

Cashmere takes stand on dyslexia

■ LORRAINE CARMODY

Cashmere Primary School is the first school in Christchurch to join a pioneering dyslexia programme designed to share knowledge with schools and drive educational change.

The programme 4D (For Dyslexia) was launched by the Dyslexia Foundation, last week.

Cashmere principal Jacqui Duncan said 4D "empowered" schools to make a difference for dyslexic students. "We have to think outside the square as to how we can engage these children in learning. (Dyslexics) learn in a different way and we have to accommodate that."

Dyslexia Foundation chairman Guy Pope-Mayell said 4D's aim was to help schools to improve the odds for the 70,000 New Zealand dyslexic children within the education system.

Schools joining the programme had to draft a dyslexia policy statement, publish it on their websites and include links to the foundation's website.

Pope-Mayell said the policy statement enabled schools to highlight the types of initiatives they found worked best at the coal-face.

"It's commonly accepted that there's a need for better interventions and learning tools, so much so, that many schools are developing their own approaches."

Duncan said Cashmere had been at the forefront of dyslexia learning for two years.

"The biggest thing that trips (schools) up is funding but also a lack of knowledge and skills so there's a lot of professional development that has to come as well to support us."

Statistics showed five to 10 per cent of the population was dyslexic, she said.

"So in a classroom there could be two or three sitting there who are learning differently and are really struggling.

"One of the big things is it takes them longer; it doesn't mean they are cognitively delayed, it just means their brain works differently."

Pope-Mayell said 4D helped to connect the good work that was taking place in schools nationwide and provided parents of dyslexic children with more information on which to base schooling decisions.

The Government formally recognised dyslexia last year.

"Recognising dyslexia was a huge milestone. However, without dedicated funding and dedicated learning resources, it simply isn't enough.

"The Dyslexia Foundation believes that specific attention needs to be focused on dyslexia, which is why we've launched 4D," said Pope-Mayell.

Next month is Dyslexia Awareness Week.



Jacqui Duncan

Details on 4D and Dyslexia Awareness Week from June 16 to 22 is available at the foundation's website, www.dyslexiafoundation.org.nz