

# Dyslexia 'affects self-esteem', funding urged

BY FELICITY WOLFE

A CROMWELL principal is thrilled to have won \$2000 in a Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand competition, but said it is a "shame" they have no funding from the Ministry of Education for specific dyslexia programmes.

Cromwell Primary School principal and Central Otago Principals' Association president Wendy Brooks said the ministry recognised dyslexia six months ago but is yet to provide any dyslexia funding.

She said the association is lobbying for clear action plans and funding for schools.

"It is a shame schools have to gather docketts and enter online competitions to get the money they need to run these programmes," Mrs Brooks said.

A Ministry of Education spokesperson, who declined to be named, said the ministry had developed resources designed for use with pupils with persistent literacy difficulties, includ-

ing dyslexia.

"We fund extensive professional development for teachers in literacy and numeracy.

"These programmes incorporate consideration of dyslexia."

A booklet to support teachers' understanding of teaching and learning for children with dyslexia is "about to be published", the spokesperson said.

Cromwell Primary School and Queenstown Primary School both won \$2000 in a prize draw after signing up to the Dyslexia Foundation's 4D programme during Dyslexia Awareness Week.

Queenstown Primary School will use the money to train teachers in teaching dyslexic pupils, while Cromwell will use some of the money to provide Speld lessons for its dyslexic pupils.

The school already pays for some pupils to go to a Speld tutor and a teacher is studying dyslexia on a Royal Society Teachers' Fellowship this year.

Queenstown Primary School learning centre co-ordinator Jan Chappell said the Dyslexia Foundation estimated 70,000

New Zealand children had dyslexia.

"In our school that would be about 60 children."

While none of the school's teachers are trained to identify dyslexia, she said many of the children who came through the learning centre were dyslexic.

Not being able to read affected all areas of children's learning and also their self-esteem.

"They're not stupid," Mrs Chappell said.

"They know they are behind the other children . . . and it knocks their self-confidence."

While the learning centre had helped pupils improve their reading for five years, the school was now developing a specific dyslexia policy under the 4D programme, she said.

The \$2000 prize would go a long way towards implementing its new policies.

"Professional development of teachers is an expensive exercise," Mrs Chappell said.

"As well as paying for the training, staff have to take time off school."



Tactile learning . . . Queenstown Primary School teacher aide Raewyn Rosie helps 5-year-old Sam Weatherall shape letters out of clay. The exercise is part of the school's learning centre programme which helps children with dyslexia or other learning difficulties catch up with their reading.

(SUEY HAN)