**Reading and phonics**

Magic bullets are highly sought after but often fail to perform to expectations. This is the case with reading accuracy, which for many years has been a preferred academic response to dyslexia – based on the idea that if we can teach children to read accurately through the use of phonics, then the ‘problem’ of dyslexia will disappear.

This, however, overlooks the fact that dyslexia is not simply an issue with reading and writing skills. Rather it’s a learning preference which can bring a broad spectrum of difference – from enhanced creativity and ‘out-of-the-box’ thinking through to issues with auditory and information processing, planning and organising, motor skills, short-term memory and concentration. Difficulties with basic skills are merely *symptoms* of dyslexia, so any magic bullet which hoped to ‘cure’ basic skill difficulties would need to be aimed at the root cause of these symptoms: a brain that is wired differently.

In essence, dyslexia thinkers receive and retrieve information in a different part of the brain to neurotypical, word-based thinkers. They tend to think in pictures rather than words. And often prefer to receive and present orally or visually rather than via the written word.

The DFNZ supports a Structured Literacy Approach to teaching reading, such as the Better Start Literacy Approach from Canterbury University (make this clickable to <https://www.betterstartapproach.com>)

Overall, it is important to understand dyslexia as a learning preference and work with, and support, students from this preference perspective. Put simply, this means understanding that dyslexics think differently, and so naturally prefer to receive, process and present information in the way that makes more sense to them.

If your child has been taught reading using a Structured Literacy Approach and they are not making sufficient progress, it is worth investigating other multi-sensory and meaning based approaches, along with adopting a Notice and Adjust strategy.

**ends**