

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability which affects how people communicate and interact with the world. More than one in 100 people are on the autism spectrum and there are around 700,000 autistic adults and children in the U.K.

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/what-is-autism>

Autistic people may:

- Find it hard to communicate and interact with other people.
- Find it hard to understand how other people think or feel.
- Find things like bright lights or loud noises overwhelming, stressful or uncomfortable.
- Get anxious or upset about unfamiliar situations and social events.
- Take longer to understand information.
- Do or think the same things over and over.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/autism/signs/children/>

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a condition that affects people's behaviour. People with ADHD can seem restless, may have trouble concentrating and may act on impulse. Many children go through phases when they're restless or inattentive. This is normal, and does not necessarily mean they have ADHD.

Inattentiveness (difficulty concentrating and focusing)

The main signs of inattentiveness are:

- Having a short attention span and being easily distracted.
- Making careless mistakes – for example, in schoolwork.
- Appearing forgetful or losing things
- Being unable to stick to tasks that are tedious or time-consuming
- Appearing to be unable to listen or carry out instructions.
- Constantly changing activity or task
- Having difficulty organising tasks.

Hyperactivity and impulsiveness.

The main signs of hyperactivity and impulsiveness are:

- Being unable to sit still, especially in calm or quiet surroundings.
- Constantly fidgeting.
- Being unable to concentrate on tasks.
- Excessive physical movement.
- Excessive talking.
- Being unable to wait their turn.
- Acting without thinking.
- Interrupting conversations.
- Little or no sense of danger.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd/>

Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty which primarily affects reading and writing skills. However, it does not only affect these skills. Dyslexia is actually about information processing. Dyslexic people may have difficulty processing and remembering information they see and hear, which can affect learning and the acquisition of literacy skills. Dyslexia can also impact on other areas such as organisational skills.

There is a misconception that dyslexia just affects the ability to read and write. If this were true, it would be much easier to identify. In fact, dyslexia can have an affect on areas such as coordination, organisation and memory.

Signs of dyslexia (Primary school age)

If a child appears to be struggling with spelling, reading, writing or numeracy, how do you know whether these difficulties are potential indications of dyslexia?

There are some obvious signs such as a 'spiky' profile which means that a child has areas of strong ability alongside areas of weakness. You may also have other family members with similar weaknesses. Remember that not all dyslexic children will display the same weaknesses and abilities.

General signs to look for are:

- Speed of processing: slow spoken and/or written language
- Poor concentration
- Difficulty following instructions
- Forgetting words

Written work:

- Poor standard of written work compared with oral ability
- Produces messy work with many crossings out and words tried several times, e.g. wippe, wype, wiep, wipe
- Confused by letters which look similar, particularly b/d, p/g, p/q, n/u, m/w
- Poor handwriting with many 'reversals' and badly formed letters
- Spells a word several different ways in one piece of writing
- Makes anagrams of words, e.g. tired for tried, bread for beard
- Produces badly set-out written work, doesn't stay close to the margin
- Poor pencil grip
- Produces phonetic and bizarre spelling: not age/ability appropriate
- Uses unusual sequencing of letters or words

Reading

- Slow reading progress
- Finds it difficult to blend letters together
- Has difficulty in establishing syllable division or knowing the beginnings and endings of words
- Unusual pronunciation of words

- No expression in reading, and poor comprehension
- Hesitant and laboured reading, especially when reading aloud
- Misses out words when reading, or adds extra words
- Fails to recognise familiar words
- Loses the point of a story being read or written
- Has difficulty in picking out the most important points from a passage

Numeracy

- Confusion with place value e.g. units, tens, hundreds
- Confused by symbols such as + and x signs
- Difficulty remembering anything in a sequential order, e.g. tables, days of the week, the alphabet

Time

- Has difficulty learning to tell the time
- Poor time keeping
- Poor personal organisation
- Difficulty remembering what day of the week it is, their birth date, seasons of the year, months of the year
- Difficulty with concepts – yesterday, today, tomorrow

Skills

- Poor motor skills, leading to weaknesses in speed, control and accuracy of the pencil
- Memory difficulties e.g. for daily routines, self-organisation, rote learning
- Confused by the difference between left and right, up and down, east and west
- Indeterminate hand preference
- Performs unevenly from day to day

Behaviour

- Uses work avoidance tactics, such as sharpening pencils and looking for books
- Seems 'dreamy', does not seem to listen
- Easily distracted
- Is the class clown or is disruptive or withdrawn
- Is excessively tired due to amount of concentration and effort required

A cluster of these indicators alongside areas of ability may suggest dyslexia and further investigation may be required.

<https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/dyslexia/about-dyslexia/what-is-dyslexia>