

Geography and dyslexia

| <p>The National Curriculum lays emphasis on an enquiry approach to developing geographical knowledge and understanding. At KS3 students are encouraged to develop a range of skills and strategies which will encourage them to ask questions about the world around them and to evaluate the answers. They will look at field work investigations, collecting, recoding and presenting data and evidence and analysing and evaluating this evidence. The ability to communicate this evidence requires the language skills of naming, identifying, locating, describing, explaining and predicting. Many of these skills do not come easily to the dyslexic student.</p> | | | |
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| Factors to take into account and characteristics of some dyslexic students which will affect learning: | Effect on learning in the Geography classroom. Students may have difficulty with the following: | Strategies which may be incorporated into classroom teaching: | Additional support which may be needed: |
| <p>Memory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> working memory (the ability to hold and juggle information in short-term memory) – if overloaded, information may be lost may be inaccurate representations in long-term memory | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> remembering and carrying out instructions remembering recently learned vocabulary repeating multisyllabic words may know the answer but cannot verbalise it remembering facts, figures, place names, geographical features, map reading, specialised vocabulary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> present new information in small chunks set limited but realistic targets make learning multisensory – use audio input, actions, graphics, diagrams, colour allow plenty of time for recall find lots of opportunities to generate talk and discussion allow the use of Dictaphones to record lessons | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide support materials to be used at home or with teaching assistants provide concise revision notes with lots of visual rather than textual information – flow charts, maps, diagrams, concept maps provide topic sheets which incorporate facts, figures, vocabulary, etc. on a single sheet |
| <p>Sequencing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> putting things in order – alphabet, letter order in words, word order in sentences etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> finding words in a dictionary seeing how separate facts and information comes together to form the big picture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> have charts, lists of vocabulary, diagrams etc. on display in the classroom talk through issues to help students bring everything together to form the big picture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> make use of e-learning tools such as spelling and word checkers encourage the use of memory strategies such as mnemonics |
| <p>Speed of information processing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> slower in responding to incoming information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responding to information or instructions understanding and responding to a continuous flow of information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> allow extra time for processing by slowing down presentation allow student extra time to answer questions and complete work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply for extra time or other special arrangements in national tests use teaching assistants to help with reading, note-taking, map reading, recording homework accurately |

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| <p>Visual discrimination / perception</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> poor ability to discriminate/differentiate between words/similar shaped letters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> differentiating between similar looking words problems with correct punctuation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> make use of picture cards for association use colour highlighting for word patterns, suffixes, prefixes etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> use e-learning tools such as a Language Master to aid learning of common words, terminology and words which are easily confused. |
| <p>Auditory discrimination / perception</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> difficulty in perceiving the difference between similar sounds difficulty identifying sounds problems identifying where one spoken word ends and a new word begins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> problems knowing if a sound is correct when repeating after a teacher recognising the difference between two words containing similar sounds listening tasks answering oral questions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide text and sound together exaggerate word separation at first and then as it would be spoken normally | |
| <p>Phonological processing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> weak sound/symbol correspondence lack of awareness of individual sounds within words | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pronunciation, even of words encountered quite frequently recognising familiar words and phrases confusion of similar sounding words reading, especially reading aloud | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> make sure new material is introduced in a multisensory way – show it, listen to it, look at it, hear it, say it, write it only ask the student to read aloud if s/he volunteers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> use practice cards for reinforcement use tapes to accompany printed materials pair the student with a good reader wherever possible |
| <p>Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> affected by weak working memory and thus lose meaning may be slow reading without expression difficulty reading aloud | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> coping with the amount of reading required unable to decode words quickly remembering what has been read selecting important areas to read skimming and scanning for information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pre-check text material and reading age to ensure students encounter text in a planned, progressive way use word-processing functions such as boldening, font style and size to highlight how texts work plan homework to use highlighter pens and scissors to analyse how text is constructed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> use ICT, video etc. to support and limit the amount of reading which may be required use questions to accompany student reading to check comprehension |
| <p>Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> handwriting may be slow may be difficult to read | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> copying from the board writing down what can be produced orally | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide written notes or cloze (gapped) exercises rather than expect the | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> allow the student to present work in other formats such as taped or word processed |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • letter formation may be inaccurate • difficulty extending writing • difficulty organising writing • restricted vocabulary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • difficulty in appreciating the relative importance and relevance of information and ideas | <p>student to copy from the board</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limit the amount of written work required • allow the use of word processing if writing is illegible • provide organisational frames for note-taking and sorting and arranging material to be included in written text • allow the use of video, tapes, and ICT software like PowerPoint and desktop publishing packages for course work, assignments and presentations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide photocopies of notes with tapes to be practised at home • use structured response sheets targeted at the appropriate level to eliminate the need for copious amounts of writing and note-taking |
| <p>Spelling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • difficulty remembering what a word looks like • lack of knowledge of spelling conventions • linked to phonological processing difficulties | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • words spelled in different ways in the same piece of text • words spelled phonetically • all the right letters there but in the wrong order | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encourage use of personal dictionaries • help students to find ways of remembering spellings – mnemonics, words within words, base words and suffixes etc. • highlight the part of the word which is causing difficulty and use visual clues to help reduce the load on memory • encourage and accept logical spelling if accuracy is not possible • do not cover a student's book with red corrections identifying each and every spelling mistake | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide support to reinforce spellings – target word sheets with strategies for spelling • homework and study diaries should contain a list of words and specialist vocabulary for each subject needed during each year. • provide or recommend dictionaries with coloured main words or try Moseley's ACE dictionary (Aurally Coded Dictionary 1995) which gives access to a spelling dictionary through aural means. • mark spelling within a whole school policy which takes into account dyslexic difficulties and gives consistency of expectations. |

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| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A computer programme 'Starspell' contains spelling lists for many subjects. The geography section has a list of 103 words split into a number of related headings. |
| Grammar/syntax <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor understanding of syntax and grammar | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> difficulty forming accurate sentences difficulty understanding what a paragraph is/looks like problems with the rules of grammar | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> use diagrams, cards etc. to show sequences and patterns of language draw the concepts e.g. draw what a paragraph looks like teach vocabulary associated with geography explicitly | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide revision cards with rules for use as reference in class and at home |
| Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> tasks – weak grasp of time required writing – tendency to 'lose the plot' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> planning and allocating time to complete tasks planning a revision schedule planning writing tasks to include all information and not wander from the subject/title | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> use planning calendars to work backwards from the hand-in dates to show when work should be done use writing scaffolds to support planning provide differentiated writing frames with suggested paragraph openings, sentence beginnings, suitable connectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide writing scaffolds to support independent work |
| Directionality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> tendency to confuse left/right, up/down, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> following and giving instructions following instructions which rely on prepositions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide symbols/pictures/arrows as well as text provide visual clues wherever possible | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pair the students with someone who can support them in this |

It is important to recognise that, although the dyslexic student may have difficulties in many areas, there will be areas of strength. Recognising and utilising these strengths is important to the student's academic and intellectual development. These strengths are important to the self-esteem of the dyslexic student.

As with the areas of possible difficulty listed above, dyslexia is very diverse and some strengths will be found in some students and not in others.

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| Factors to take into account and characteristics of some | Recognising these talents within the classroom. |
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| dyslexic students which will affect learning: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for strengths • Notice areas of interest • Provide a wide variety of activities • Talk with the students about what they like to do • Ask parents about a student's interests and talents • Ask other teachers about the strengths they have noticed |
| Creativity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a high degree of curiosity • ability to concentrate intensely and for a long period of time on something they are interested in • may have excellent spatial skills – the ability to perceive and interact with three dimensional space • can think abstractly | |
| Problem solving <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ability to think 'outside the box' • to see other ways of approaching the problem • to visualise a solution • ability to see patterns in seemingly unrelated data | Nurturing these talents within the classroom. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise them • Provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their talents within the classroom • Utilise the talents within literacy and numeracy tasks – work to the interests e.g. football – write game reports, produce league tables, train or bus timetable to get to away matches etc. • Provide opportunities to discover and create new interests and talents |
| Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good social abilities • enthusiasm • willingness to take risks • willingness to work hard • a strong sense of humour • empathy with others • good observational skills | |
| Verbal skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may be good at communicating verbally | |