

Ceisteanna & Freagraí: Disléicse

Questions & Answers: Dyslexia

Gaeloideachas 
Guth don Oideachas Ián-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta



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Introduction

Irish-medium and Gaeltacht schools are the choice of many parents of children with special educational needs. Dyslexia is the most frequently featured special educational need in Irish-medium schools, with more than 9% of pupils in Irish-medium primary schools having dyslexia. This section provides advice and information for parents and guardians on the identification, assessment and support of dyslexia. It is specifically designed to help parents gain a better understanding of dyslexia, address some of the many misunderstandings about dyslexia and the suitability of learning through the medium of Irish, as well as advice on ways to support your child. Our aim is to empower and inform parents so that they have the confidence to make the best choices for their children. We also have some practical tips on how parents can provide support with homework and learning.

The questions below are all real questions received from parents and practitioners. We are extremely grateful to Emily Barnes from the Phonetics and Speech Laboratory, Trinity College Dublin, for providing answers to these questions, as well as the researchers and practitioners who shared their tips, advice and research at our recent information evenings on dyslexia. Recordings of these sessions can be viewed below.

If there are other general questions, which you think should be included here, we will be happy to add these to this page. You can email Ciara Ní Bhroin ciara@gaeloideachas.ie. If you have something that is troubling you or are looking for more general information, the Dyslexia Association of Ireland may be able to help. Please see www.dyslexia.ie.

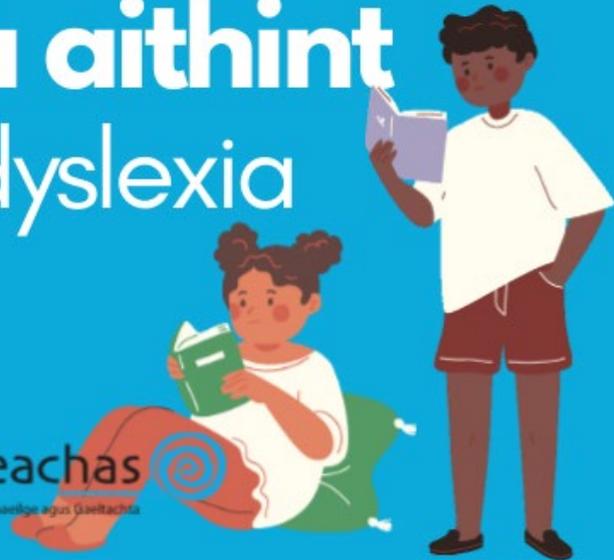
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Disléicse a aithint

Identifying dyslexia

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Identifying Dyslexia

Are the early signs of dyslexia identified in an Irish-medium or Gaeltacht school in a similar manner to an English-medium school?

All schools use a Continuum of Support to identify needs. Irish-medium and English-medium schools follow the same guidelines in relation to how to identify and support dyslexia. Teachers in gaelscoileanna and scoileanna Gaeltachta monitor the language development of children from the very beginning of primary school and can identify possible issues early.

The Continuum of Support has three stages:

Stage 1: If a child's teacher or parents notices that emergent literacy skills are not developing as expected, support is provided by the class teacher depending on the needs of the child (e.g. additional phonics instruction and practice). The teacher sets targets for the child and if they do not meet those targets, they move onto the next stage.

Stage 2: When formal reading instruction has begun, early screeners can be used to identify needs. Many of these screeners are based on the development of English literacy in English-medium schools, so gaelscoileanna and scoileanna Gaeltachta use other tools such as the *Áis mheasúnaithe don Luathlitearthacht* and *Mar a Déarfá!* to provide information about needs. Based on this information, individual learning support is implemented by the class teacher or learning support teacher in a small group. After a period of intervention, the child's progress is reviewed and if the learning targets are not achieved, the child moves on to the next stage.

Stage 3: A team which may include the class teacher, learning support teacher, parents and an educational psychologist meets to consider the child's strengths and their response to intervention to date. A formal diagnosis is made at this stage by a psychologist and the child's learning plan is reviewed and any necessary adjustments made. Support is usually provided by the learning support teacher at this stage in a one-to-one setting outside the classroom.

Before a child moves on to post-primary school, a review of their learning needs should be carried out to see what supports will be needed in post-primary school.

How would you know for certain if your child had dyslexia? What are the other tools available apart from screening tests for dyslexia which identify the symptoms or difficulties in relation to dyslexia?

The signs of dyslexia are different from person to person. Everyone with dyslexia has various individual strengths and weaknesses. There is additional information on some of the most common symptoms in relation to dyslexia available on the Dyslexia Association Ireland website or on the Health Service Executive's website.

A diagnostic test has to be undertaken with an educational psychologist initially to know for certain if your child has dyslexia. The psychologist who undertakes that test should understand bilingualism and the literacy acquisition of two different languages. Also, particularly if Irish is the language at home, the psychologist should be proficient in Irish. Before undertaking a diagnostic test, a lot of information on the child's needs can be obtained through various instruments such as the *Áis Mheasúnaithe don Luathliteartacht* (Assessment Resource in Early Literacy) or the assessment resource *Mar a Déarfá!* (As You Would Say) as well as the screening tests in English.

What are some of the benefits of receiving a diagnosis? Are there any potential disadvantages?

Receiving a diagnosis for dyslexia usually brings relief to parents though it might feel overwhelming initially. The relief comes from knowing that their child's difficulties is not a question of overall ability and that there is a community of people who have had the same experience as your child. A diagnosis can help move the discussion forward from trying to define the difficulties a child has to addressing those difficulties. The report that is provided with the diagnosis contains valuable information on a child's strengths as well as the areas in which support is needed. These findings are incorporated into an intervention plan that focusses on their strengths while tackling areas that they find difficult.

The effect of labelling a child is often a worry for parents when seeking a diagnosis. It is usually the case that the child is aware of their own difficulties whether they are named or not. Naming the difficulty is useful in order to identify with people who have had a similar experience. It is important to remember that while the psychological report gives a good picture of your child's strengths and weaknesses at a given point of time, this picture can change over time. A psychological report is a tool to inform intervention and not a forecast of a child's abilities.

Can children access supports at school for reading and writing without the need for identification of a literacy problem by a professional?

Yes. The Continuum of Support ensures that as soon as an issue is identified, support is provided by the class teacher or the learning support teacher and the progress of the child is regularly reviewed. See the first question on this page for a more detailed description of the Continuum of Support.

Is there a link between Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and dyslexia?

There has been much research on the link between ADHD and dyslexia. About 25-40% of children with either dyslexia or ADHD also meet the criteria for the other disorder (Pennington, 2006). One disorder does not cause the other. Instead, it appears that there are common risk factors for both ADHD and dyslexia, which can result in a dual diagnosis of both.

There has been much less research on the link between ASD and dyslexia. Based on what we know currently, a person with ASD is no more likely to have dyslexia than a person without ASD. Similarly, a person with dyslexia is no more likely to have ASD than a person without dyslexia.

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Questions & Answers: Dyslexia

Disléicse & Oideachas Lán-Ghaeilge

Dyslexia & Irish-medium education

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Dyslexia and Irish-medium education

How do I know if a Gaelscoil is right for my child?

Before beginning school, it is difficult to know how a child's interests will develop. Attending a Gaelscoil or Gaeltacht school maximises the options and opportunities your child will have as they grow older. In addition to the academic and cultural benefits of being bilingual, there are more and more employment opportunities for people who speak Irish in many different fields. It is also clear from research (see the References section) that children in Irish-medium schools develop English language and literacy skills to the same level as their peers in English-medium schools.

The most important thing is to make sure that the school itself is suitable for your child and that it has the resources and experience to support your child's learning and happiness. This is the case for both English-medium and Irish-medium schools. Factors such as the ethos of the school, class sizes and extracurricular opportunities are important considerations. If your child has any additional educational needs, make sure that the school has the resources and experience to support them. Listen to the experience of other parents and ask for information from the school to help inform your decision.

A psychologist has suggested that a Gaelscoil would not be suitable for my child.

What's your advice on this?

This type of advice used to be common but this is changing based on the findings of research which supports the fact that children should be given the chance to become bilingual and that children can reach their academic potential in a gaelscoil. Research shows that, as a group, children with SEN perform as well as their peers in English-medium schools in English reading. Children with dyslexia are capable of reaching their academic potential in gaelscoileanna and scoileanna Gaeltachta, provided they have the right support.

The main issue is whether the school can support the needs of your child. Find out about the level of support available in the gaelscoil, including what model of support they have for children with

dyslexia, the experience they have in supporting children with dyslexia and the training that school staff have received in relation to dyslexia. The child's overall wellbeing should be considered too, including the impact of moving a child from a Gaelscoil after they have settled in there.

Recent research (Andrews, 2020) examined the benefits that parents who have kept their children in Irish-medium schools have identified. These benefits include:

- Their child becoming bilingual and being able to communicate in two languages
- Academic benefits in post-primary school, including good marks in Irish and the transfer of skills to their third language.
- Self-esteem, self-identity and pride: children felt that Irish was a strength for them compared to their peers in English-medium schools.
- Opportunities for repetition: learning certain skills in two languages provided opportunities for repetition, which helped them master skills.

[Should we stay with Irish-medium education at primary level once SEN have been identified? Particularly where more than one challenge has been identified, e.g. dyslexia and dyscalculia, dyslexia and hearing impairment?](#)

The most important question is whether the school has the resources and experience to support your child's learning and happiness. Irish-medium schools routinely provide education for children with special needs, both physical and educational; children with impaired sight or hearing, autism spectrum disorders, dyslexia and other special educational needs. Irish-medium schools offer the same supports for these children as English-medium schools do. Ask the school about the support they can provide to your child based on their needs, as well as the experience they have with children who have more than one diagnosis of SEN. It is not unusual for children with dyslexia to have co-existing needs in another area. Many children with dyslexia thrive and are very happy in Irish-medium schools.

[If a child has dyslexia should they be in a Gaeltacht school? Would it not be better for him or her to attend an English school?](#)

Gaeltacht schools provide the opportunity for children to develop literacy and spoken skills in English and in Irish in a very supportive environment. There is more support now than ever available as there are language support teachers in Gaeltacht schools since the implementation of the Policy for Gaeltacht Education. It is paramount that children have the opportunity to develop skills in the language of the community and in their family language, and children get that opportunity in Gaeltacht schools. Children in Gaeltacht schools can realise their full potential and the skills transfer benefits their literacy skills in both languages. Also, there are many academic advantages, both cognitive and linguistic, relating to education through the medium of Irish.

[Is there any advice regarding the suitability of a Gaeltacht school for a child with dyslexia, when Irish is not the first language at home?](#)

Since the implementation of the Policy for Gaeltacht Education in 2017, for the first two years at school the development of literacy skills is in Irish only in the Gaeltacht schools. This provides the child with a great opportunity to acquire the Irish language and to develop the relevant literacy skills in junior infants and in senior infants, regardless of the language at home. English isn't undertaken until 1st class and the child has no difficulty transferring the literacy skills developed in Irish during the initial two years to the learning of English.

Are there similar problems in Irish and in English regarding memory, reading and processing pace, sequencing, etc.?

Some people with dyslexia have difficulties in all those areas, and other people with dyslexia have difficulties in some of those areas. At the cognitive level (memory, processing, sequencing), a person with dyslexia has the same difficulties in any language. However, dyslexia has a different effect on reading and spelling in different languages. For example, in a language with a complicated writing system (e.g. English), mistakes can be made frequently in reading and spelling. In a language with a simple system (e.g. Spanish) quite often reading can be slow but accurate. Irish is more regular than English and children will be able to use that regularity if they are taught phonetics.

What are the objective metrics and criteria to see if Irish language teaching is helping or hindering my child's development both in Irish but also more generally?

The new curriculum breaks up learning outcomes into a series of stages which allows teachers to measure progress and identify any areas in which a child's progress is less than would be expected in relation either to their peers or to the child's skills in other areas. Teachers may also use the Próifílí Measúnachta don Ghaeilge sna Scoileanna Gaeltachta agus Lán-Ghaeilge, which lays out the language development of children in a set of stages to examine progress. If a teacher identifies any area in which a child is not meeting learning targets then supports will be put in place (refer back to the section on identifying dyslexia for information on the Continuum of Support). However, if you are worried about your child's progress in Irish or in other areas you should make an appointment to speak to the class teacher.

Is there any research that compares outcomes for children with dyslexia in English-medium schools with children with dyslexia in gaelscoileanna or scoileanna Gaeltachta?

Based on the available evidence, it appears that as a group, children with additional educational needs perform as well in immersion education as in English-medium education. There are additional advantages to gaelscoileanna and scoileanna Gaeltachta beyond literacy outcomes. A recent study (Andrews, 2020) examined the opinions of parents of children with dyslexia in gaelscoileanna. The benefits of immersion education that they have identified include:

- Bilingualism: their child is able to communicate in two languages
- Academic benefits in post-primary school, including good marks in Irish and transfer of skills to their third language.
- Self-esteem, self-identity and pride: children felt that Irish was a strength for them compared to their peers in English-medium schools.
- Opportunities for repetition: learning certain skills in two languages provided opportunities for repetition, which helped them master skills.

There is one study that compares the literacy development of students in Irish-medium schools, scoileanna Gaeltachta, and English-medium schools (Parsons & Lyddy, 2016). The participants include the full range of reading ability, including good readers and poor readers, though none are diagnosed as dyslexic given their age (Senior Infants – Second Class). The study found that by Second Class, as a group, those in gaelscoileanna had English reading skills that were as good as their English-medium peers and superior Irish reading and vocabulary to their English-medium peers. Children in Gaeltacht schools also had superior Irish reading and vocabulary skills than their English-medium peers, and had comparable English decoding skills to their English-medium peers. This is a group study, so it is not possible to tell how the skills of individual students developed. However,

another study (Ní Chiaruáin, 2009) examines the development of three individual students with dyslexia in a gaelscoil. The findings suggest that they make good progress in both languages, with slightly better reading skills in English than in Irish.

There have been group studies carried out with French immersion students in Canada who have additional educational needs. These studies are reviewed by Genesee and Jared (2008). The evidence suggests that students who have additional educational needs have comparable English reading skill to their peers in English-medium education (who also have additional educational needs), and superior reading skill in French. The educational context of French immersion students in Canada is very similar to that of students in gaelscoileanna in Ireland.

How does a parent recognise if his or her child's English has developed adequately while in the Irish-medium or Gaeltacht system?

From the research that has been undertaken, the children's English vocabulary in a Gaelscoil is as good as the children's vocabulary in English-medium schools. Also, having started to learn English in school, the children's English vocabulary in Gaeltacht schools is as good as the children's vocabulary in English-medium schools.

If the child speaks Irish at home, there is a possibility that the child's English spoken skills will develop slower than children who are raised through the medium of English, but there is no possibility that they won't be able to master the English language after primary school. It is worthwhile continuing the development of Irish language skills at home, and the English skills will catch up over time.

How does the teaching of reading (especially English reading) differ in a gaelscoil or scoil Ghaeltachta compared with English-medium school?

English reading instruction is taught in a similar way in Gaelscoileanna, Scoileanna Gaeltachta and English-medium schools, usually using a combination of phonics instruction and whole word instruction. The sequence of introducing English and Irish reading differs from school to school. Some introduce English reading first, some introduce Irish reading first and some introduce both at the same time. Gaeltacht schools introduce Irish reading first, in line with An Polasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta (Policy on Gaeltacht Education), whereby immersion in Irish is compulsory in the first two years in school.

Previous research (Parsons & Lyddy, 2016) shows that regardless of the sequence in which English reading is introduced, the English literacy attainment of children in gaelscoileanna is the same of those in English-medium schools by Second Class. It also shows that children in gaelscoileanna have higher Irish literacy attainment than those in English-medium schools. Similarly, the study showed that children in Gaeltacht schools have better Irish reading and vocabulary skills than their English-medium peers, and comparable English decoding skills to their English-medium peers.

How do phonics work for a child with dyslexia? If the child does not have Gaeilge as his or her home language will it affect their phonological awareness?

Phonics is a method of instruction that makes the links between letters and sounds clear. The following skills provide a good base for phonics instruction: (1) an awareness of the sounds of a language (2) an understanding that words can be broken up into smaller sounds (phonemes) and smaller sounds can be blended to make a word, and (3) an ability to recognise letters.

For the first skill, the child will need to become aware of the new sounds in Irish which do not exist in their first language. This can be done as part of a phonological awareness training programme. At

home, listening to e-books in Irish or to programmes on TG4 can help to develop this skill too. The second and third skills transfer across languages and are not dependent on knowledge of the language. If your child can break up words in English into sounds it is very likely that your child will be able to do the same in Irish. Practicing this skill at home with word games in your home language will help to develop their literacy skills.

[Anxieties about vocabulary when English is the main language at home](#)

English is the main language at home for the most part. When my son (7 years old) gets older, his English vocabulary will expand as that is what he speaks. He will come across a lot of words in reading that he won't initially recognise and then he won't be able to read them. Is that not difficult for him? I'm worried that his vocabulary in Irish won't expand at the same pace.

As with a lot of children in Irish-medium primary schools, he thinks that Irish is a language being taught and he has no interest in cartoons or in reading in Irish at home.

The acquisition of reading is a process which happens gradually. Your child will progress in the spoken language as he progresses in the written language. Don't forget that your child has been immersed in the Irish language in school, and that he will learn new words in the same way as he learns them in English at home.

In addition, while reading we normally come across new words. Reading is one of the most effective ways to learn new words. That is why phonetics are taught – so that the child can decode new words. A lot of words can be understood in the context of the sentence, even if a person already knows them. The more he reads, the better: there are wonderful books available in Irish for all age groups and on many themes and varied topics.

It is worthwhile speaking to your child in Irish at home, even if English is the language he or she speaks to you. You could add to the contexts in which your child uses Irish. Various groups organise family events (refer to www.peig.ie and select "suitable for families" (oiriúnach do theaghlaigh) from the list), for example. Gaeloideachas can advise you in relation to various organisations depending on your requirements.

Tacaíocht a chur ar fáil don pháiste le disléicse

Supporting a child with dyslexia

Gaeloideachas

Guth don Oideachas Ián-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta



Supporting a child with dyslexia

How can I support my child?

There are many ways to help your child with dyslexia thrive, no matter what language you speak at home. At a young age, it is important to provide support for language and literacy skills. Some advice is provided below in this regard:

Home language interventions in any language will benefit your child e.g. working on phonological awareness skills and building vocabulary.

Phonological awareness: develop this skill by listening to and making up rhymes or poems, playing games such as I spy which focus on sounds, or incorporating sound games into other activities (e.g. say a word, ask your child to think of how many sounds are in the word and then jump to that number on a hopscotch ladder).

Vocabulary: Reading, listening to audiobooks and playing scrabble or word bingo are great ways to develop vocabulary.

Give your child reading material that they are interested in – this could be anything from comics to Pokemon cards or magazines about animals, cars or sport.

If Irish is your home language, keep speaking Irish to the child. Research shows that for children in Gaeltacht schools, the more exposure that children have to Irish the better their Irish literacy attainment (Harris et al., 2006).

Let your child speak, and listen to them.

Provide your child with the opportunity to read in both languages. If you are not confident reading with your child in Irish, you can use Irish e-books (An Gúm & Breacadh)

Document your child's progress in Irish and English to monitor their development in both and to monitor the transfer of skills between each.

Use evidence-based intervention strategies in Irish or English (or another home language) when helping the child at home.

If your child has trouble recording homework, ask if your child can take a picture of the homework or if the class teacher can e-mail it to you.

Provide meaningful reading and writing opportunities for your child in everyday activities. For example, reading recipes and food labels together, writing notes on a family calendar, using shopping leaflets and catalogues, writing shopping lists, to-do lists or cards. If necessary, ask for a reduced level of homework for your child.

At school and in the community:

- Provide input in school planning, be open about your child's needs and collaborate with the teacher to provide support for your child.
- Ask for advice from others when you need it.
- Register with the library and attend literacy or language-related events. There are many support organisations for parents of children being raised through Irish or bilingually. Gaeloideachas can put you in touch with various organisations depending on your needs.
- Register with Gaeloideachas to receive the SEN Newsletter which has information on resources in addition to news.

At the same time, it is important to look after your child's wellbeing as well as your own:

- Have patience and understand that it will take time and effort to develop their reading skills
- Build your child's confidence, focus on the strengths that they have and praise them for their skills and abilities. Let them know that there are many successful people who have had dyslexia and achieved their goals.
- Keep perspective: dyslexia does not define your child, it is one part of their learning experience.

As they get older, children can be supported in different ways:

- Encourage daily routines that help with organisation (e.g. an organised and tidy study space, colour-coded files, copies and folders, limit distractions in the space used for study, study and homework calendar/wall planner, etc.)
- Use technology to allow children to record and display what they have learned in different ways (e.g. making a video, recording audio, etc.)
- Give your child opportunities to access subject information in other ways. This can include videos, audiobooks, podcasts and online exercises and resources.
- Apply for spelling and grammar waivers or other accommodations for examinations if needed.

The Dyslexia Association of Ireland also have useful advice for parents of children with dyslexia on their website. Though it is not focussed on children in gaelscoileanna or scoileanna Gaeltachta, much of it is relevant for all children.

[How does parents' level of Irish affect the support they can give a child learning through Irish with dyslexia?](#)

Regardless of parents' level of Irish, providing a home intervention in any language is beneficial as literacy skills learned in one language contribute to the development of skills in the other. Reading

together in your home language and encouraging discussions and debates is great for vocabulary development. Creating meaningful reading and writing experiences at home can be less pressure than homework: these might include writing up shopping lists and to-do lists for the day as well or reading the weather before going out for the day.

Parents who do not speak Irish can still support their child with dyslexia in Irish too. In terms of Irish language input, listening to audiobooks together in Irish is a great way to strengthen your child's vocabulary and increase their reading comprehension. The child should still be provided with the opportunity to read in Irish: if you are unsure about the correct pronunciation, www.teanglann.ie provides audio files of individual words while www.abair.ie provides audio files of phrases and sentences. There are a lot of different resources and apps available online to provide children with practice in spelling, vocabulary and reading.

[I am a parent and a former gaelscoil student who has dyslexia. There was no support for me while I was at school. How can I help my child now?](#)

Our understanding of dyslexia is continuously growing as well as our understanding of the effective interventions to assist children with dyslexia. It is important to encourage and praise a child to enhance his or her self-confidence. As you attended a gaelscoil yourself, you can enhance your child's language skills by speaking Irish to him or to her at home and that is a great advantage. Also, you and your child have a mutual understanding: you understand the challenges faced but that they can be overcome. You will be able to help with homework and with other projects and you will be able to share any tricks or working methods that helped you with your child. There is a lot of support available in schools now and there is more information regarding that in the section on Dyslexia and Irish-medium education. There is more information on the ways in which to provide support in the first question in this section as well.

[What type of support should I be looking for, as a parent, from the school?](#)

It is important that reading support is made available to your child. Depending on your child's requirements, the following aspects are targeted as part of the support programme:

- Training in phonological awareness focusing on (i) differentiating between sounds of the language and (ii) separating sounds from one another and assembling sounds together.
- Training in phonetics in Irish and in English. Training is needed in both languages as the sounds of both languages are not the same nor are the letter-to-sound rules of both languages. There are resources available in these programmes, for example: Fónaic na Gaeilge (Irish Phonetics), Mar a Déarfá (As You Would Say), Cód na Gaeilge (Irish Language Code), and Lámh Chúnta (Helping Hand). There are new programmes and resources being developed continuously.
- Reading practice with graded books, which are available as part of Cleite and Séidean Sí.
- Training in the high frequency words.
- Spelling strategies e.g. look-write-cover-say-check.
- A lot of practice and repetition in reading and language skills.
- Collaborative reading and rereading in order to enhance fluency and the pace of reading.
- Games and exercises to expand vocabulary and to advance comprehension skills.

Although there are differences between both languages, progress in one language enhances skills in the other language. Your child's progress should be assessed regularly and his or her intervention programmes should be reviewed accordingly. Also, your child should have access to support technologies if he or she requires them.

What assistive technology can be used by students with dyslexia in an Irish-medium or Gaeltacht setting (e.g. voice to text, text to audio facility, etc.)? Most or all of the software in use in schools seems to be limited to English language usage.

Abair.ie has voice-to-text technology which allows you to enter text on the website and choose which dialect and at what speed you would like it read out in. ABAIR also has voices that can be used with the NVDA screen reader which will read out text on your computer screen. There is a guide to installing the screen reader and the ABAIR plug-in here:

<https://www.abair.tcd.ie/products/nvda/download.html>. Other helpful assistive technologies include the spellchecker GaelSpell and grammar-checker Anois available at www.cruinneog.com which allow the user to correct errors in word documents.

An Scéalaí is a resource which combines assistive technology and a learning experience (<https://www.abair.tcd.ie/scealai/#/landing>). An Scéalaí allows the user to write a story or essay and correct their own work using a two-step process. The first step is the audiocheck, where the user hears their story/essay read back to them in one of the ABAIR voices. The aim is for the user to correct spelling mistakes, grammar mistakes or word omissions that they hear in the audiocheck. The second step is an automatic spelling and grammar check using An Gramadóir. The teacher can also provide written or spoken feedback to the student. The stories are stored in the student's account where they can keep track of their written work and progress.

Are there any games available in Irish to assist with reading and spelling? We are using *Nessy* and *Reading Eggs* in English.

The programme Mar a Déarfá (<https://www.maradearfa.ie/>) has small books with videos which help children differentiate between sounds in Irish, an important skill for early literacy. These small books and videos are available in the three main dialects. The programme Séideán Sí also has language and literacy games in the main dialects (<https://www.seideansi.ie/>).

There are many development games and resources for the Irish language curriculum and for education through the medium of Irish in Northern Ireland. The programme Cleite has games online which assist children in the development of phonology, phonetics and reading skills (<https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/clar-luathleitheoireachta-cleite/cluichi-bhanda-1#section-7267>) The programme Féasta Focal (Feast of Words) also has language and literacy games (<https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/feasta-focal>). The programme Cód na Gaeilge has phonetics games (<https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/cod-na-gaeilge>) which assists children in understanding the relationship between a letter and a sound. (http://legacy.ccea.org.uk/curriculum/gaeloideachas/foghla%C3%AD_focal) has spelling games.

COGG's website (www.cogg.ie) has a complete list of the resources available.

Are there any suggestions in relation to supporting the young person with additional needs during distance (remote) learning?

There are challenges and opportunities in relation to distance learning.

The challenges:

- It is more difficult for teachers to assess the progress being made by children when they are not in the classroom. Keep a record of the progress being made by your child and bring it to his or her attention if your child is having a bad day. If your child has difficulty with a particular subject, skill or topic, make a note of it.

- Children with dyslexia need a lot of practice and repetition and there is a possibility that they won't have those opportunities available when they are not in school. Learning opportunities or practice can be merged into the day. For example, if you have the opportunity to cook with your child, you can practice reading skills (the recipe) and sequencing (ingredients and steps) in a different context.

The opportunities:

- The schoolday is more flexible now and your child will have more time now to process information.
- This is a good opportunity for children to find out what type of learning suits them – this is an important step in the development of the independent learner. They can adjust the space to suit themselves, take breaks when it suits them, and experiment with other learning materials (audiobooks, podcasts, videos, etc.).
- It is important to shape the day. It is a good thing to compile a timetable and to insert different tasks in different colours.
- Try new technologies. Look at the apps referred to in the sections above as well as the different types of support technologies for Irish.

My child often gets frustrated at homework time because of the sheer volume of learning work to be done. It takes so long for him or her to learn half of what is required that he or she often gives up. I don't know how to make it easier without both of us getting upset and frustrated?

You have already made progress by identifying the source of frustration at homework time: your child has too much material to learn in too short a space of time. It is worth speaking to the teacher to see if the homework can be adjusted to depend less on memorising or learning chunks of information.

Then, find different ways of learning the information that must be learned. This might include watching documentaries and videos or listening to audiobooks and podcasts. The most effective way to learn information is to provide “anchors” for it. Anchors can include information the child already knows, as well as visual anchors (images/pictures) or musical ones if they are available. Mind maps can help your child visualise the links between information, and different pieces of information then act as anchors to each other.

If your child is learning skills rather than information (e.g. maths skills, phonics), you can still use visualisation strategies. These include using objects (e.g. using counters for maths) or making letter shapes with your hands to reinforce letter learning. For some children, using different coloured markers and a whiteboard can make all the difference to their learning.

In addition to this, make sure the environment is optimal for doing homework. This might include finding a space that is quiet and free from visual distractions and doing homework at a time where your child is not hungry or tired, and has had a break after school. Make sure that the desk space is well-lit and that your child has everything they need to do their work, including notebooks and stationery. Organising the desk space can help to avoid unnecessary frustration, this might include having a wall planner or desk planner, as well as colour-coded subject files and notebooks for older children. Motivate your child with praise and keep a record of their progress in different areas. Take a break when they get frustrated or upset and remind them of this progress.



Irish-medium post-primary education and dyslexia

What advice would you give regarding the transition from Irish-medium primary school to Irish-medium post-primary school?

A successful transition from primary to secondary education starts with good preparation. Ensure that the school is aware of any additional needs that your child may have and of the type of supports your child needs. Children are often anxious during the first few months of post-primary school so check in with your child regularly. Reassure them that things will get easier, praise them and motivate them to keep going. It is worthwhile looking at the school diary every day to catch any concerns early.

In post-primary school, there is usually a higher level of self-management and self-organisation expected. Some children with dyslexia have difficulties with organisation. If this is the case for your child, it is worthwhile making sure that there are systems in place to help your child stay organised:

- Schedule daily reminders on phones or tablets to remind your child what is needed for class each day
- Ask the teacher if your child can take a picture of the homework if he or she has trouble recording the homework.
- Copy extra timetables and keep them in schoolbags and lockers.
- Use coloured zip pockets to make work for different subjects easy to find.
- Put one tick next to each piece of homework as it is done, and a second tick next to it when the homework has been placed in the schoolbag.
- Break big tasks such as preparing for end-of-year or state examinations down into smaller steps and plan schedules in advance to avoid stress.
- Use mindmap apps to organise information and topics within a school subject. If choosing a mindmap app, consider whether the information can be written in Irish and whether the font size and colour can be changed to accommodate your child's preferences or needs.

Language technology can help support your child in post-primary school. Online dictionaries such as teanglann.ie and focloir.ie can help your child to learn terminology for a specific subject. There is also a 'grammar wizard' available on teanglann.ie which is particularly helpful for writing essays or answers for homework. There is additional information on text-to-speech software and spelling and grammar checkers in the section on supporting a child with dyslexia.

[What is the advice on sending a child with dyslexia to a school where iPads are used?](#)

Technology can be a huge help to children with dyslexia. There are many different types of software to help with language and literacy (e.g. text-to-speech software and spelling and grammar checkers) as well as with organisation (e.g. mindmaps and reminders). This means that an iPad school could offer advantages to your child. It is important, however, to make sure that the iPad school has adapted their teaching and learning for the technology and that there are other paper-based learning resources available for pupils if they wish to use them.

[Will dyslexia affect my child's ability to learn a third language?](#)

Recent research (Von Hagen, 2019) shows that many children with dyslexia are as good as children without dyslexia at learning an additional language, though there are some that will need more support than other children. Children in gaelscoileanna with dyslexia are very capable of learning an additional language as the language and literacy skills developed in Irish and English should support the acquisition of a third language. Having become proficient in two languages, they are very aware of how languages work.

Make sure that your child is provided with lots of exposure to the spoken language as this will play to your child's strengths and provide a good basis for literacy development. When choosing a foreign language to study at school, there are a couple of things to consider. The first is the writing system of the language. Languages with a simple writing system (such as Spanish and Italian) are the easiest languages to learn to read in. The second is the availability of assistive technology in the language, including text-to-speech technology as well as grammar and spell checkers. Unlike other subjects, language exams have a large listening and oral component which your child might enjoy and be very good at.

[Are there any scenarios where it would not be recommended to continue to Irish-medium post-primary school after Irish-medium primary school?](#)

Without knowing the details of any particular case it is difficult to answer this question, however the most important thing to consider when choosing a post-primary school is the school's ethos. Find out whether the school has a good policy of inclusion, experience of children with the type of needs your child has and the willingness to keep learning about how to cater for your child's needs. Ask the school about these factors and make a decision based on the ability of the school to cater for your child's needs as well as your child's motivation and interest in going to a Gaelcholáiste. Having attended a gaelscoil, your child should have a good foundation in language skills which will stand to them in post-primary school.

[What are the best subjects to choose at post-primary level? Is it better to avoid those that require a lot of memorization of text?](#)

Choose subjects based on your child's strengths and interests, as well as the requirements of the subject. If your child has the opportunity to try out different subjects at the beginning of first year, they will soon learn which ones they enjoy best. If your child is good at problem-solving and understands abstract concepts well, physics or chemistry might suit them best. If your child is creative and has good visuo-spatial abilities, art or technical graphics might suit well. It is not the

case that every child with dyslexia has a poor memory, but if your child does, subjects such as history which require the memorisation of facts and dates may be more difficult for them. It is worth looking at past examination papers to see what type of answers are required. Some subjects require longer passages of text or essays as answers, while others do not.

In relation to languages, people with dyslexia are likely to do best with languages such as Spanish which have a simple writing system where every letter is pronounced. It is worth checking the availability of online resources and of assistive technology in a language before choosing it. It is also important to consider your child's interests. The interest a person has in a topic influences their ability to remember facts about the topic. If your child has an interest in the subject they will be more motivated to study it and more likely to remember the content. Your school will be able to give you further advice on this area.

Is it better to sit State exams through English?

If your child learns the subject matter through Irish, it is best to sit the state examinations in Irish. Your child will be most familiar with the terminology used in each subject in Irish as this is the language of schooling. They will also be used to writing and structuring answers in Irish based on their experience in school. In addition, your child may be eligible for additional points if they sit the exams in Irish.

What supports are available for State exams, i.e. spelling waivers, etc. across all subjects?

Students with literacy difficulties may be eligible for the following accommodations, depending on the severity of the child's needs:

- Spelling and grammar waivers in language subjects only (does not apply to other subjects)
- Exam reading pen which scans and reads out the exam script (for exam scripts in English)
- A reading assistant to provide support to the student's own reading where necessary i.e. to read words or phrases when needed.
- A reader, who will read the examination paper
- A computer or a recording device to record the students' answers
- A scribe (in exceptional circumstances)

If your child has a co-existing hearing impairment or visual impairment, there are other accommodations which can be made. Guidelines are made available but they are amended every year, so be sure to check with the school about the most up-to-date guidelines and closing dates for applications. Here are the 2019 guidelines: <https://www.examinations.ie/schools/BI-1013-1972533.pdf>

Your child's eligibility for accommodations is based on their scores on recent literacy tests (within the previous twelve months). It is a good idea to document your child's scores on school exams and keep samples of their work where possible. A psychological report is not required in order to apply for accommodations.

Ceisteanna & Freagraí: Disléicse
Questions & Answers: Dyslexia

Tagairtí References



Gaeloideachas

Guth don Oideachas Ián-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta

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Acmhainní Resources



Resources

Booklets

- Students with Dyslexia in an Irish-medium school: Advice for Parents <https://gaeleideachas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Students-with-Dyslexia-in-an-Irish-medium-school-Advice-for-Parents.pdf>
- Supporting your Child: Irish-medium Education and Special Education Needs (Bilingual Leaflet) <https://gaeleideachas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/NCSE-Leaflet-d%C3%A1theangach-16pp-FOR-WEB-1.pdf>

Research

- Gaelscoileanna and dyslexia: A review of literature | Gaelscoileanna agus an disléicse: Léirbhreithniú ar an litríocht ar an ábhar Máire-Áine Ní Chinnéide <http://gaeleideachas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Conference-Book-PAPERS-FNL-web.pdf>
- An Examination of How Children with Dyslexia Experience Reading in Two Languages in a Gaelscoil <https://www.cogg.ie/wp-content/uploads/mairead-ni-chiaruain-1.pdf>
- The special educational needs of bilingual (Irish-English) children by Deirdre NÍ Chinnéide, POBAL http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/11010/7/de1_09_83755_special_needs_of_bilingual_children_research_report_final_version_Redacted.pdf
- How children with dyslexia experience literacy in Irish and English in a Gaelscoil' Ní Chiaruáin, M. & Travers, J. (2012) 'How children with dyslexia experience literacy in Irish and English in a Gaelscoil' In: T. Day & J. Travers (eds). Special and inclusive education: A research perspective. Oxford: Peter Lang.

- 'The inclusion of Irish-medium students with special educational needs' Ní Fhoighil, N. & Travers, J. (2012) 'The inclusion of Irish-medium students with special educational needs' In: Special and inclusive education: A research perspective. Oxford: Peter Lang.

Videos

- Disléicse & Foghlaim na Gaeilge le Emily Barnes <https://youtu.be/Gpae1kmFtV8>
- Dyslexia & Learning the Irish Language with Emily Barnes <https://youtu.be/4Z2BLYE6wzl>
- Gaeloideachas Dyslexia Seminar for Parents 03.06.2020 (English) <https://youtu.be/2vXJzEvpMuU>
- Seimineár Gaeloideachas Disléicse do Thuismitheoirí 04.06.2020 (Gaeilge) <https://youtu.be/-8nvwfWkokY>
- Riachtanais Speisialta Oideachais Lán-Ghaeilge/Irish-Medium Special Needs Education (English Subtitles) <https://youtu.be/gOu7gpSUIMg>
- Bilingual education for children with speech, language and communication needs <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdv71QslvljckvrWEmxRzFQ>

Articles

- Benefits of a bilingual education for children with special needs https://www.tcd.ie/news_events/articles/benefits-of-a-bilingual-education-for-children-with-special-needs/

Presentations

- Doras Feasa Fiafraí: Exploring Special Educational Needs Provision and Practices across Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht Primary Schools in the Republic of Ireland | Mary Barrett, Jigsaw <http://www.gaelscoileanna.ie/files/RSO-Comhdh--il-Mary-Barrett.pdf>
- Dyslexia: Information from the NCSE <https://www.sess.ie/categories/specific-learning-disabilities/dyslexia>

Practical Resources for the Classroom or Home

- Reading and Dyslexia: Recommendations for Schools, Parents and Teachers: <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/NEPS-Guides/Reading-and-Dyslexia/>
- Dyslexia-Tips for Parents- Primary Aged: <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/NEPS-Guides/Reading-and-Dyslexia/Reading-and-Dyslexia-Dyslexia-Tips-for-Parents-Primary-Aged.pdf>
- Activate Speech (Speech and Language Resources) <http://activatespeech.ie/index.html>
- Fios Fuaimeanna (Teanga agus Litearthacht) <https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/fios-fuaimeanna>
- Cód na Gaeilge (Clár Fónaice) <https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/cod-na-gaeilge>
- Straitéisí Molta le haghaidh Feabhsúchán Deacrachtaí sa Léitheoireacht (CCEA) http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk/docs/key_stages_1_and_2/assessment/incas/resource_box/Irish%20strategy%20booklet.pdf

- Please see the Gaeloideachas general database on SEN research also <https://gaeloideachas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Bunachar-Taighde-RSO-%C3%89ireann.pdf>