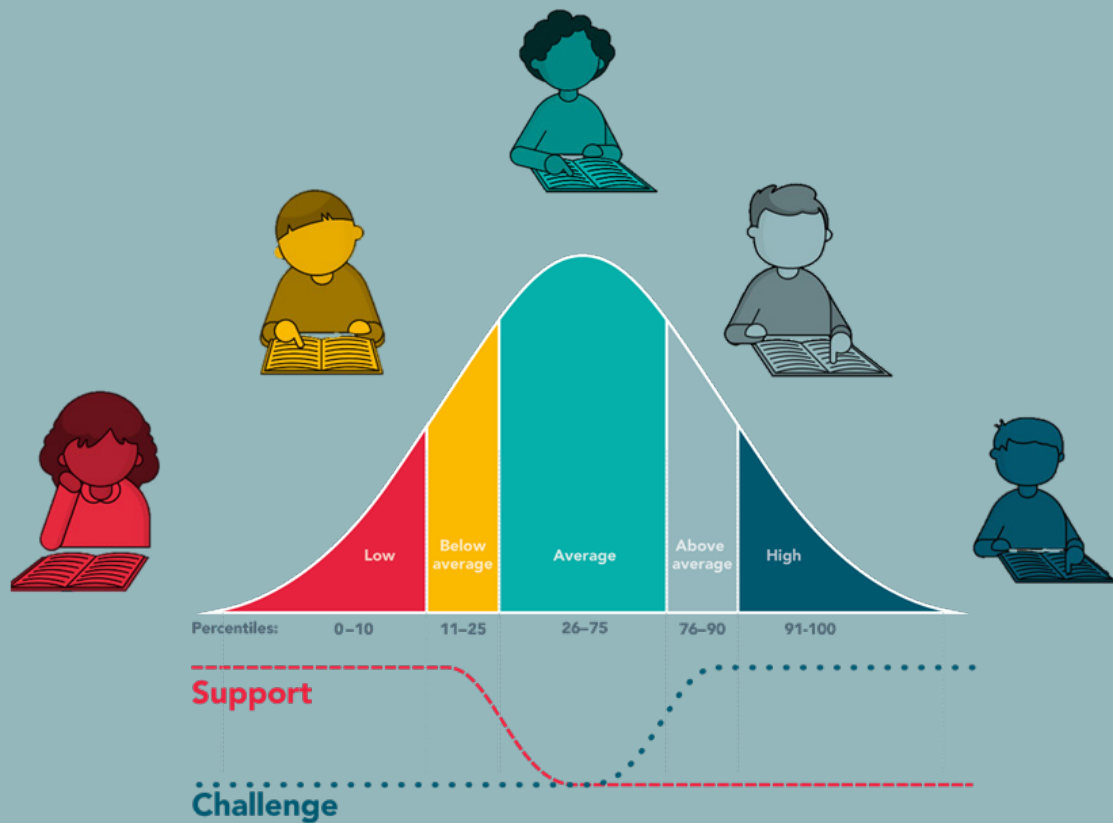


A Teacher's Guide to Reading Support



We all know that the early identification of reading difficulties can transform a child's whole educational experience. However, the complexity of reading is often underestimated, and specific difficulties are not always easy to spot.

The following guide provides teachers with a more systematic approach for differentiating between different difficulties, as well as identifying and supporting those children who may struggle.



How do we help those who struggle?

When it comes to learning to read, it is often assumed that children will naturally develop the skills required. However, unlike language and communication, these are not inbuilt. Instead, children must learn the many complex cognitive and linguistic processes involved for themselves.

Even the most experienced teacher may find themselves challenged when it comes to identifying and supporting children with very diverse linguistic abilities. Fundamentally, teachers can only address reading issues if they know precisely what they are in the first place. However, when the signs for specific reading difficulties present very differently for each child, it can also be extremely difficult for teachers to pinpoint exactly which area of reading a child is struggling with.

It is estimated that around [148,000 pupils](#) still leave primary school every year unable to read. Despite a plethora of initiatives and a huge amount of hard work from teachers, many of these children fail to catch up with their peers.

There can be an unspoken expectation that children will intuitively know how to read and will simply pick it up like language.

The thing is, human beings are hard-wired to pick-up language. Our brain is adapted to process speech, whereas reading is a skill that needs to be learnt and requires a specific set of cognitive processes.

In order to read, dyslexic children may need to use different neural pathways to neuro-typical learners.

Children with good memories remember and recognise the sequence of letters in words and can use images or other visual cues to develop coping strategies and hide the fact that they are struggling. Their problems can, therefore, be even more difficult for teachers to spot and support.

The key to early identification and tailored intervention rests on effective and accurate assessment. It is imperative that literacy issues are spotted at the earliest opportunity. Teachers can then ensure children are well equipped with personalised strategies that are appropriate to their individual thinking style to help them decrypt the reading code.

Given that we know early intervention through testing is by far the most effective approach to boosting reading skills and changing children's life chances, what options do we have when it comes to the assessment of literacy?

Identifying struggling readers

Many schools rely on a traditional combination of paper-based tests and teacher assessments to measure reading attainment and monitor progress.

Testing a child's reading skills, ability and comprehension is a very difficult task! There are a whole host of multifaceted cognitive and linguistic processes that come into play.

Words being read are transformed into speech sounds, which connect to meaning, vocabulary and general language knowledge. However, this is not a linear process. All these activities are part of an information loop that feeds back continuously and strengthens itself over time.

Despite this complexity, the most widely used reading tests are one-dimensional and focus on individual reading components. In the younger years, tests focus on phonics.

However, teaching children to read single sounds or words doesn't help check whether they can understand or infer meaning. Then, as children grow older, reading tests often focus on scoring comprehension.

But again, a simple score doesn't tell you how the child is reading, which means two children with the same score might actually need very different types of remediation.

"Current assessments are simply not good enough...they tell us that a child can't read, but don't tell us exactly why that child can't read."

Bernadette McLean, the former
Principle of the Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre

With limited information, it can be difficult for teachers to tailor support individually for each child, and some children may continue to struggle despite interventions being put in place.

However, new technological developments are already helping to level the playing field, and radically change how and when literacy issues are spotted.

By combining the latest in AI and eye tracking, our assessment can offer teachers an entirely new insight into literacy and dig deeply into what is really going on when a child reads!

Tracking eye movements can help highlight minor differences in they way children process text, offer an insight into the many linguistic processes going on, and reveal a large amount of information about the reading components.

Illiteracy is estimated to cost the UK economy £36 billion a year, with one in four adults struggling to read and write.

TES News

There is an average 16 month vocabulary gap at age five between the most disadvantaged children and the most well-off.

Literacy Trust

Children who enjoy reading and writing in their free time have significantly better mental wellbeing than their peers who don't.

Literacy Trust





Why do children struggle with reading?

Reading fluently is the result of a complicated interplay between many different linguistic and cognitive processes. Working together, these enable children to decode text and comprehend content.

Learning these processes can be extremely difficult; children must first understand that words are composed of individual sounds – phonemes. In the English language we have many letter combinations that go with the same phoneme sound - for example, 'sh' can be formed in many ways. Not only is this sound found in the word 'sheep', but also in 'mission', 'sugar', 'lotion' and 'ocean'.

Children who are good readers have strong phonemic awareness, vocabularies and good grammatical skills; they also understand and can easily apply alphabetic principles.

However, children who encounter difficulties in any of these areas will struggle, especially when it comes to reading with proficiency and enjoyment.

Some of these struggling readers may lack language-rich experiences with both written and spoken content. If children do not engage and interact with language from a very early age, their later acquisition of reading skills can be greatly affected.

This is often a problem for some of our most vulnerable children from more disadvantaged backgrounds, who often start primary school without the communication skills needed to fully engage in the classroom.

The devastating impact of early attainment gaps has been highlighted by the former education secretary Damien Hinds.

“ When you are behind from the start you rarely catch up! Your peers don't wait, the gap just widens. This has a huge impact on future social mobility.”

Teachers using our assessment have been able to quickly pick up on reading trends and target any early attainment gaps.

“ One of the tests involved reading aloud and one reading silently. We found that those who read faster out loud tended to be children who do not read at home, and often come from low income backgrounds. Knowing this has given us an opportunity to work directly with these families and encourage more reading at home.”

Adam Luxford - Freemantle Academy

In addition to developmental delays, some struggling readers may encounter specific reading difficulties like Dyslexia, attention disorders, or even problems with their visual and verbal memories, processing speeds and motor coordination.

In order to target support to each student's specific needs, it is important for teachers to understand which specific difficulty or area of reading a child is struggling with. This is important because methods that work for non-dyslexic children may be confusing and potentially detrimental for those with reading difficulties.





How do I know?

With many schools using a combination of formative assessments, standardised tests, and observations sessions, identifying children who struggle can be a very lengthy and resource intensive process.

As many of these reading tests only give one-dimensional, simple scores teachers often struggle to collect the in-depth information they need to back their judgements, especially when deciding where those pupils performing at borderline levels lie.

It is also possible for pupils to use coping strategies and fall under the radar, especially when many reading tests only assess isolated reading components.

Tests that are heavily comprehension based might not highlight children who struggle with their reading fluency and speed. Although it may take time for these children to decode written text, they might still be able to make important inferences and answer questions in relation to the material they have read.

At Lexplore Analytics, we have been able to highlight children using such strategies and help teachers uncover information they did not previously know.

" The tests revealed that one of our KS2 pupils was having reading difficulties. But because they were very capable and had developed ways to get by, such as guessing parts of the stories rather than reading them, we hadn't spotted her difficulties. "

" The progress the pupil has made since we made guided changes has been impressive and it is food for thought that it may have taken a few months or terms before we spotted the issue ourselves as her coping strategies were so highly developed. "

Jane Mullane - Mersey Vale Primary

Some students may have difficulty tracking text with their eyes as they read. You may notice their finger stop and point to words they are struggling with, but their eyes continue to scan the text in different directions.

For other pupils, the difficulties they encounter when reading in the classroom may result from a lack of confidence or their varying level of fluency in English.

With such a diverse range of linguistic ability in today's classroom, teachers need a completely objective way to root out any reading difficulties as soon and help pupils make progress.

" Lexplore provides a completely unbiased way to assess children, regardless of their situations and backgrounds. "

Our unique AI assessment can offer teachers a fresh perspective when it comes pointing to children's specific problem areas, regardless of their fluency or literacy level.

Some of these, such as problems with reading speed, certain sounds, or quite simply a lack of confidence with reading aloud, can be easily addressed. Others, like some visual processing difficulties might require a optician referral.



Dyslexia

With an estimated [10% of the UK population](#) being dyslexic - the same percentage that are left-handed - it is no surprise that Dyslexia is the most well-known reading difficulty. However, it is also perhaps one of the most misunderstood.

Dyslexia is a neurological difference, which is often associated with reading, writing and spelling issues. However, it actually affects individuals in entirely different ways, including numeracy skills and executive functioning skills, like co-ordination, organisation and memory.

Studies have shown that the brains of those with dyslexia actually perform differently. As well as experiencing certain challenges, those with dyslexia have demonstrated exceptional creative abilities and can be skilled atypical problem solvers.

Following a recent move to celebrate these creative strengths, many individuals have spoken openly about their struggles with the condition, including the Health Secretary Matt Hancock. By discussing their own experiences of education they aim to raise awareness of the importance of early identification and work towards levelling the educational playing field for all students.

However, it is still the case that over 80% of children with dyslexia still leave school without a formal identification. Students with dyslexia are also more than twice as likely to fail their Maths and English GCSEs. ([APPG, 2019](#)).

Today's curriculum requires children to have strong foundational reading skills. The lion's share of resources, especially at secondary level, are becoming increasingly content heavy. If children are experiencing specific difficulties, like dyslexia, engaging with material can be a challenge.

Diagnostic assessments provide the only way to formally identify dyslexia. By providing a clear picture of someone's cognitive strengths and weaknesses they can pave the way for much more effective support, whilst also providing evidence for access arrangements, funding applications or even employment adjustments.

You can find out more about dyslexia from our partners at the British Dyslexia Association
www.bdadyslexia.org.uk



Language Disorders

According to recent research, it is estimated that 2 in every 30 children will experience a language disorder severe enough to hinder their academic progress. As reading incorporates many linguistic processes, identifying these students early and providing support is key to their reading success.

What is a language disorder?

Children with language disorders usually have difficulty communicating and understanding language.

Language disorders can be extremely broad; some children only encounter mild, short-lived problems. However, others encounter much more severe and prolonged problems.

Children can be very able and intelligent, but they may struggle with speech sounds and patterns, or find it difficult to form words or find meaning. Those with expressive disorders may find it hard to form sentences and communicate. Those with receptive disorders may struggle to understand instructions and follow simple conversations.

Often these children have no trouble with their hearing or pronunciation skills, they simply struggle to apply the rules of language and grammar. It is therefore important to make a differentiation between language disorders and other impairments to do with hearing and speech.

Identifying language disorders

Children with language disorders will often be delayed when it comes to learning their first phrases and may be reluctant to speak at all. When communicating you may notice they struggle with their fluency or use vocabulary much simpler than would be expected for their age.

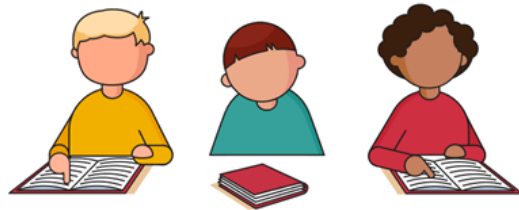
If you observe children struggling in these areas it is possible to make some simple accommodations which can greatly support their learning in the classroom.

For more information on language disorders and classroom practice you can visit:

I CAN - The children's communication charity
www.ican.org.uk

The Communication Trust - Free Resources
www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk





Attention Deficit

Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder AD(H)D is one of the most common behavioural disorders affecting around [5% of British children](#). With these children often struggling when it comes to concentration, attention deficit disorders can greatly hinder a child's reading development.

Students with attention deficits might struggle following and understanding text, as well as find it difficult to sit for prolonged periods of time to read. Over time, these children may become frustrated and begin to avoid activities requiring them to focus on reading or writing.

Attention deficits can be both the cause of learning struggles and also the result. If a student is experiencing a specific difficulty they can also often feel discouraged with reading tasks and consequently struggle with their concentration.

In the cases where AD(H)D and dyslexia present together, which occurs in about [1/3 of AD\(H\)D](#) cases, children can also struggle when it comes to tracking words on a page and understanding the material they are reading.

In order to address these problems, teachers can look to make reading a more engaging activity with incorporated movement, actions, or props. Offering children regular breaks and praise can also help them become much more focused and motivated when it comes to reading.

You can find out more about good AD(H)D practise by visiting:

The National Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Service - [Here](#)

The ADHD Foundation - [Here](#)

The UKAAN - [Here](#)





Phonological Deficits

We aspire to encourage all learners to develop a secure phonemic understanding, as this provides the foundations for their reading and learning journey. But, how do you recognise that pupils are developing good phonemic knowledge or identify those showing signs of a phonological deficit?

When it comes to developing children's strong phonological awareness and understanding, there are some simple signs that parents and teachers can look for which suggest children are on their way with the foundations of reading:

- They have a good and secure knowledge of the names and sounds of letters.
- They show an ability to "chunk" up words, in a variety of configurations individually and in clusters.
- They are confident with different sounds and are able to blend sounds together to make words.
- They can quickly figure out and pronounce new words.
- They can easily memorise new words and vocabulary.
- They can hear and appreciate rhyme as well as match with similar sounds.

Some readers can have a phonological deficit, defined as 'A difficulty in phonological processing, segmenting and blending sounds or appreciating rhyme' ([Kelly and Philips, 2016](#)). Whilst, there are many different manifestations of this 'deficit' there are again some simple signs teachers and parents can look out for.

- A basic and intrinsic problem sounding out words.
- Slow, laborious reading.
- An inability to consistently match letters and sounds.
- Only using the first one or two letters when sounding out words, then guessing the rest.
- Poor comprehension and recall due to the time and effort of sounding out words, the meaning of text is often lost

The earlier phonological deficits are identified, the more support we can give to get pupils back on track with their reading and learning. Whilst there are lots of ways to support children with poor phonemic knowledge, here are a few simple tips from our consultants.

1. Make sure to check for visual difficulties and learning differences.
2. Consider changing the appearance of words, change the background or use an overlay.
3. Use a structured, multisensory approach to the teaching of phonics.
4. Set time aside for exploring words beyond reading time. Look at every letter and sound to help develop 'phonic dexterity'.
5. Encourage learners to read the words they write to reinforce the sound of words in their minds.
6. Use simple rhyming games to continue the learning process outside of the classroom.



Providing consistent and personalised support

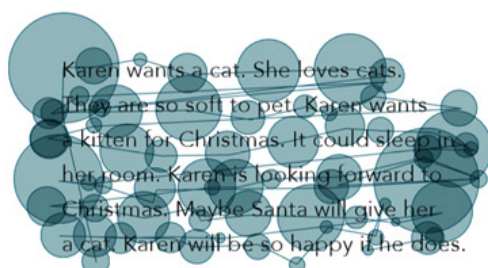
Balancing day to day classroom challenges with the need to plan and provide additional support for pupils with varying literacy barriers can seem an impossible task. The following steps will help you save time and deliver consistent and individualised interventions for those pupils in need.

1

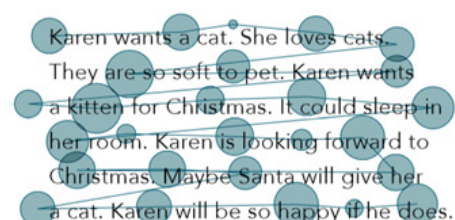
Early discovery of struggling readers

Early discovery is key when it comes to helping struggling readers achieve their potential in the classroom. Many schools rely on the traditional combination of standardised assessments, comprehension tests and teacher observations when it comes to evaluating reading. These can be very effective, however, often require large amounts of time and consequently delay the all-important interventions.

New innovations, such as our AI assessment can offer a startling and unique insight into reading, which helps pinpoint those with potential difficulties in a matter of minutes from their individual eye movement patterns. With immediate, objective and in-depth results, teachers can determine which students require extra support much earlier in their education.



Low Reading Ability



High Reading Ability

2

Tailored Support and Progress Monitoring

With new research suggesting that early intervention can even [change brain circuitry](#) for struggling readers, it is important that teachers are able to provide tailored support whilst children are still learning and refining their language skills. As many assessments only look at the reading components in isolation of one another it can be difficult for teachers to pinpoint exactly which area of reading a child is struggling with.

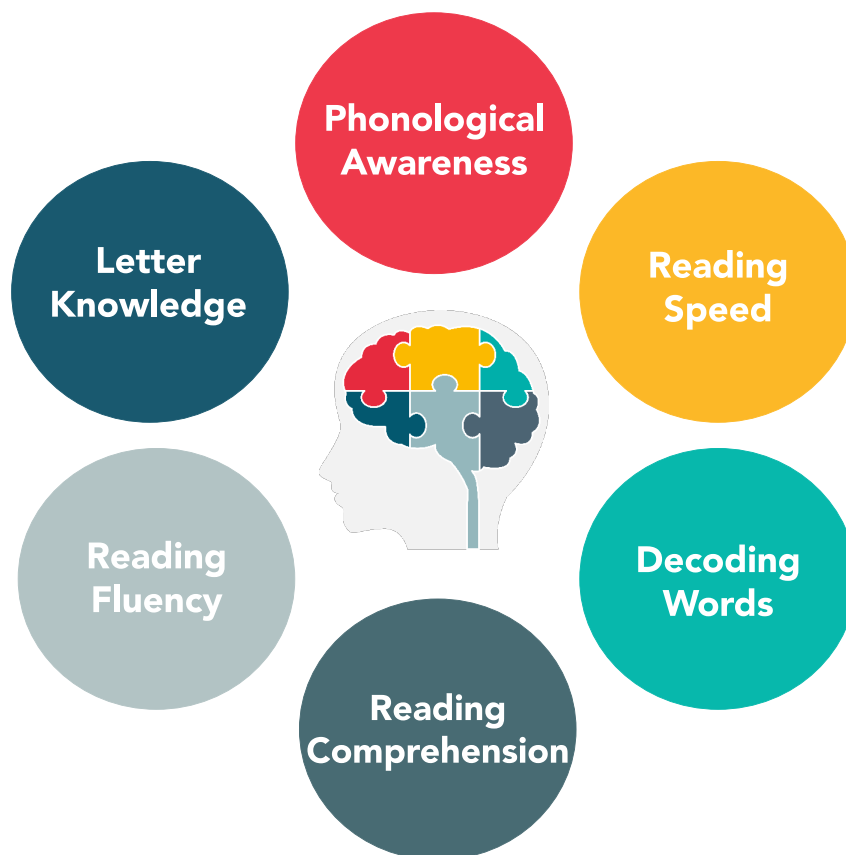
By measuring how the reading components work together we can offer teachers an objective analysis of a child's natural reading ability and incorporate all the main cognitive processes involved.

Within each pupil's reading profile, teachers are able to see a unique visual representation the reading process and can for the first time see what reading silently looks like! Eye movement recordings are combined with audio recordings to enable teachers to hear and see the reading process at the same time. As well as highlighting potential reading difficulties results and recordings can also be an indicator of children experiencing visual impairments, allowing you to make referrals to opticians or Optometrists.

For each of the reading components, an individual measurement is given displayed alongside previous results, the school average and the national average. This enables teachers to monitor the most minor progress at a granular level.

Reading speed in particular has proven to be useful for teachers building a picture of candidate needs for exam access arrangements. Therefore, results for both aloud and silently are displayed alongside a pupil's overall reading profile.

During its analysis, Lexplore's powerful machine learning platform is able to take into account the natural progress a child would make though an academic year, so even minor percentiles progressions equate to real progress following interventions.



3

Accommodation and Classroom Tools

Once struggling readers have been identified and provided with tailored support, it is important to accommodate for their literacy needs in the classroom. When providing simpler material which can be accessed both with and without guided instruction, it is important to ensure content is still engaging and relevant for pupils' ages and interests.

Following an assessment, teachers can work with our dedicated reading development and intervention programme to support both emerging and fluent readers.

Lexplore Intensive has been pioneered by experienced SENDCOs, literacy leaders and dyslexia specialists to support precision teaching, with specific strategies to help develop pupils' working memory and metacognition.

As a Lexplore customer, you will also have access to...

- Lexplore's Educational webinars – Free access for all staff to a series of CPD certificated broadcasts by educational specialists.
- Intervention, assessment and results support from our team and our professional consultants.
- Discounted access to resources and materials from our partners, including a 30% discount from Peter's Books.

We have collected a few of our favourite resources and assistive tools below:



Resources...

From providing tailored support for all readers to making the most of new classroom technology, our Resources provide teachers with exciting materials and strategies to help all children with their learning.

[click here](#)

Webinars...

From supporting all readers to SEN provision, we have an exciting line up of expert, guest speaker webinars. All attendees will also receive a CPD certificate following each broadcast.

[click here](#)

Scan me



Dyslexia Awareness Webinar

Tools to Use in the Classroom

Now more than ever, technology offers simple and easy solutions to help you provide support for struggling readers throughout their school day. These time saving tools can help all pupils engage with their learning and succeed in the classroom.

Microsoft Assistive Tools

Microsoft have a mission to empower every person and every organisation on the planet to achieve more! Their rang of free assistive tools can help students with disabilities unlock their full potential and learn independently, both in the classroom and at home.

You can find out more about the range of built-in accessibility tools and features in Microsoft Technologies - [Here](#)

Arran Smith, Microsoft UK's SEND and Dyslexia Consultant, recently presented a Lexplore Analytics Webinar exploring how assistive technology, as well as new Microsoft 365 and Windows 10 functionality can be used to empower potential and provide better support for neurodiverse learners.

You can download a recorded version - [Here](#)

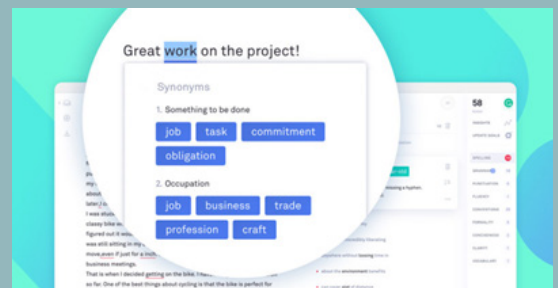


Grammarly

Grammarly is a great tool for helping to make writing a much less intimidating task. Going much further than checking for spelling and grammar, it can offer suggestions for words, style and improved punctuation.

The programme then explains the reasons behind its recommendations so pupils can make their own choices and learn as they write. Grammarly has a free browser extension into which any text can be copied and pasted, making it easily accessible when working from school or home.

You can find out more - [Here](#)



Coloured Overlays

Transparent coloured overlays can help reduce visual stress and make text much clearer for some readers. Using this simple tool can greatly improve fluency for some struggling readers whilst also making it easier for them to comprehend the text they read. Different readers prefer different colours so pupils should spend time finding the one which works best for them.

You can purchase high quality coloured overlays from our partners at the British Dyslexia Association - [Here](#)



School Library Services

Becoming a member of your local school library service can give you access to resources, training and literary information which can help greatly when it comes to creating and supporting a strong reading culture within the school. Run by qualified and experienced librarians, the school library association can help develop that all-important language rich school environment with relevant, engaging, and up to date material for all readers.

For more information visit the School Library Association website where you will also be able to access their free literacy resources.

More Information - [Here](#)



Scanning Pens

For some students who struggle with both reading and writing, taking notes in class can be overwhelming and challenging. Using a Smart pen can help eliminate some of the stress involved by recording entire lectures as students take notes.

The ReaderPen gives students the chance to build their vocabulary using the built-in dictionaries. Students no longer feel like they stand out in class thanks to its discreet design. Teachers are also able to assign individual learning objectives using the Voice Recorder function. There are countless ways educators can use the ReaderPen to support their teaching.

Scanning Pens also have an ExamReader Pen, which has been approved by JCQ for use in exams. This means students who have reading difficulties such as dyslexia can independently take exams knowing that they can read and understand the questions. No special access arrangements are required.

You can find out more and arrange a free trial [Here](#)

scanningpens

Peters

With over eight decades of experience and a passion for children's literature, Peters is the UK's leading specialist supplier of children's books to schools and academies.

Their team of expert librarians and school curriculum specialists read and review every book in stock and are on hand with help and advice, whatever your requirements – whether you're looking for reading schemes or the latest fiction and non-fiction.

You can find out more by visiting the Peters' website - [Here](#)

If you are a Lexiplore Analytics Customer speak to your account manager in order to access our exclusive discounts.



Juniper Education

Juniper Education's aim is to increase the effectiveness of schools, improve outcomes for learners and enable teachers to teach.

The organisation supports more than 7,000 primary and secondary schools with software for tracking pupil performance, and services to assist schools with financial management, teacher training, HR and school visits planning.

They also have an Education and Resources Service, which can provide schools and academies with a broad range of learning resources, books to borrow, books to buy, topic and fiction loans and artefact collections.

You can find out more by visiting the Juniper Education Website - [Here](#)



Positive Dyslexia

Positive Dyslexia was set up in 2016 by Katrina Cochrane, in order to raise awareness of dyslexia and co-occurring difficulties and support the needs of both Adults and Children. They offer bespoke consultancy and accredited training for schools, employers and parents, as well diagnostic assessments for children and adults.

Katrina Cochrane, has spent nearly 25 years in education – this is her 20th year as a Dyslexia Specialist. She spent 14 years with Dyslexia Action as Principal and Southern Regional Manager then 4 with the British Dyslexia Association as Head of Education and Policy. She has been a tutor for teachers on the Dyslexia Action Postgraduate Diploma course and has just finished writing the new Level 7 course for specialist teachers for the BDA.

You can find out more - [Here](#)



About Lexplore Analytics

Lexplore is a pioneering and mission-driven company, which provides schools with new technology and resources to promote reading development.

At the core of our offering is a ground breaking method of measuring reading attainment, which uses artificial intelligence and eye tracking technology to offer an entirely new insight into literacy.

By measuring when, where, and how a student's eyes move in relation to the words they are reading, our paperless assessment quickly analyses a their skills across key reading components, determines their attainment, and highlights potential barriers in a matter of minutes.

With immediate, fully objective and in-depth results, teachers can then work with our dedicated intervention package to support both emerging and fluent readers in their development.



Lexplore

ANALYTICS

A clear view of reading

www.lexplore-analytics.co.uk

hello@lexplore.com

+44(0)161 697 4166

@LexploreAnalyticsUK



British
Dyslexia
Association

Assured