

Dysblox

“Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel.” Socrates

Dysblox is our own in-house spelling course devised by Hugh Alexander AMBDA (Head of Dyslexia 1995-2014).

Originally designed for dyslexic 3rd to 5th formers with high verbal comprehension and reasoning scores and taught in a modified version to younger pupils, the course is usually taught in small groups with a teacher supervising and providing individual teaching and feedback as appropriate. The aim is not only to equip pupils with an understanding of spelling rules but also to develop knowledge and skills which will help them achieve their full intellectual potential and become successful independent learners.

Pupils work at their own pace, managing their own tasks and using a checklist to ensure they cover all the required elements. A key feature is the assessment allowing pupils to omit spelling rules and patterns which they can already apply successfully. Graded reading comprehension exercises covering a wide range of general knowledge are integrated at every level and the course includes regular discussion of language use and of how word origins influence spelling rules and patterns.

The Books

The spelling course consists of seven books of eighteen pages, each containing 15 spellings and a dictation phrase to test punctuation skills or the use of common homophones.

Each page explores a common spelling pattern (eg vowel digraphs, words ending in ‘tion’) and gives ten examples which are discussed in detail before the pupil begins the written tasks. There are also five revision words from previous pages. Within the books, the pages are roughly grouped into similar patterns – ‘ei’ and ‘ie’ words, suffixes, doubled consonants etc.

The word lists are intended to broaden vocabulary and to introduce a variety of new words appropriate to high-achieving pupils at GCSE level as well as reinforcing the spelling of familiar ones.

The Tasks

For each page, there is a worksheet consisting of two ‘Gaps’ exercises and a crossword. The first two tasks require pupils to scrutinise the words letter by letter, then to use them in an appropriate context to complete a short phrase. The crossword requires reasoning ability to insert the words into the appropriate places in a blank grid. Pupils also write the words from dictation (using pre-recorded MP3 files) and finally take a computerised spelling test (‘Starspell’) to test their retention.

In addition to the Dysblox tasks, the course also uses SRA cards containing ten short reading comprehension exercises based on a wide range of general knowledge. These are part of a graded scheme in which feedback enables each pupil to find and work at an appropriate level.

Finally, as well as improving exam and revision technique where appropriate, group teaching encourages pupils to develop their listening, reasoning and communication skills by preparing short talks or taking part in discussions and debates exploring a variety of topics and ideas.