



**British Dyslexia Association
briefing for MPs**

**DEMAND SUPPORT
FOR DYSLEXIC LEARNERS**

March 2025

Summary

- Dyslexia is the most common learning difficulty, affecting 1 in 10 people. That is more than 1 million children in classrooms across the UK.¹
- Despite its prevalence, most children with dyslexia are not identified and have to navigate the education system without appropriate support.
- We are calling for a National Dyslexia Strategy to make sure that children with dyslexia become a key priority and are supported to fulfil their potential.

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty which primarily affects reading and writing skills, and sometimes the ability to process and remember information, which can affect learning and the acquisition of literacy skills. It is not linked to cognitive ability or intelligence.

The impact

Literacy is a key skill without which children struggle to access the school curriculum. Young people with dyslexia's outcomes are significantly worse than their peers on a range of outcomes which extend beyond attainment in school.

- **26% of 11 year olds** left primary school in England **not meeting the expected reading standard.**²
- Students with dyslexia are **twice as likely to fail to achieve a Grade 4 or above** in English and Maths at GCSE - limiting their ability to go on to acquire further qualifications.³
- Children and young people with dyslexia and/or literacy difficulties report **higher levels of poor mental health** than their peers and over three quarters of parents with dyslexic children report that their child experiences **poor self-esteem, embarrassment and anxiety** related to their dyslexia.⁴
- Pupils with dyslexia are **more likely to be excluded from school** than their peers⁵ and may be at **greater risk of coming into contact with the youth justice system** with more than 30% of people in prison thought to have dyslexia.⁶

1 British Dyslexia Association. [Dyslexia Factsheet](#).

2 Department for Education (2025) [Key stage 2 attainment](#).

3 All Party Parliamentary Group for Dyslexia and other SpLDs (2019) [Educational Cost of Dyslexia](#).

4 All Party Parliamentary Group for Dyslexia and other SpLDs (2019)

[The human cost of dyslexia: the emotional and psychological impact of poorly supported dyslexia](#).

5 Timpson, J. (2019) [Timpson Review of School Exclusion](#).

6 Shannon Trust (2022) ['8 Facts You Didn't Know About Neurodiversity and Prisons'](#).

Invisible in policy

Despite its prevalence in the classroom and the high cost to both individuals and the public, **children with dyslexia have been systematically overlooked** in policy. Unlike other forms of special educational needs and disability (SEND), there is no **dedicated strategy** to ensure that children with dyslexia and the family members and professionals in their lives receive the right support, at the right time.

Overlooked in practice

Early identification of dyslexia is crucial, but opportunities are often missed. There is no universal pathway for assessment of children with dyslexia and systems for identification and support have been described as a 'postcode lottery'.⁷ More than 80% of children leave school without a diagnosis as this is rarely an option for those who cannot afford to pay.⁸

Whilst a standardised test at the end of Year 1 is intended to pick up those struggling with phonics and literacy, a pressure to 'teach to the test' can mask children with dyslexia. Often, schools simply do not know how many children in their classrooms have dyslexia - mirroring issues with national SEN and attainment datasets which do not specifically record or report on this.

Even when dyslexia is identified, a lack of resources means that specialist support is not available for learners in the majority of schools.⁹ Despite their best efforts, many teachers do not have appropriate knowledge of dyslexia¹⁰ and current frameworks and learning and development opportunities do not support them to address this. Initial teacher training has a very limited focus on SEND and there is no standardised means of determining that new teachers have received sufficient instruction on this. Likewise, there is no guidance on training requirements related to SEND as part of teachers' continued professional development.

7 Hutchinson, J. (2021) [Identifying pupils with special educational needs and disabilities](#). Education Policy Institute and Nuffield Foundation.

8 All Party Parliamentary Group for Dyslexia and other SpLDs (2019) [Educational Cost of Dyslexia](#).

9 There are chronic shortages in the specialist workforce and many schools lack access to specialists such as Educational Psychologists or Specialist Teachers to help with identification and intervention strategies for those with SEND. 96% of local authorities report difficulties with recruiting and retaining educational psychologists. Department for Education (2023) [Educational psychology services: workforce insights and school perspectives on impact](#).

10 Knight, C. (2018) What is dyslexia? An exploration of the relationship between teachers' understandings of dyslexia and their training experiences. *Dyslexia: An International Journal of Research and Practice*, 24: 207-219. <https://doi.org/10.1002/dys1593>

Recommendations for change

1. Making children with dyslexia a priority

The Department for Education must develop a National Dyslexia Strategy, appoint a policy lead for dyslexia and improve annual data collection and reporting on children with dyslexia in schools.

2. Ensuring early identification and equity in access to support

The Department for Education must roll out a universal pathway for assessment, develop a simple, in-classroom screening tool and review the use of the Year 1 Phonics Check to ensure it is fit-for-purpose.

3. Creating 'dyslexia-friendly' classrooms

The Department for Education must establish a national standard of SEN support, on a statutory footing, and set out clear expectations for initial and ongoing CPD training for teachers and school staff in relation to dyslexia.

How you can support us:

- Write to the Secretary of State for Education urging her to commit to publishing a National Dyslexia Strategy.
- Raise awareness in Parliament, for example by tabling Written Questions or raising the issue at Oral Questions.
- Join the All Party Parliamentary Group for Dyslexia.



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