IS THERE A MINIMUM AGE TO ASSESS FOR DYSLEXIA?

By Naomi Leow, Specialist Psychologist

Dyslexia is a **brain-based learning difficulty**, which means that a child's challenges with reading and spelling are **not due to a lack of effort or intelligence**, but rather how their brain processes language. Early identification and targeted intervention are keys to helping a child with dyslexia achieve success in school and in life.

However, **assessing dyslexia in young children can be tricky**. Tests that look at early reading skills, such as phonological awareness and foundational word knowledge, can be influenced by a child's overall language and cognitive development, as well as the experiences they have had with learning. This means that if a young child (e.g., six years old and below) has not had enough exposure to reading, they might score low on these tests even if they would later develop typical reading and spelling skills. In other words, an early test could sometimes give a **"false positive"**.

At the Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS), we recommend that children be formally assessed for dyslexia only when they reach:

- **six years old** and have had
- at **least six months of phonics or literacy support.**

www.das.org.sg
dyslexiasg
6444 5700
9:00 am to 9:00 pm Mon to Fri
8:30 am to 5:30 pm Weekends
Closed Public Holidays

DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION OF SINGAPORE

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6 years old + 6 months of literacy support

This helps to reduce the risk of inaccurate results, or "false positives," that can happen if a child has not yet had enough exposure to literacy activities. By giving children **time to develop foundational skills**, assessments can more accurately reflect what they have learned and how they respond to support. This approach is especially important for young children, whose skills are still developing, as early testing without sufficient exposure to opportunities for learning may not provide the full picture.

Early support can make a big difference for children who are having difficulty learning to read. The DAS Preschool Programme is designed to help children develop foundational literacy skills, especially for those who have not yet reached the minimum age requirement for a formal dyslexia assessment at the DAS.

If your child continues to face learning challenges after at least six months of support, it may be time for a comprehensive psychoeducational assessment.

The SpLD Assessment Services (SAS) at the DAS can help. Our team of trained psychologists will work with you to understand your child's learning needs and recommend practical strategies to support their learning and overall development.

Find out more about our services:

- **DAS Preschool Programme** &
- **DAS SpLD Assessment Services**