

## **Backbench debate on support for dyslexic pupils at school Briefing from the British Dyslexia Association, 11 November 2025**

*"I wish I never had it - life would be much easier rather than struggling every day."* Young person with dyslexia

### **Introduction**

Dyslexia affects more than 1 million children in classrooms across the UK<sup>1</sup>, yet most children with dyslexia are not identified in school and continue through education without the support they need to reach their potential.

There are significant inequalities in access to diagnosis, support and specialist help with children from lower income families much less likely to be diagnosed and access good support. And when dyslexia goes unrecognised or unsupported, it can lead to low confidence, poor mental health and poor attainment.

The delay to the Schools and SEND White Paper offers a crucial chance to ensure reforms deliver early identification, effective support, and dyslexia-friendly schools where every teacher is trained and every learner can thrive.

### **Key facts**

Dyslexia is the most common specific learning difficulty, affecting around 1 in 10 people<sup>1</sup>. That's over one million children, or three in every classroom.

- There are clear inequalities in diagnosis: 90% of young people in high-income households (over £100k) receive a formal diagnosis, compared to just 43% in low-income households (under £30k), showing that access too often depends on family income.
- There is also a lack of diagnosis overall, with around 80% of children leaving school without ever being formally identified as dyslexic.
- Only 18% of children with dyslexia have access to assistive technology at school, despite evidence that these tools improve learning and confidence.
- 65% of students say they hide their dyslexia at school, and 59% report being bullied or teased because of it.<sup>2</sup>

### **The impact on children and young people**

When dyslexia is not recognised early, the effects can last a lifetime, with many young people feeling the education system is "set up for somebody else." Their needs are often misunderstood, and without the right support pupils can lose confidence, fall behind, and face challenges that continue well beyond school.

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<sup>1</sup> British Dyslexia Association estimates that – based on data from Department for Education (2025) Schools, pupils and their characteristics – there are 900,000 children with dyslexia in England.

<sup>2</sup> Set up for someone else report, British Dyslexia Association, September 2025

More than one third of children and young people say the support they receive for dyslexia is poor or only fair. Many highlight that teachers often lack training or awareness, leaving pupils feeling isolated rather than supported.

*“Most teachers didn’t really understand what it’s like to be dyslexic. They just thought I was being lazy or not paying attention, but really, I was trying my best.”* Young person with dyslexia

The emotional toll is clear. Young people with dyslexia report higher levels of poor mental health than their peers, and over three quarters of parents say their child experiences low self-esteem, embarrassment or anxiety<sup>2</sup>.

The impact is most visible at GCSE level. In 2023/24, only 1 in 5 pupils with dyslexia achieved a Grade 5 or above in English and Maths<sup>3</sup>, compared with over 50% of pupils without special educational needs, an attainment gap of over 30 percentage points.

## Recommendations

To ensure every child with dyslexia can reach their full potential, the British Dyslexia Association calls on the Government to:

- **Make children with dyslexia a national priority:** By developing a dedicated National Dyslexia Strategy that ensures no pupil is left unidentified or unsupported in education.
- **Guarantee early identification for all:** Through a universal screening and/or assessment pathway so that every child, regardless of background or postcode, can access timely support.
- **Build truly dyslexia-friendly classrooms:** By introducing mandatory teacher training and clear national standards for SEND support, ensuring that every teacher has the knowledge and tools to help dyslexic learners thrive.
- **Modernise the curriculum and assessment system:** By embedding assistive technology, creating flexible learning pathways, and recognising the diverse strengths and talents of all learners.

## How MPs can support

- Attend the debate on support for dyslexic pupils at school.
- Call for better early identification and improved teacher training.
- Join the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Dyslexia.
- Meet with the British Dyslexia Association to discuss local experiences and solutions.

For any questions or additional information, please contact Munira and Helen at [policy@bdadyslexia.org.uk](mailto:policy@bdadyslexia.org.uk).

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<sup>2</sup> Set up for someone else report, British Dyslexia Association, September 2025

<sup>3</sup> British Dyslexia Association (2025) Mind the gap: GCSE Results and the Dyslexia Divide.