

Devon SpLD (Dyslexia) Service

Please contact Deborah Lynch or Ann Atherton if you have any queries or concerns.

The following leaflets are available on the QE website:

- What is Dyslexia?
- Assessing for dyslexia
- Emotional Support for Dyslexic Students
- Reading at home
- Supporting Dyslexic Students in the Classroom
- How can I help my child?
- Helping with homework
- Helping your child with spelling
- Visual Stress
- Working Memory Difficulties

Ann and Deborah are part of a Secondary Dyslexia Network; these materials were produced by this group of teachers and educational psychologists.

Useful websites:

www.dyslexiaa2z.com

www.learning-works.org.uk

www.dyslexiaaction.com and

www.bdadyslexia.org.uk - both sites provide information and guidance on all topics relating to dyslexia (to all members of the dyslexic community and professionals who support them).

www.dyslexia.org.uk - hosts a guide to the help available to parents of children with special needs - a useful compendium of information covering difficulties with reading and writing (dyslexia), numeracy (dyscalculia), handwriting (dyslexia), developmental coordination (dyspraxia), language impairment, autism and 'attention deficit disorder'. Lists details of the national organisations that address a range of SEN needs, together with a list of books and pamphlets.



Queen Elizabeth's School
Western Road
Creddon

Phone: 01363 773401



Working Memory Difficulties

Parent Leaflet

Devon SpLD
(Dyslexia)
Service

What is Working Memory?

Working memory is the ability to hold information in your head and mentally manipulate it over short periods of time. It is a mental workspace that we can use to store information in the course of our mental activities. Difficulties with working memory make it hard to hold information in 'temporary storage' or work with it - for example, difficulty in remembering and following instructions, or forgetting what has recently been said.

Your child will need this memory on a daily basis at school for a variety of tasks, such as following teachers' instructions or remembering sentences they have been asked to write down. Children with a difficulty in working memory can often expend more effort than other children in completing a task.

Some signs of a working memory difficulty are:

- Difficulty staying engaged in class
- Needing more time and repetition
- Inconsistent performance
- Difficulty following instructions or directions
- Poor academic progress, especially in reading and maths
- Difficulty keeping their place in a task, especially when required to multi-task
- A need to constantly read and re-read text

How can I help my child?

- Memory games using cards or articles, toys, etc, will be helpful - some board games also require memory skills.
- Provide only short lists of things to remember - this can provide practice at remembering. Start with only a few things, then add other items to the list.
- Encourage the use of memory aids - wall charts, Dictaphones.
- Encourage the use of memory strategies - such as writing things down in a related group. For example, if doing shopping, list all the items for the kitchen together, then for the bathroom, then clothing, etc
- Try to encourage the use of drawings - children with working memory difficulties can often remember things better if they have some sort of visual image of the item or the material.
- Many everyday family-type outings can be used to reinforce working memory without it being obvious to the child. A visit to a museum, a shopping outing, word and picture games and 'I spy'-type games can all reinforce school activities in a leisurely and stress-free manner.

Praise and Motivation:

- Praise can be a natural motivator as long as your child feels the praise is genuine and deserved. It is important to let him/her know why he/she is being praised rather than just provide praise.

It can be easy for the child with working memory difficulties to be discouraged. It is crucial that motivation is maintained. One of the best motivators is success. If steps are small enough and targets are realistic, then your child will achieve some success and this will provide motivation.

Further help:

The technique called Mind Mapping® is usually an effective way to remember items visually, and this technique also helps to organise items. The Mind Map® Book by Tony Buzan (BBC Books) provides good examples of the use of this strategy.

The book by Agnew, Barlow, Pascal and Skidmore, *Get Better Grades - Cool Study Skills for Red Hot Results* (Piccadilly Press), also offers a range of interesting and unusual strategies for developing memory skills, as do the books by Jonathan O'Brien such as *Brain Trainer* (Longman).

Memory Trainers: techniques, games and systems to teach and improve memory skills (2001) - available from Learning Works, 9 Barrow Close, Marlborough, Wiltshire SN8 2YY; email: info@learning-works.org.uk; website: www.learning-works.org.uk

Don Campbell (2001) *Mozart Effect for Children: awakening your child's mind* - available from Anglo-American Book Company: www.anglo-american.co.uk

The Happy Puzzle Company, www.happypuzzle.co.uk - a wide range of games, puzzles and challenges, to develop visual and spatial skills, motor skills, memory, problem-solving, and number skills.

Office for Advice, Assistance, Support and Information on Special Needs (OAASIS), Brock House, Grigg Lane, Brockenhurst, Hants SO42 7RE; helpline tel: 09068 633201; website: www.oaasis.co.uk - an advice, training and resource centre for parents and professionals. Cogmed Working Memory Training is a home-based computerized brain training program that is designed to help people sustainably improve their working memory capacity. <http://www.neurodevelopmentcenter.com/index.php?id=128>