

WHAT ARE SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

General Information...

Specific Learning Difficulties (SLD) **cause students** who usually have average or above average intelligence **to underachieve in one or more school subjects** - especially where the basic skills of reading, writing, spelling and/or mathematics are involved.

Students with SLD have **problems processing some forms of information** - either when receiving information, in organising, storing and/or retrieving information, or in expressing ideas, in both oral and written form. (Link to Appendix 1)

Specific Learning Difficulties affect about 7-10% of the population. This translates to at least one student with SLD in every classroom, in every school.

Specific Learning Difficulties **are intrinsic to individuals** and can cause them to **learn differently** from their peers. Students with SLD may fail to learn at a similar rate to their peers in certain areas.

Without intervention students with SLD **cannot access parts of the curriculum with equity**, even though they:

- have received regular schooling
- do not suffer from a physical or intellectual disability or emotional disturbance
- are not disadvantaged by environmental, cultural or economic factors

SLD students are often labelled 'lazy' or told to 'try harder' as teachers recognise their intelligence level but do not see the equivalent level of learning

Specific Learning Difficulties are **life long**. Problems caused by learning difficulties can become **obvious** not just in school but also in:

- poor social interaction skills,
- organising daily routines,
- concentration and attention,
- and often in poor self esteem and eventual behaviour difficulties.

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Typically, there may also be **motor problems which become obvious in handwriting and sporting activities**, or in just a general **lack of co-ordination** and spatial orientation.

If SLD is identified early and educational adjustments appropriate to the individual are provided, improvement in achievement of age-expected syllabus outcomes may be anticipated, and, failure and inevitable loss of self esteem can be prevented

Specific Learning Difficulties are also known as Learning Disabilities or Specific Learning Disabilities. **Dyslexia is the most common SLD and refers to problems decoding and encoding reading and writing.** Some other specific forms of learning disabilities include:

- ❑ dysphasia - difficulty **understanding language or learning to speak**
- ❑ dyscalculia - difficulty **understanding and calculating numbers**
- ❑ dysgraphia - difficulty with the **motor process of writing**
- ❑ dyspraxia - difficulty with the motor **production of speech and/or some actions**

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity **Disorder (ADHD) often co-exists with Specific Learning Difficulties**, presenting problems of hyperactivity, and/or inattention and impulsivity.

Specific Learning Difficulties can also co-exist with other disabilities.

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