

SEND AWARE

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PRIORITISE DYSLEXIA

More needs to be done to diagnose children with dyslexia at an earlier stage and support them effectively, says a new medical report published in *The Lancet*. Although much has been achieved in recent years to further our knowledge of the condition, more research is needed to fully understand dyslexia and further develop teaching interventions. Dyslexia should be seen as a top priority education and health issue, the report says.

Working out of the University of Denver, Dr Robin Peterson and Dr Bruce Pennington say that education professionals should not wait until children receive a formal diagnosis of dyslexia before implementing reading interventions "because remediation is less effective than early intervention."

Currently, children only tend to be diagnosed as dyslexic once they have struggled with reading at school over a period of years, by which time it is much harder for them to adapt to new approaches and develop new skills. Outcomes are improved the earlier interventions are implemented.

There is still a great deal of debate about exactly what dyslexia is and how it is caused. Researchers have identified six genes which are thought to contribute to the condition, but little is understood about how they affect children and how they interact with environmental factors. "Like all behaviourally defined disorders, the cause of dyslexia is multi-factorial and is associated with multiple genes and environmental risk factors", the report says.

Have your say: <http://petitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/20674>

CHILDREN WITH SEN TOP ABSENTEE LIST

Nearly 400,000 pupils missed at least a month of school during the school year 2010/11, according to new Government statistics. Those with SEN, and children on free school meals, were around three times more likely to be persistently absent.

Releasing the figures, a Department for Education (DfE) statement highlighted "clear evidence of a link between poor attendance at school and low levels of achievement". Figures for 2009/10 show that only 35 per cent of pupils who missed ten to twenty per cent of school achieved five A* to C grade GCSEs including English and Maths. For those who missed 50 per cent of school this figure drops to just three per cent. This contrasts with children who missed less than five per cent of school, 73 per cent of whom achieved five A* to Cs including English and Maths.

- Pupils with SEN are three times more likely to miss school
- These children need over-learning opportunities
- Interventions only work when they are regular and completed
- Schools are not able to support children effectively if they are not in school

AUTISM-WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people. It also affects how they make sense of the world around them.

It is a spectrum condition, which means that, while all people with autism share certain difficulties, their condition will affect them in different ways. Some people with autism are able to live relatively independent lives but others may have accompanying learning disabilities and need a lifetime of specialist support. People with autism may also experience over- or under-sensitivity to sounds, touch, tastes, smells, light or colours.

Asperger syndrome is a form of autism. People with Asperger syndrome are often of average or above average intelligence. They have fewer problems with speech but may still have difficulties with understanding and processing language.

People with autism have said that the world, to them, is a mass of people, places and events which they struggle to make sense of, and which can cause them considerable anxiety.

In particular, understanding and relating to other people, and taking part in everyday family and social life may be harder for them. Other people appear to know, intuitively, how to communicate and interact with each other, and some people with

autism may wonder why they are 'different'.

The three main areas of difficulty which all people with autism share are sometimes known as the 'triad of impairments'. They are:

Difficulty with social communication– they can find it difficult to use or understand facial expressions or tone of voice, jokes and sarcasm, common phrases and sayings; an example might be the phrase 'It's cool', which people often say when they think that something is good, but strictly speaking, means that it's a bit cold.

Difficulty with social interaction– they may not understand the unwritten social rules which most of us pick up without thinking: they may stand too close to another person for example, or start an inappropriate subject of conversation, appear to be insensitive because they have not recognised how someone else is feeling, prefer to spend time alone rather than seeking out the company of other people, not seek comfort from other people.

Difficulty with social imagination- they find it hard to understand and interpret other people's thoughts, feelings and actions, predict what will happen next, or what could happen next, understand the concept of danger, for example that running on to a busy road poses a threat to them, engage in imaginative play and activities: children with autism may enjoy some imaginative play but prefer to act out the same scenes each time, prepare for change and plan for the future, cope in new or unfamiliar situations.

IDEAS FOR SUPPORTING AUTISM IN SCHOOL

- Use visual supports-timetables, work lists, homework support
- Break down tasks into chunks and give a visual support
- Use templates, exemplars and adult support
- Show a clear start and finish indicator for the child
- Set a time limit for working on homework
- Keep your routines but alert the child if you intend to change things for whatever reason
- Be aware of literal interpretation and modify your language
- Support parents with a home school book
- Use social stories
- Work with obsessions wherever possible

ASK THE CHILD WHAT WORKS FOR THEM!!

Need more advice? Want to know more about autism? Come and see DB!



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