

Specific Learning Difficulties

When a pupil's reading ability (accuracy/speed and or comprehension as measured by individually administered standardised tests) falls substantially below that expected given the pupil's chronological age, measured intelligence, and age equivalent education they are said to be experiencing specific learning difficulties sometimes known as Dyslexia. However, the place of intelligence as factor in diagnosis has been strongly challenged in more recent times. The place of phonological processing, disturbances of the visual system, and difficulty processing rapidly changing stimuli as a part of a temporal processing problem, are all gaining ground in contemporary thinking, especially those formulations emphasising phonological processes. This is seen in The British Psychological Society's current working definition (1999, "*Dyslexia is evident when fluent and accurate word identification (reading) and/or spelling does not develop or does so very incompletely or with great difficulty.*")

The description of Specific Learning and Related Emotional Difficulties provided for by special schools on Wirral (from the scheme for Local Management of Special Schools, 1994) is:

Children who are of average or above average ability, but whose attainments fall short of their potential. The earliest sign is slow progress in reading, and other signs will be difficulties in spelling, sequencing, temporal and spatial awareness, poor memory, awkward writing, poor number concepts and delays in motor development. Children's emotional development is affected, manifesting itself in frustration, anxiety, aggression, withdrawal or anti-social behaviour.

Specific Learning difficulties may show themselves in the following ways:

- low attainment in one or more curriculum areas, particularly where this can be traced to difficulties in some aspects of underlying literacy and/or numeracy skills;
- low attainment is not global - higher performance on measures of reasoning and ability;
- evident difficulties in tasks involving specific abilities such as sequencing, organisation or phonological or short-term memory abilities.