

## **Information for Parents and Carers about Dyslexia Screening**

### ***Why has my child been identified to be screened for dyslexia?***

Your child's class teacher, and/or the school's SENDCo, has noticed that your child is having some difficulties in some areas of their learning. This could be in their reading or writing, or related to other areas such as their phonological awareness (how they process and understand letter sounds), memory, organisational skills, or processing speed. Please speak to your child's class teacher for further information about the difficulties they have noticed. It may also be that you have noticed some of these signs yourself, and have requested that the school screen for dyslexia.

### ***What is dyslexia?***

Dyslexia is what is known as a specific learning difficulty (SpLD). It is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed. Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities. It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off point. Dyslexia is very common. It is estimated that up to 1 in every 10 people in the UK has some degree of dyslexic difficulty. Further information about dyslexia can be found on the British Dyslexia Association's (BDA) website at the following link: <https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/dyslexia/about-dyslexia/what-is-dyslexia>

### ***How is dyslexia diagnosed?***

Dyslexia is diagnosed through an extensive series of tests delivered by a professional dyslexia assessor. It is very time consuming to administer, and can only be done so by specialists with specific qualifications. Due to the high prevalence of dyslexia, and the very high costs associated with a formal diagnosis, schools unfortunately do not have the funding to finance diagnostic testing for children who display signs of dyslexia. Instead, our special educational needs funding is used to support the progress of all children who are experiencing difficulties with their learning, whether formally diagnosed or not.

Should parents/carers wish to pursue a formal diagnosis, they would need to locate an assessor and fund this themselves. The BDA lists costs in the region of £540-£720 for an assessment, although some private assessors may charge more. Further information is available at <https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/services/assessments/diagnostic-assessments/overview>

### ***What is dyslexic screening?***

Although we are unable to offer diagnostic testing, we are able to fund and offer dyslexia screening. Dyslexic screening uses a lower cost and is a relatively quick screener that looks broadly for typical signs of dyslexia. It is **not** designed to generate a definitive identification of dyslexia, but a dyslexia screening tool can give a research-based and accurate indication of whether a child might display some dyslexic tendencies. Significant difficulties in key areas of the screening tool may indicate an increased likelihood that a child may be dyslexic. Dyslexic screeners can be paper based or computer based assessments. Both require support from an adult to administer the screener.

### ***Which dyslexia screener do you use at Merdon, and how is it administered?***

At Merdon we currently use a screening tool called Nesy. It is research-based, and assured by the British Dyslexia Association. Children attempt a series of online activities with an adult which are designed to assess the child's ability in different areas linked to dyslexic difficulties.

The Nesy screen usually takes around 20 - 30 minutes to administer and children usually find it a fun activity to do as all the activities are practical. All children will be assessed on their phonological awareness, rapid naming, sequencing skills and their phonological/auditory memory.

### ***What happens after the screener?***

A report will be generated indicating your child's current abilities for each of the traits of dyslexia they were screened for. The individual results for each trait will help teaching staff pinpoint difficulties and consider how these can be supported in class. Their overall results will then state that they are either at **low, moderate** or **high** risk of dyslexia. We keep a log of which children have been screened for dyslexia, when this happened, and the result of the screener.

The screening report will be shared with class teachers and parents/carers. Should you wish to have a conversation about the results, please request a phone call or meeting with the SENDCo and/or your child's class teacher.

### ***My child's results show that they are at 'high risk' for dyslexia; what now?***

It cannot be stressed enough that screening results are indicators of *potential* dyslexic difficulties, and are not diagnostic. It would be inaccurate to assume a child was dyslexic based on a short, one-off screener. We have also found that when we have re-administered the screening tool at a later date, some children can change their risk level e.g. they may have been 'high risk' a year ago, but are now 'low risk' (or vice versa). Where a child has been assessed as at high risk of dyslexia, we do try to re-administer the screening tool every year or two to gain an updated view of the child's abilities. It is not recommended that the Nessy screen is used more than once within a school year.

As a school, we do recognise that any high risk result does likely indicate that a child has difficulties in some key areas of learning, at least at this point in time. In many cases, we will already have support in place for your child. Where we don't, we will review what support your child needs. For some children, we may decide that in-class support will be enough to address any barriers to learning that your child experiences. Where this is the case, your child's class teacher will discuss the in-class strategies with you so that you can also build on these at home. Where it is deemed that your child needs specific additional intervention to ensure progress, your child may be added to the school's Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) register, and a Provision Plan would be created. Some children being screened will already be part of our SEND register. If your child's screen shows that they are at 'high risk' of dyslexia, this does not necessarily mean that they have special educational needs. The impact of their difficulties is assessed against the SEND Code of Practice's definition of special needs which says that children have special needs if they:

- a) have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age;***
- or***
- b) have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in schools within the area of the local education authority.***

It also states that special needs provision, '***goes beyond normal differentiated and personalised teaching and learning approaches. It is individual provision that is additional to or different from that made generally for other children or young people of the same age.***

### ***My child's results show that they are at 'low risk' or 'moderate risk' for dyslexia; what now?***

These results may reassure you that, despite us identifying some difficulties with their learning, your child currently has some effective learning skills. In addition, the screening report will provide us with some valuable information on your child's strengths and areas of difficulty. It may also be that some parents/carers, or school staff, still feel that your child may be demonstrating dyslexic traits. Please remember that this screening tool is not a definitive diagnosis; it is perfectly possible for children to later in life be diagnosed as dyslexic, despite not showing as being at risk on a screening tool (although obviously less likely than if they screened at high risk). Should your concerns continue as your child progresses through their time at Merdon, you are welcome to request that your child is re-screened for dyslexia at a future date.

### ***I still have some questions – who do I contact?***

Please either speak to your child's class teacher, or you can contact the school's SENDCo, Claire Sambles, at [admin@merdon.hants.sch.uk](mailto:admin@merdon.hants.sch.uk) or via a telephone call to the main office.