Report for Jack Jones
Assessed by Sue Thompson on 05/08/2009

Report for parents

When a child is identified as dyslexic, additional support will be needed from both school and home to make sure that the difficulties associated with dyslexia are minimised, particularly those with reading, writing and information processing (remembering facts and recalling them efficiently). This report gives broad guidance to parents on ways that their child can be helped at home in everyday activities and situations. The school will want to work very closely with parents on specific areas that need reinforcement at home – support with homework, course work, additional reading and more structured activities that focus on improving literacy.

Parents can sometimes be reluctant to pressure children into practising reading. However, it should be borne in mind that the more a child reads, the better he will become at it and the more able he will be to learn and achieve.

For primary school children much of what the parent can do reinforces and practises learning at school – helping with reading, spelling and writing tasks. For secondary school students who have not acquired some of the basics in literacy during the primary stage, it is inevitable that some relearning and reinforcement of what they may consider skills for younger children will be needed. If taught at school they may be practised at home. If cooperation can be established with such students, gains will be made.

Jack’s Dyslexia Index indicates he has dyslexic difficulties that are mild in extent.

Why the Portfolio has been used

• What the Portfolio measures
  The Dyslexia Portfolio is made up of a series of nine short assessments that together provide a balance of information that may allow an individual to be identified as dyslexic and the extent of their dyslexia to be measured.

  To identify a student as dyslexic a general ability score (from another assessment) needs to be included as part of the assessment process. This is because the model of dyslexia used in this assessment is one of discrepancy. That is, it looks for an unusual mismatch between the student’s level of general ability and their progress in acquiring literacy skills.

  The short assessments in the Portfolio are divided into four pairs or ‘clusters’ plus a single test for writing.

• What the clusters measure
  • Reading and spelling of single words form the word literacy cluster
  • Timed reading of sentences and naming of pictures at speed form the processing speed cluster
  • Saying words with certain sounds omitted and reading made-up words form the phonological processing cluster
  • Repeating lists of numbers in forward and reverse order (two separate assessments) form the working memory cluster
  • Writing is a stand-alone assessment based on the number of words a student can write in a given time (rather than the quality of language or ideas)
Types of score
The scores from the individual assessments and the cluster scores are given as standard scores. A standard score is one that can be placed on a ‘standard scale’ and can therefore be compared meaningfully to the national average. 100 is the average score whatever the difficulty of the test and approximately 50% will score between 90 and 109. Scores can be compared to a nationally representative sample and are adjusted to take account of the child’s age.

Interpreting scores
No assessment is entirely accurate and scores may vary from one assessment session to the next. An individual’s performance may be affected by tiredness, minor illness or some level of discomfort (feeling too warm or too cold). To allow for a margin of error the scores from the Dyslexia Portfolio are provided in a range which is indicated by the bar (or ‘confidence band’) either side of the diamond in the chart below.

As the Dyslexia Portfolio is an individual assessment, the assessor has the opportunity to observe the student during the session and assess their attitude and approach to the assessments. Such observations can then be considered alongside the scores the assessments yield.

Summary
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Word Literacy
This cluster is an estimate of the student’s literacy at the word level, as shown in tests of single word reading and spelling. Whatever may be added later in terms of comprehension and enjoyment, word-level skills are the entry point into literacy and the engine that continues to drive progress even in the more sophisticated reader.

Jack’s skills in reading and spelling words are currently below average.

At home:
- It will be important to encourage Jack to ensure school-set reading and writing exercises are completed as requested.
- Such tasks may need to be supervised and broken down into manageable amounts of time to allow Jack to concentrate well.
- It will also be important to encourage Jack to read and write for pleasure. To this end, books and other reading matter such as magazines of interest to Jack should be made available to him.
- He should be supported in reading in a way that maximises enjoyment and minimises frustration. For instance, times for ‘pleasure’ reading should be set aside when he is not tired or wanting to do other things.
- Let Jack choose the book he wants you to read. Sometimes he will want to read silently. If he is reading aloud to a parent, however, help should be given readily when he falters over difficult words or passages, even if the school reading homework requires Jack to try to read such words or passages himself.

For information about choosing books see:

Processing Speed
This cluster comprises two tests: Naming Speed and Reading Speed. The latter, of course, is critical to the performance of older students in examinations. The former corresponds to what are sometimes described as word-finding skills, the ability to think of words and recall quickly the right name for an object.

Jack’s speed at processing information is slow.

Because students sometimes make a great effort to race through their work, with resulting poor quality, at home:
- Speed should not be encouraged at the expense of accuracy.
- It may be valuable for Jack to slow down and achieve better confidence through greater accuracy.
- Subsequently, greater automation (when the processing of information becomes less strained and more automatic) and confidence will result in improved speed.

Phonological Processing
Alphabetical skills are at the heart of the literacy-learning process in the early stages. Moreover, skill with the written word closely corresponds with spoken language skills; a reader needs to be able to hear the sounds within a word to read and write it accurately.

Jack’s skills in processing spoken words and phonemes are currently average. Jack is likely to be able to cope with the phonological elements of the literacy tasks that are appropriate to his age group.

Working Memory
The ability to hold verbal material in short-term memory seems to be central to learning the highly
sequenced procedures of reading and spelling. While Recall of Digits Forwards is a fairly straightforward measure of how well a student can do this, Recall of Digits Backwards requires that the student hold the material in memory while transforming it in some way (reversing it).

Jack’s ability to keep verbal information in his short-term memory while performing some mental task with it is below average.

At home:
- Jack should be given information a bit at a time and should be encouraged to jot down notes or diagrams to help him retain crucial details.
- He could also be encouraged to use visual imagery as an aid to remembering information that is initially provided in verbal form.
- For example, he can picture items in a ‘to do list’ as if they were situated around his home, so that he only has to imagine himself walking around the house to ‘see’ the things he must deal with.
- It helps to group information – numbers and letters – into chunks, which are easier to remember and may be more meaningful. A mobile phone number may begin 07997 (five digits), followed by six more; words occur in families (cover, recover, recoverable); and so on.

Overloading Jack with too much verbal information or instruction will result in failure to achieve what may seem straightforward tasks. For example, a general request to ‘tidy your room’ may result in only partial success: better to break down requests – ‘pick up your clothes’, ‘put away your toys’, etc. - even if some repetition is involved. Involving Jack in everyday tasks that can be done in a sequence – setting the table, following a simple recipe (with help) – can reinforce organisational skills.

**Writing**

This test primarily samples productivity, that is, the amount of writing a student can complete in a given time. Younger children perform a copying task, while older children engage in an open-ended but straightforward exercise in free writing.

Jack is currently below average at writing.

At home:
- Jack should be encouraged to practise writing whenever the opportunity arises, such as completing a daily diary entry, writing birthday cards and messages to friends or family, designing displays of photographs and labelling these, creating ‘home-made’ cards and so on. Older children can participate in ‘Facebook’ or an online blog.
- Many children with dyslexia have the ability to create stories but not to write them down: parents can help by doing this for them and, if handwriting practice is required, the child can copy these into a ‘writing journal’.

One effect of handwriting training can be a renewed pride in producing attractive written work, so this should be praised.

**General**

At home:
- It will be helpful not to overload Jack with too much verbal information at once, so he has time to absorb one thing before having to register and comprehend or remember another.
- It will also be very beneficial to remember that speaking and listening are only one route to conveying information.
- It may help Jack to have information presented to him in visual form and to experience new material by touch and movement if possible. So, for example, if he is studying a particular period of history, he might gain more from a museum visit or being allowed to handle artefacts and watch a video of key events, rather than being given a long description.
- Similarly, Jack may benefit from being allowed to present his thoughts and ideas in formats other than speech or writing. Using mind maps or drawing a flow diagram may help to get a sequence of tasks in
the right order before doing them.

Here are some other suggestions for creating a positive working relationship with your child:

- Do not use ‘but’ when talking to your child:
  ‘Your essay is great, but there are a lot of spelling mistakes’.
  Use ‘and’:
  ‘Your story is very funny and creative, and maybe next time we can work on some of the spelling mistakes’.
- Ask for what you want, rather than what you don’t want, when speaking to your child’s teacher.
- Encourage your child to draw a cartoon character, who can help combat the nagging negative ‘voice’ in the child’s head.
- Use praise frequently, especially with precise reference to actual work (‘You remembered all of this from last week’, ‘Well done, you’ve been concentrating for fifteen minutes’, ‘Fantastic! I’ve never seen you manage such a long sentence before’ and so on).
- With all children, whose development proceeds at a giddying rate, a little play-acting is necessary to being a supportive parent. The aim is to be always agreeably surprised.
- It is necessary to emphasise and praise growth – change, development, progress. It may feel like watching the grass grow sometimes: nothing much happens in an hour ... but a week or two can make a huge difference.