

Difficulties at school: is it dyslexia?

People with specific learning difficulties may have problems with certain skills at school, yet do well in other subjects and are generally intelligent. The most common type of specific learning difficulty is specific reading difficulty; and this is often called “Dyslexia”.

Dyslexic children are usually poor at spelling and may be highly intelligent in conversation, but have trouble with written language. Leonardo Da Vinci and Einstein are both thought to have been dyslexic.



Dyslexia can only be diagnosed with certainty by a psychologist who, in addition with other tests will evaluate a person’s expected reading age from their intelligence (IQ) and age. The difference between this and the actual reading age, as measured with a reading test, gives a measure of the specific reading difficulty.

The term dyslexia is usually reserved for a severe degree of reading difficulty, however the visual problems that are described can also be present in children who have other, non-dyslexic, difficulties at school. A person does not have to be diagnosed as dyslexic in order to benefit from the investigations and different tests available in our practice.

Visual factors and school difficulties

Most experts agree that problems with sight are not usually a main cause of dyslexia. Certain visual problems however, do occur more frequently in dyslexia and these may, in some cases, contribute to the reading difficulty.

Such visual problems would not normally be detected in a school eye test. Two of the most common visual anomalies in dyslexia revealed by our series of tests are a reduced ability to focus closely and poor or instable co-ordination of the two eyes (binocular instability).

These visual problems can cause eye strain, visual stress or visual distortions. This may slow reading and discourage children from prolonged reading.

Not all dyslexic people have these problems, but some have visual anomalies without realising it. People with a mild specific learning difficulty, perhaps not bad enough to be called dyslexic, can also have these visual problems. The visual problems can usually be treated with simple eye exercises and glasses may be prescribed in some cases.

A routine eye examination with an optometrist may not be able to diagnose dyslexia, but if dyslexia is suspected, then it is sensible to start by investigating whether visual function is normal.

Our eye care for dyslexic people

At Kerr Optometrists, we run a special clinic for the optometric assessment of people with Specific Learning Difficulties.

Our paediatric optometrist, Miss Vanessa Arav, has specialised in the optometric investigation of children who have difficulties at school, and worked for many years at the Institute Of Optometry. Miss Arav sees patients at the practice to carry out a full eye examination and additional tests to detect the visual problems that may be associated with dyslexia.

These initial appointments usually take about one hour. The fee for the examination is £60 for children and £75 for non-exempt adults (where the basic eye examination is not paid for by the NHS).

A written report explaining the investigations, results and recommendations is included in this fee as well as all the tests necessary for the initial assessment with the exception of Intuitive Colorimetry.

If you would like to attend this clinic please telephone our reception and ask for an appointment in the Specific Learning Difficulties Clinic.

Tinted lenses and dyslexia

Some people with dyslexic difficulties benefit from using coloured filters (Meares-Irlen Syndrome or Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome). If our findings suggest that a person may benefit from colour, then we dispense a trial coloured overlay. If this is still being used after one school term, then a further appointment can be arranged for testing with a special instrument, the Intuitive Colorimeter. This enables the precise tint for glasses to be accurately determined. The fee for this further investigation is £50.

Continuing care

Generally, after care visits are repeated every 6 months or every year depending on the age of the patient and the current treatment for the visual difficulties. The fee for follow up visits is £35.

For patients who are prescribed Precision Tinted Lenses, the exact colour of tint that is required can, like any other optical prescription, change over time. Therefore, we usually repeat the testing with the Intuitive Colorimeter at yearly intervals.

Useful addresses

Psychological assessment can be arranged through your school, or privately through a local Dyslexia Institute. Amongst others, there are:

The British Dyslexia Association

This is a support group which can give information on the legal situation concerning learning difficulties and legislation on education. Their address is:

98 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU

The Dyslexia Institute

It has many local institutes where psychologists can assess learning difficulties and specially trained teachers can help to overcome these problems.

Their head office address is:

133 Gresham Road, Staines, TW18 2AJ

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Combines teaching and research with private practice. Clinical consultant to major industrial and contact lens companies and many professional bodies. Senior Optometrist at Mayday University Hospital. International speaker, broadcaster and

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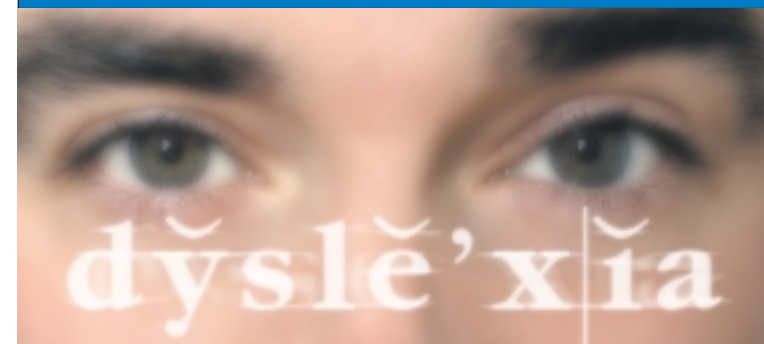
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Difficulties at school: Dyslexia & vision



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