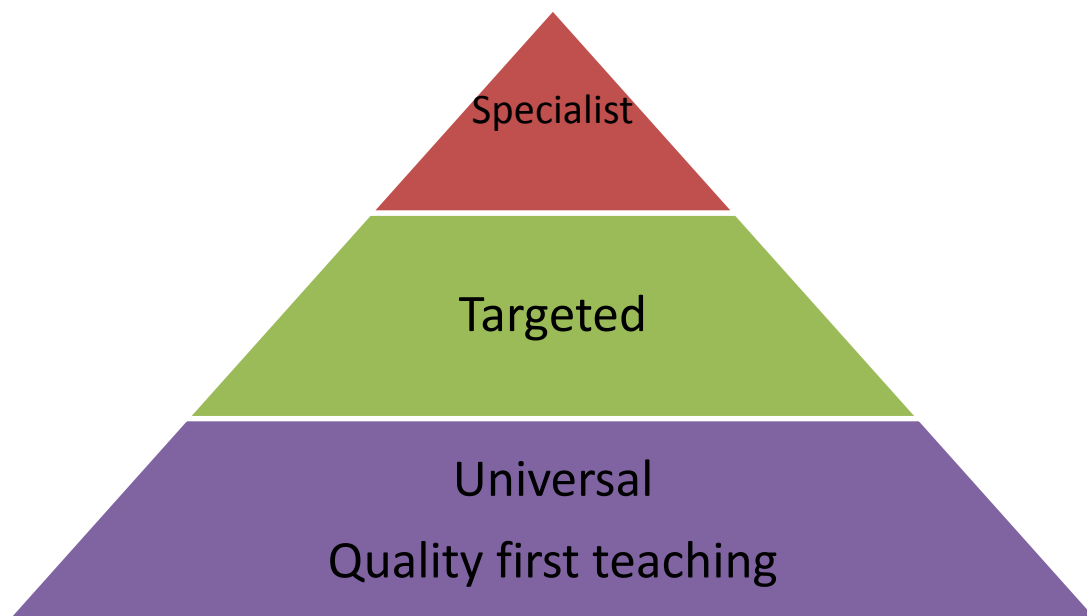
<http://www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/>

## **Dyscalculia**

Dyscalculia: is a difficulty understanding maths concepts and symbols. It is characterised by an inability to understand simple number concepts and to master basic numeracy skills. There are likely to be difficulties dealing with numbers at very elementary levels; this includes learning number facts and procedures, telling the time, time keeping, understanding quantity, prices and money.

For more information visit:

<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/about-dyslexia/schools-colleges-and-universities/dyscalculia.html>



**The graduated approach**