



# Dyslexic children should be diagnosed early

Children who are suspected of being dyslexic should be diagnosed early, says Dr. Peter Gardner, Chartered Educational Psychologist and Founder Director of Appleford School in Shrewton, near Salisbury, Wiltshire.

Advances in diagnosis in recent years means that children who years ago may have slipped through the net can now be recognised earlier (many of the symptoms predictive of later dyslexia can be diagnosed at four and a half years).

Dr. Gardner says: "All the available research points to the fact that if children's learning difficulties are diagnosed early and if appropriate help is offered at an early stage, the child is given the best chance of success. So much of the suffering and lack of self-confidence of these children could be avoided by a nationwide screening programme of children entering school."

So, what are the signs in a young child which might indicate dyslexia? They include difficulties with:

- sound discrimination
- appreciation of rhyme
- short term memory for spoken information
- letter naming
- number naming
- shape copying
- postural stability
- fine motor coordination

There are specific tests for identifying weaknesses in

"Too many parents," says Dr. Gardner, "are encouraged to wait until the child is older before seeking help. In general, the earlier the parent takes action the better."

A starting point for any concerned parent is an assessment by a chartered educational psychologist.

**Dr. Peter Gardner**  
B.A., DipPsych., M.A., Ed.D., A.F.B.Ps.S.,  
M.I.Mgt., F.Inst.D.  
**Chartered Psychologist**

Peter gained an Honours Degree in Psychology from Nottingham University, a postgraduate diploma in Academic Psychology from University College London, a Master of Arts Degree in Therapy and Counselling from Antioch College, U.S.A. (London Branch) and a doctorate from the University of Bristol.

He has been a lecturer in a number of universities and was a tutor at the Child Guidance Training Centre, London, responsible for post-graduate training of educational psychologists on a British Psychological Society – and Department of Education and Skills – accredited course.

He is a Chartered Educational Psychologist, a Chartered Forensic Psychologist and a Chartered Counselling Psychologist of the British Psychological Society. He is a Full Practitioner Member of the British Psychological Society Division of

(United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy) and was

a committee member of the Psychology and Psychotherapy Association.

Much of his work is legal work, including the preparation of detailed court reports and submission of oral evidence, working for Crown Courts, Magistrates Courts and Guardian *ad litem* panels.

He acted as an expert witness in the precedent-setting *Phelps v London Borough of Hillingdon* education negligence case in the High Court in July 1997 and was described by Mr. Justice Garland as 'particularly well qualified, careful and fair.' His legal work is split roughly 50:50 between Claimant and Defendant work.

He is a founder of both Appleford School and of Daneswood, Shipham, near Cheddar, a care home for young adults with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties, which is registered with and approved by CSCi.

## Contact Details

To make an appointment for your child or for you to be assessed, please contact:

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these areas in young children.

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