

XXXXXX School

A Quick Guide to Phonological Awareness

What are 'Phonological Awareness' difficulties'?

'Phonological awareness' is the ability to recognise and distinguish between the sounds used in spoken language, including phonemes, syllables and rhymes.

It is not the ability to hear using the ear, but, instead, it is to do with how the brain processes the speech sounds that are heard.

Phonological awareness development is embedded into the Early Years curriculum, but some pupils may need additional input if their skills have not developed as expected.

Phonological awareness difficulties can have an impact on a pupil's ability to read and spell. We use Phonics to teach reading and spelling which is the mapping of speech sounds to letters (or graphemes). If a pupil has a reduced 'awareness' of speech sounds, then this will mean that it will be challenging for them to map sounds to graphemes and hear them within words.

Phonological awareness difficulties can be a key indicator of a specific learning difficulty (dyslexia).

Implications for a pupil

Pupils with phonological awareness difficulties may:

- Find retaining phonic learning difficult, including developing automaticity
- Find decoding and blending words difficult
- Have spelling difficulties
- Avoid reading and writing activities (work avoidance behaviours)
- Have verbal abilities that are not reflected in their written work
- Struggle with rhyming and sound manipulation activities
- Have difficulties with syllable division
- Mix up sounds or similar sounding words

How to help – top tips

Pupils may benefit from:

1. Phonological awareness development activities in quality first teaching or in an intervention
2. Structured, multi-sensory, cumulative phonics programme which contains phonological awareness activities
3. Phonically decodable books matched to their phonic level to consolidate their skills
4. Pre-teaching of key vocabulary, including guidance on phonics/decoding on displays
5. The opportunity to read information more than once for comprehension
6. Differentiated resources matched to phonic knowledge
7. Consistent exposure to 'pure sounds'
8. Extra time in tests
9. Assistive technology or other reading or writing supports (e.g. text to speech)
10. Task boards, visuals, and verbal instructions.

Further advice and support

Useful Websites:

Dyslexia and Phonological Difficulties - Nessy

<https://www.nessy.com/uk/teachers/further-dyslexia-information/phonological-dyslexia/>

Reading:

Phonological Awareness Pack – Hertfordshire County Council

[https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/local-offer/media-library/documents/resource-area-documents/phonological-awareness-pack-pdf-6mb.pdf /](https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/local-offer/media-library/documents/resource-area-documents/phonological-awareness-pack-pdf-6mb.pdf/)

Special Education Needs Inclusion Team (SENIT) – consultation and support - referral via SENCO to senitrequests@leeds.gov.uk