



The Communication Trust  
Every child understood

**No Pens Day  
Wednesday**

**British Dyslexia!**  
Association

# No Pens Day Wednesday and Dyslexia Awareness Week

*No Pens Day Wednesday* supports schools and settings with placing a focus on speaking and listening. But putting down pens doesn't mean that literacy skills are forgotten; quite the opposite.

## Speech and language difficulties can be an indicator of future literacy difficulties

Speech and language delay can be a first sign of potential future reading difficulties.<sup>1</sup> Focusing on spoken language for one day can help to identify those who are struggling with their speech and language and who may be at risk of later literacy difficulties. Once children's needs are accurately identified, support can be put in place and potential future impacts can be greatly reduced.

1 Snowling, M.J. and Stackhouse, J (Eds) (2006) *Dyslexia, speech and language: A practitioner's handbook* (2nd ed). Whurr Publishers Ltd  
2 Stothard, S., Snowling, M., Bishop, D., Chipchase, C., and Kaplan, C. (1998) 'Language impaired preschoolers, a follow up in to adolescence' *Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research* 41, 407-18  
3 Inclusion Development Programme: Teaching and Supporting Pupils with Dyslexia  
4 Altmann, L.J.P., Lombardino, L.J., and Puranik, C (2008) 'Sentence production in students with dyslexia' *IJLCD* 43, 1, 55-76

Take a look at our *No Pens Day* information to help you identify pupils who are struggling with their speech, language and communication development [here](#).

## Pupils with identified literacy difficulties are likely to have associated spoken language difficulties

There is a strong link between language and literacy skills. One study found that 70% of children with identified language difficulties at 5 and a half, still struggled with spoken language at 15 years old, and of these pupils, 93% also had literacy difficulties.<sup>2</sup> Approximately 35-40% of pupils with dyslexia will also have some level of language impairment, and vice versa.<sup>3</sup>

Dyslexia can be associated with phonological awareness difficulties, as well as problems with word learning and retrieval, sentence formation and fluency. Focusing on spoken language can support teachers to develop every day, practical strategies to help pupils with dyslexia who might also struggle with these spoken language skills.<sup>4</sup>

Take a look at our strategies to support vocabulary learning that might be useful for pupils with dyslexia [here](#).

## Building self esteem and confidence

Children and young people with literacy difficulties may have low self esteem, withdraw or display challenging behaviours as a result of struggling with their reading and writing.

To find out more about *No Pens Day Wednesday*, go to [www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/nopensdaywednesday](http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/nopensdaywednesday)

To find out more about Dyslexia Awareness Week, go to [www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/fundraising/dyslexia-awareness-week](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/fundraising/dyslexia-awareness-week)

No Pens Day Wednesday provides an opportunity for pupils to develop and demonstrate their spoken language skills, and to reduce the pressure on writing for one day. Comments from our No Pens Day Wednesday evaluation reports highlight the impact that this can have: "children who have difficulty succeeding when we are doing the highly academic curriculum blossom and are so happy" "kids could focus on listening, communicating effectively, working with their team...without panicking about recording anything in terms of writing"

**Hear what other schools have to say about how No Pens Day Wednesday enhances literacy:**

"Taking time to focus on speech and communication actually gives more depth to pupil's written work"

"It led to valuable conversations revisiting the importance of oral skills and that they do support literacy skills development"

"Everyone enjoyed it. The pupils were curious and enthusiastic about this new experience and the teaching staff were surprised by the mileage and extension activities that developed from core tasks. We incorporated NPDW as a part of our Dyslexia Awareness week programme and in this context it reinforced the use of alternatives to print based activity"

"We also saw an improvement in their written work following the initiative. We found that students were able to write down more, having had time to talk about and process the topics they were learning before putting pen to paper."



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