

## What can we do to help?

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The most important thing we can do is acknowledge and explore the child's experience. There is a real danger for misunderstanding, and seeing the child as 'not trying'. It can be puzzling to see a child in the classroom who is verbally able and obviously switched on, and compare this with the standard of writing they produce. This mismatch in performance can lead to suspicions of 'laziness', when in fact the opposite is the case. Parents have a key role in advocating for the child and working with the school to look into potential causes and ways of adapting and providing opportunities to facilitate the child's learning. The first point of contact will be the school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) to discuss any concerns.

Being able to work with all those abilities and strengths will be the most positive step for the child. Encouraging hobbies, trying new sports, joining groups and finding interests will help raise self-esteem. It is a trait of human nature that we take for granted what we are good at, and focus on what we find difficult. We need to ensure the balance is swung in the other direction. Every child is unique, and every child can be supported to find their best ways of working and explore their own unique set of talents and strengths. They are so much more than a set of literacy scores on a page!

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There are things we can do at home to help. Memory and organisation can be supported with establishing daily routines, preparing for the next day the night before, having set places to put belongings, using wall charts and calendars. See it, say it, do it, is a good premise to work from in terms of reinforcing learning. Discussion, drawing pictures, using colour, making a model, can all really help with retaining new learning. Mispronunciation (say it as it is spelled) is worth experimenting with, eg 'Wed-nes-day', and looking for words within words, eg 'bus' in 'business'. Draw it out, talk about it, think about the letter patterns. Fostering a love for stories and information will form the basis of a positive approach to reading.

Read to your child, let them focus on the understanding, offer to read along with them, let them use audiobooks, select high interest reading and talk to them about what they are reading.

Technology is a wonderful aid. There are inbuilt read aloud functions where the child can hear what is on the screen, as well as speech to text options, where what is said is typed on the screen. Advanced grammar checkers are available, as is software for mind mapping to work with visual and holistic ways of thinking.

Dyslexia is not uncommon, and there is a huge amount we can do to ensure that our young people are supported, nurtured and facilitated to find their skills, abilities and best ways of working. Local parent associations are a good source of support, and it is important that parents ensure their own needs are looked after. The most important thing is to listen to your child and reassure them that they may need to work a little harder, but help is here for them, and it doesn't mean they can't achieve.

## About Witherslack Group

We are committed to sharing advice and support to parents, carers and professionals. Our webinars and online resources provide expert knowledge and practical support. If you would like to find out more information you can email [webinars@witherslackgroup.co.uk](mailto:webinars@witherslackgroup.co.uk) or visit [www.witherslackgroup.co.uk](http://www.witherslackgroup.co.uk).



## About Sally-Anne Morrison

Sally-Ann Morrison is an Independent Dyslexia Consultant with over 20 years' experience working in the field.