

Dyslexia Friendly Schools



Section 2

Identifying Children:

B) Formal Identification of Dyslexia

Identifying Dyslexia Formally.

If many of the indicators of dyslexia are recognised within a pupil and progress is limited, SENCOs, teachers and teaching assistants might wish to deepen their understanding of the difficulties, to inform support and learning strategies. This involves professionals working on three levels:

- Level 1 professionals include teachers and teaching assistants working with pupils in mainstream classrooms.
- Level 2 professionals include SENCOs and specialist literacy teachers.
- Level 3 professionals are those appropriately qualified to formally identify dyslexia; Advisory SpLD teachers and Educational Psychologists, for example.

The three levels therefore represent three stages to be worked within, and *loosely* correspond to the three waves of intervention.

In fact, the main aim of this work is not a formal identification of dyslexia (although this may be necessary in some cases) but **the identification of literacy needs and launch of appropriate interventions.**

All have a role in this: class teachers need to be vigilant for difficulties justifying whole school training; SENCOs need an extensive and flexible armoury of support strategies; and those brought in to formally identify dyslexia need to evaluate the intervention work prior to their involvement.

The following section describes typical activities during the three stages.

At level 1, class teachers appropriately plan and differentiate work to meet the individual needs of pupils experiencing difficulties. For those pupils making insufficient progress, intervention work should be started as soon as reasonably possible. This could include:

- Monitoring and gathering of relevant evidence for identification and support purposes: for example, completing an appropriate checklist from the pages

Identifying Dyslexia Formally: Level 1 Professionals.

below or reviewing the Inclusion Development Programme materials for strategies.

- Setting up an IEP and strength-based targets for improvement, with associated support, review etc.
- Arranging support by individual or small-group work, based on Wave 2 or Wave 3 interventions. (Descriptions and examples of these are given in section 3).

Parents or carers should be informed of the intended provision and its reasons (although dyslexia would never be declared in the absence of further investigation). Prompt action by the school and an early meeting to discuss concerns will often help to alleviate anxieties.

Don't wait for the team – intervene

Schools do not need formal identification of dyslexia from the SpLD team or Educational Psychologists to move pupils into an intervention programme; only the *identification of a literacy need* is necessary to begin.

Needs-led, quality intervention work will rarely be detrimental. It should improve matters and in all likelihood, the recommended intervention would be the same whether the pupil has dyslexia or not. Furthermore, how a pupil reacts to support will give a good indication as to the nature and extent of difficulties.

The important point is **work can begin with a pupil even before dyslexia has been identified.**

Time is needed for the effects of any intervention to be monitored and evaluated. If problems persist, external guidance should then be sought from level 2 professionals: for example, the SENCo or specialist literacy teacher.

The main focus remains support and further intervention required for the pupil to progress. Indicators of dyslexia will probably be discussed with parents at this stage, but this still does not represent a formal identification of dyslexia.

Identifying Dyslexia
Formally:
**Level 2
Professionals**

Identifying Dyslexia

Formally:

**Useful Evidence
to Collect at
Levels 1 and 2.**

Information gathering can also begin on identification of a need, whether external support services are to become involved or not. Collect:

- **Background Information**

Is there a prior history of need?
How has the need arisen?
How is it impacting on learning?

- **Family History**

Is there a history of dyslexia in the family?

- **Medical History**

Is there a history of:

- Speech and language therapy?
- Hearing difficulties?
- Visual difficulties?
- Has vision and hearing been checked recently?

- **Pupil Interview**

How does the pupil see himself or herself?
What is their perception of strengths and needs?
What do they feel they are good at?
What subjects do they particularly enjoy and why?
What are their interests?

- **Classroom Observation**

Gather and record evidence from a variety of situations and lessons.
What is their learning style?
How confident are they?
Are they prepared to take chances in their learning?

- **Assessment Scores to Date**

Results from tests of reading, spelling tests or any other results from assessment are always useful, but it is important they are used conscientiously (see “Assessments” section).

- **Checklists to Identify Pupils on the Dyslexic Continuum**

In addition, one of the following checklists could be completed. The initial two, for primary and secondary pupils are adapted from the Inclusion Development Programme (IDP) materials, while the third itemises those difficulties that often co-occur with dyslexia at any age.

- **Wiltshire Early Screening for Dyslexia (WESForD)**

Finally, refer to the WESForD materials to build a ‘dyslexic profile’ for the pupil and assess the likelihood of dyslexia. The materials are now available online.

Checklist to Help Identify Primary Pupils on the SpLD/Dyslexia Continuum

Name of Primary Pupil	Yr Group	Age	Date
			//___

	Typical signs or behaviours	Tick
History	Family history of SpLD/dyslexia	
	History of ear infections or hearing loss	
	Late to start talking	
Classroom	Slow to process instructions	
	Problems with sequencing, e.g. getting dressed for PE	
	Poor concentration	
	Does not retain concepts from one lesson to the next	
	Problems with fine or gross motor skills, notable mixed left/right preference	
Writing Content does not reflect ability	Good at thinking of ideas, but cannot get them down on paper	
	Uses simple ideas and vocabulary that do not reflect verbal ability	
	Written work often not completed	
	Reluctant to write	
Writing Difficulties in structuring written work	Problems with grammar, e.g. tenses or words muddled	
	Problems sequencing ideas, e.g. when writing a story	
	Ideas not logically linked together – rambling style	
	Inaccurate punctuation	
Writing Poor handwriting	Reverses some letters when writing, e.g. b/d, p/q, m/w	
	Older child does not write cursively	
	Writing badly arranged on the page	
	No spaces between words	
	Slow writing speed	
Writing Inaccurate spelling	Problems copying from the board	
	Omits letters within words	
	Errors in discriminating individual sounds, e.g. middle sound	
	Letters in words in the wrong order	
	Bizarre spelling	

Checklist to Help Identify Secondary Pupils on the SpLD/Dyslexia Continuum

Name of Secondary Pupil	Yr Group	Age	Date
			__/__/__

	Typical signs or behaviours	Tick
History	Family history of SpLD/dyslexia	
	History of ear infections or hearing loss	
	Late to begin talking	
	Learning support at primary school	
Classroom	Slow to process instructions	
	Problems with sequencing, e.g. knowing the alphabet	
	Poor concentration	
	Does not retain concepts from one lesson to the next	
	Problems with fine or gross motor skills	
Writing Content does not reflect ability	Good at thinking of ideas, but cannot get them down on paper	
	Uses simple ideas and vocabulary that do not reflect verbal ability	
	Written work often not completed	
	Reluctant to write	
Writing Difficulties in structuring written work	Problems with grammar, e.g. tenses or words muddled	
	Problems sequencing ideas, e.g. when writing a story	
	Ideas not logically linked together – rambling style	
	Inaccurate punctuation	
Writing Poor handwriting	Reverses some letters when writing, e.g. b/d, p/q, m/w	
	Does not write cursively	
	Writing badly arranged on the page	
	No spaces between words	
	Slow writing speed	
	Problems copying from the board	
Writing Inaccurate spelling	Omits letters within words	
	Errors in discriminating individual sounds, e.g. middle sound	
	Letters in words in the wrong order	
	Bizarre spelling	
	Cannot recognise spelling errors	

Checklist to Record Further Difficulties for Pupils on the SpLD/Dyslexia Continuum

Name of Secondary Pupil	Yr Group	Age	Date
			//_

	Typical signs or behaviours	Tick
Speech and language	Sound production difficulties (t/k/, p/b, f/b)	
	Sound sequencing (per kark for car park)	
	Word confusions (stepfoots for footsteps)	
Speech difficulties	Syllable omission	
	Stammering	
Speech and language Auditory discrimination difficulties	Difficulty discriminating between the following sounds: T and d K and g l and e F and th	
Mathematics Concepts and language of time	Difficulty with words like first, last, before, after, tomorrow, yesterday Telling the time 8.50 as ten to nine (8:50 includes neither 10 nor 9!) Quarter to and quarter past	
Mathematics Language	Difficulty with words and phrasing like: Take away, share, less, more What is one more than 16? What is 15 from 30?	
Mathematics Sequencing	Instructions, procedures, tables, co-ordinates	
	Difficulties with Mental arithmetic	
Mathematics Memory and verbal memory	Difficulties with holding numbers or steps in memory	
	Difficulty recalling number bonds and times tables	

Early Identification of Dyslexia or Literacy Difficulties at Level 3.

At this final level, appropriately qualified external professionals work with the SENCo and class teacher to evaluate the efficacy of past intervention.

- A useful question for SENCos and Teachers to consider before accessing external services is, "What outcomes are anticipated following their involvement?"

Along with information on progress, the SpLD team or Educational Psychologists will review the nature of the intervention, time spent and existing assessment results. They may perform additional (more targeted) assessments with the pupil for a greater understanding of the underlying problems.

Once again, the primary aim is to inform effective support for the pupil, driven by their needs.

Who do I Call? Advisory Teacher or Educational Psychologist (EP)?

When the suggested need is a specific learning difficulty or dyslexia, the SpLD Team can become involved straight away by way of referral - a referral form is available from the SpLD team by telephone or email. Parental consent is obtained by the school as part of this process.

Sometimes the pupil has a more complex array of difficulties making the primary need less certain; this is when schools should consult their link Psychologist since EPs see children with all types of SEN, not only literacy difficulties. School priorities for working with pupils are agreed at planning meetings between the EP and SENCo.

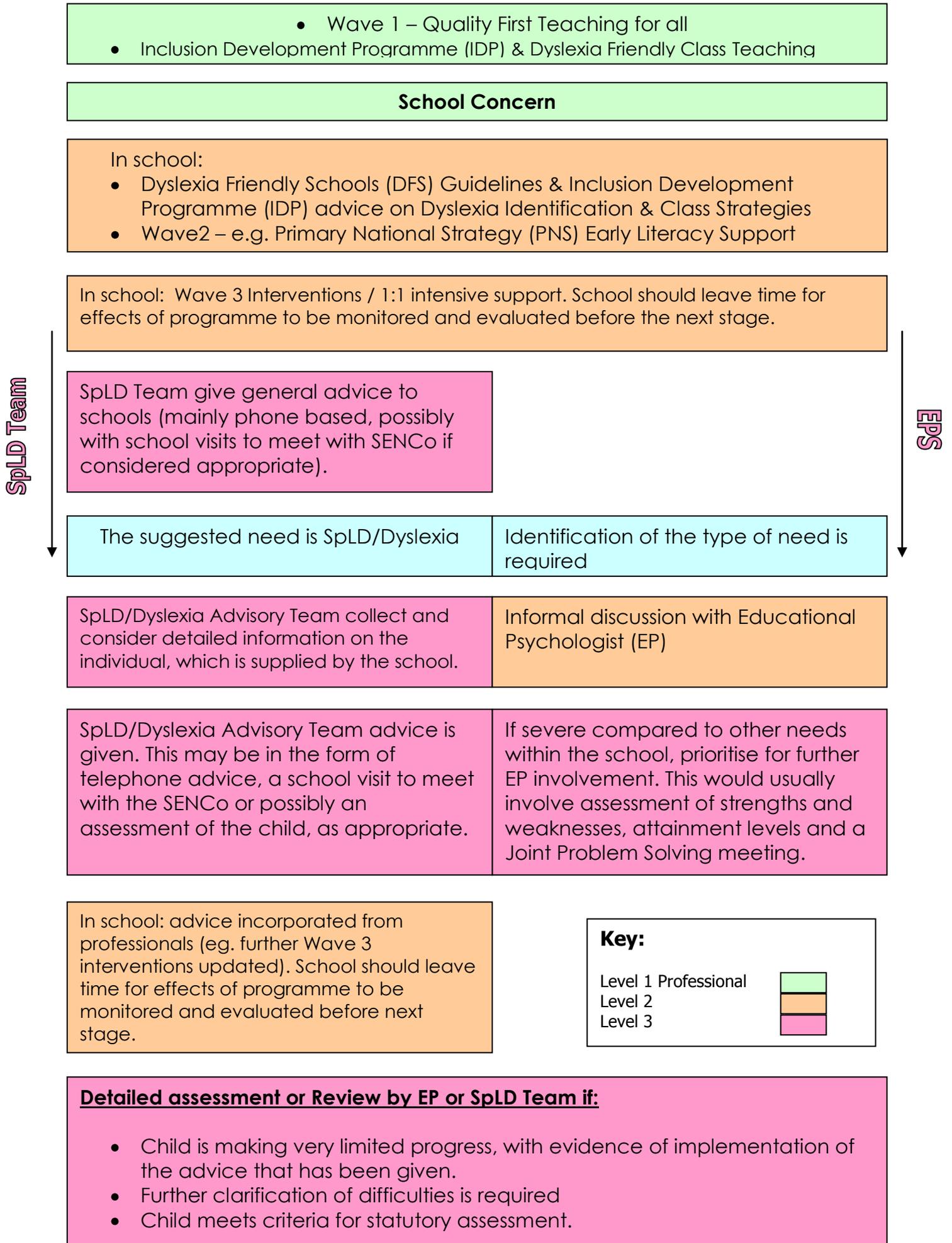
When a pupil is prioritised to see an EP, the SENCo completes a form providing background information. The school also obtains parental consent and the documents are passed to the Educational Psychology Service.

EPs are directly involved with all pupils under statutory assessment and those with a statement.

However, they may be called in for other pupils, for example, when statutory assessment is being considered. If the pupil is eventually found to be experiencing difficulties of a primarily dyslexic nature, they may refer back to the SpLD team.

The flow chart on the next page shows how the two services interact and their stages of involvement. It also highlights the steps schools carry out on identifying a literacy need within a pupil.

Flow Chart to show the Involvement of the SpLD Team and EPS



Formal Identification of Dyslexia at Level 3 by the SpLD Team or Educational Psychologists, Key Features of a Formal Identification

Formal Identification of
Dyslexia at Level 3:
by the SpLD
Team or
Educational
Psychologists.

The assessment process to identify dyslexia will address a pupil's whole profile and provide a complete picture of strengths and literacy needs. A complete report would not necessarily contain every feature from the list below, but there would be clear reasons as to the choice and range of assessments undertaken.

Key Features of a Formal Identification:

Background Information.

History

- Is there typical developmental history?
- Has hearing and eyesight been checked recently?
- Has the child experienced Speech and Language difficulties?
- Have there been disruptions to the child's education by illness or other factors?
- Is there a history of literacy difficulties or dyslexia within the family?

Current Observations of the Child in the Local Context of Their School

- Are difficulties specific to literacy or generally across the curriculum?
- Are there barriers to learning that might account for the difficulties?
- Are there problems with fine or gross motor skills, co-ordination, speech and handwriting?
- Are there difficulties with memory, organisation and planning?
- Are there visual or copying difficulties?
- What are the views of others involved with the child; SENCo, class teacher, parents etc?

Formal Identification of
Dyslexia at Level 3:
**Key Features of
a Formal
Identification.**

Provision of Support to date.

- What is the history of support (small group or 1:1)?
- Are access arrangements in place or considered necessary?
- What interventions have been tried to date and how much progress has been made?
- What are the child's current attainment levels?

Finally, Assessment always includes the following areas that are listed as characteristic features of dyslexia.

Attainments

A profile of academic attainment is built upon the following:

Reading

- Reading Accuracy, fluency and comprehension.
- A miscue analysis to assess qualitatively the child's strategy use during reading

Writing/Spelling

- Single word spelling
- Spelling during free writing
- Dictation (to gauge spelling of unfamiliar vocabulary)
- Speed of writing Test.

Numeracy

- Numerical Operations
- Mathematical Reasoning

Assessment of General Ability

A measurement of verbal and non-verbal ability is carried out, usually to highlight needs and hidden strengths that could form the basis of support. Measures are also taken for speed of information processing, working memory and, most importantly where dyslexia is concerned, phonological skills.

Key Features of a Formal Identification

Standardised tests assess the child's knowledge of letters, sounds and their ability to work with them. The three main areas of interest are:

- Phonological Awareness and skills; for example, removing sounds from words (phoneme deletion) and non-word reading.
- Short-term memory: for example, recalling a sequence of digits forwards.
- Working memory: for example, recalling a sequence of digits in reverse order (which requires the pupil to store and manipulate information).
- Verbal Processing speed; for example, rapid letter naming

Guidance to Parents Considering a Private Assessment for Dyslexia, Verifying the Credentials of an Assessor

Guidance to Parents Considering a Private Assessment for Dyslexia.

The recent Rose report (2009) contains clear guidance on the people they deem qualified to identify dyslexia *formally* in schools:

“[They] should be:

- Appropriately qualified and experienced psychologists; or
- Specialist dyslexia teachers holding a current Practising Certificate of the type described [by the 2005 DfES working party, now the SpLD Assessment Standards Committee, SASC].” (page 53)

It seems sensible that parents be advised to look for the same in any professional they employ. Luckily, there are straightforward mechanisms for checking the credentials of a private assessor.

Verifying the Credentials of an Assessor.

Any appropriately qualified and experienced Psychologist (offering services to the public) should be registered with the Health Professionals Council (HPC).

This can be verified online at “HP Check”:

<http://www.hpcheck.org/lisa/onlineregister/MicrositeSearchInitial.jsp>

Parents should also check whether the Psychologist specialises in SpLD and dyslexia. The British Psychological Society offers an online register of Psychologists and their areas of interest:

<http://www.bps.org.uk/e-services/find-a-psychologist/psychoindex.cfm?&redirectCount=0>

Meanwhile, a private specialist teacher should possess a practising certificate issued by Dyslexia Action or the Professional Association of Teachers of Pupils with SpLD (PATOSS). SASC registers suitably qualified teachers, while a tutor index from PATOSS can be requested by post. See:

SASC “Search for An Assessor”:

<http://www.sitesetserver.co.uk/assessors.php>

PATOSS tutor register:

http://www.patoss-dyslexia.org/tutor_index.html

Points to Note for Parents Commissioning a Private Dyslexia Assessment

Points to Note for Parents Commissioning a Private Dyslexia Assessment.

Parents should be made aware of the following points:

- The Local Authority will consider carefully the findings from **suitably** qualified professionals, regardless of origin.
- If parents have commissioned the private assessment to form evidence as part of a SEN tribunal, for example, reports missing many of the key features (outlined above) will be less favourably received.
- Any assessments used in the report must be up to date, well recognised and fit for purpose. Parents should ensure this is made known to the private professional they employ.
- Any report, private or otherwise, must place the pupil in the **local** context of his or her school and teachers. Parents should instruct their chosen professional to do this, rather than carrying out a series of assessments in isolation. It is reasonable to expect contact with teachers and SENCos as a minimum, to consider background, prior intervention work and resulting progress (as would Borough Advisory Teachers or Educational Psychologists). A joint problem solving meeting between parents, teachers and SENCo is also advised.

More
Information to
Support Parents
in their Decision.

More Information, on many aspects of the above, is available for parents on the following websites.

British Dyslexia Association (BDA)

Home page:

<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/>

Useful guidance for help at school, assessments etc.

<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/about-dyslexia/parents/getting-help-for-your-child.html>

Professional Association of Teachers of Students with SpLD (PATOSS)

Home page:

<http://www.patoss-dyslexia.org/index.html>

Advice for parents considering a private tutor or assessment:

<http://www.patoss-dyslexia.org/Publications31.html>

Dyslexia Action

Home page:

<http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/>

British Psychological Society (BPS)

Home page:

<http://www.bps.org.uk/home-page.cfm>

Search for a Psychologist at:

<http://www.bps.org.uk/e-services/find-a-psychologist/psychoindex.cfm?&redirectCount=0>

Dyslexia A2Z

Included here owing to its local roots, this Swindon-based website was founded by Maria Chivers. It contains an online register of Educational Psychologists and Specialist Tutors (but it remains advisable for parents to check credentials by the above routes).

www.dyslexiaa2z.com