Supporting Dyslexia

Current practice: Current practice is to identify traits of Dyslexia then 'test' for visual stress and issue a coloured paper, these are only supposed to be trialled for 6 weeks then if useful, should be checked by an Ophthalmist or Ophthalmic surgeon.

Lots of students in the school rely on coloured paper but this is not consistent across all media/ environments (i.e. phones, computers, use at home etc.) and this does not support them with their dyslexia.

During the GCSE examinations students who required coloured paper found they could not interpret certain questions due to colour conflicts with questions and their coloured paper.

What is dyslexia?: Dyslexia is not a physical problem with the eyes but a neurological difficulty with the brain. Many of the most common difficulties are caused by the way the brain recalls and works with letters and sounds, called phonological processing. When someone with dyslexia is reading or spelling, they have to hold a sequence of symbols in their head and process them into writing. Something in this process can go wrong.

7 Common Dyslexia Difficulties:

1. Slower reading speed
2. Confusing similar looking letters and words
3. Mixing up the sequence of letters
4. Not recognising the same word
5. Struggling to spell homophones and irregular words
6. Difficulty copying
7. Slower written output

Scientific research:

Educational experts, researchers, and medical authorities around the world have found little independent scientific evidence to support the use of eye exercises, vision therapy, tinted lenses or filters as a treatment for dyslexia and SpLD.

Dyslexia and SpLD is not a vision-based disorder but if children feel a (placebo) benefit from using coloured overlays then there is no harm, but they should never be used as the only form of support. They must also never be used as a substitute for an intensive program of individualised Structured Literacy.

Research Studies:

Ingrid Torjesen – Use of coloured overlays and lenses are unlikely to help children with dyslexia, study finds. British Medical Journal. (26th May 2015)

Clare Wilson – Forget colour overlays – dyslexia is not a vision problem. New Scientist.(may 2015)

Alexandra L. Creavin, Raghu Lingam, Colin Steer and Cathy Williams – Ophthalmic Abnormalities and Reading Impairment. Pediatrics AAP Publications.

Dr Alexandra Creavin MBChB(Manch.) NIHR Doctoral Research Fellow NIHR Doctoral Research Fellow at Bristol University. (June 2015)

The myth that coloured overlays help dyslexic pupils (TES 4th September 2019) TES article:

https://www.tes.com/magazine/teaching-learning/general/myth-coloured-overlays-help-dyslexic-pupils

Research at the Universities of Bristol and Newcastle tested 5,822 children and concluded vision problems in children with dyslexia were rare and co-occurred in children without dyslexia.

Children aged between 7 and 9 had their reading abilities tested as well as performing a battery of visual tests. The study found that there's no evidence visual stress is linked with dyslexia. The study's findings, published in Pediatrics on 1st June, reinforced the argument that coloured overlays and lenses are unlikely to help with reading difficulties in children with dyslexia.

Around 375 000 UK children have dyslexia, and the use of coloured overlays and lenses by such children is common in educational establishments. Parents can spend hundreds of pounds on them, but their effectiveness remains uncertain.

What is the Hamble School doing to support students with Dyslexia and SpLD?

1. Introducing a structured phonic approach

Understanding spelling rules will help. Gaining mastery of all the phonic sounds, syllables, prefixes and suffixes so a child knows how to construct a word using sounds.

2. Introducing Mnemonic spelling strategies can be used to help spell irregular 'tricky' words

The first letter of each word spells out the word you need to remember. A funny picture reinforces the memory.

3. Use the ability to rhyme as a spelling strategy

Rhyming can be used to help to by recognise common letter patterns e.g. if you know how to spell pink then it will help ‘drink’, ‘stink’ and ‘think’.

4. Adopting ‘duller’ paper for all printing to support all students with visual strain

Removing bright white paper and coloured paper to minimise possible eye strain – the only exception will be students who have it named on their EHCP. Most new sets of glasses can have an invisible tint added to filter out the effects of white light. Duller paper will support with minimising visual strain for all and will not single out students as different.

5. Supporting students who find filters helpful to use these in all lessons

In line with Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) expectations, a filter removes or ‘filters’ certain wavelengths of light reflected from the white.

Please note: If a parent feels that their child is still unable to access learning without coloured paper they can arrange a referral with their GP to be tested by an ophthalmic consultant.

If a student has a coloured paper named on their EHCP this will be provided in school and a colour filter will be discussed in the next annual review.