



Pre-school Hints

Handy Hints for Educators Working with Pre-School Aged Children

There is a large body of research linking speech and language difficulties in early childhood to later literacy problems. Because much can be done pre-school to help a child at risk, early identification is really important. Although some children may have difficulties with some parts of their learning, they are just as bright and able as their peers - in some cases even brighter! They are often creative and imaginative. At the same time they also have difficulties. If a child shows a cluster of difficulties, you will need to take action.

Here are some hints on identification. The list is worth keeping handy - the chances are there's at least one dyslexic child in each nursery class.

Watch out for the child who does not outgrow the following possible indicators:-

- has difficulty learning nursery rhymes
- finds difficulty paying attention, sitting still, listening to stories
- likes listening to stories but shows no interest in letters or words
- has difficulty learning to sing or recite the alphabet
- has a history of slow speech development
- gets words muddled e.g. cucumber, flutterby
- has difficulty keeping simple rhythm
- finds it hard to carry out two or more instructions at one time, (e.g. put the toys in the box then put it on the shelf) but is fine if tasks are presented in smaller units
- forgets names of friends, teacher, colours etc.
- poor auditory discrimination
- finds difficulty cutting, sticking and crayoning in comparison with their peer group
- has persistent difficulty in dressing, e.g. finds shoelaces and buttons difficult
- puts clothes on the wrong way round
- has difficulty with catching, kicking or throwing a ball
- often trips, bumps into things, and falls over
- has difficulty hopping or skipping
- has obvious 'good' and 'bad' days for no apparent reason

A child who has a cluster of these difficulties together with some abilities may be dyslexic, but remember that the levels of development and speed of learning at the pre-school stage differ significantly for each child.

If you find at risk children, consult with the special needs advisor. There are programmes and games to help with development in speech and language, motor skills, auditory and visual perception and memory.