

# Oxfordshire Dyslexia Association newsletter



President: The Duke of Leinster

Spring 2005

## WELCOME TO the new-look Oxfordshire Dyslexia Association newsletter!

Along with this new look we are keen to include more contributions from members. If you would like to put pen to paper, please send any news, views, opinions or questions to: Oxfordshire Dyslexia Association Newsletter, Oxford Community School, Glanville Way, Oxford OX4 2AU, or email: mldevenish@hotmail.com. Letters, poems, drawings or cartoons from children with dyslexia are also very welcome. Deadline for the next issue is 1 August.

## diary dates

### JULY

**Thursday 7 July**  
**6.00pm**

**Adult Meeting** at Oxford & Cherwell College's Oxpens Campus. A practical session on The Davis Method led by Hilary Farmer. We need to know numbers in advance so Hilary can bring enough clay and other materials. If you are planning to attend, please email smoon@occ.ac.uk or leave a message on Sue's answerphone on 01865 551977 by Friday 1 July.

### SEPTEMBER

**Tuesday 27 September to 6 December**  
**7.00-9.15pm**

**Course: How to Identify and Teach Dyslexic Learners**

OCS, for teachers, SENCOs and LSAs.  
Phone ODA office

**Thursday 29 September to 8 December,**  
**7.00-9.15pm**

**New Course: How to Teach Structured Maths**  
OCS, for teachers, SENCOs and LSAs. Phone ODA office.

### OCTOBER

**Saturday 9.30-11.00am ODA Computer Workshop** Contact???????????

**Thursday 6 October**  
**7.30-8.30pm**  
**Parents' Group**

**Tuesday 18 October**

### NOVEMBER

**Saturday ??????**  
**9.30-11am**

**ODA Computer Workshop**

Contact ??????????

**Thursday 3 November**  
**7.30-8.30pm**

**Parents' Group**

'A Parents' Perspective' Speakers: Liz Hunter and Helen Wigmore

**7-13 November**

**DYSLEXIA AWARENESS WEEK**

**Thursday 10 November**  
**7.30-9.00pm**

**Adult Meeting**

*Your Rights at Work and College. How the Disability Act Can Help Adults*

**Didcot Parents' Support Group**  
**Every Tuesday, 7.30-8.30pm.**

Ladygrove Community Centre, Tamar Way, Didcot. Contact:

**Tuesday 21 June**

*How a Specialist School Teaches Dyslexic Children.* Speaker: Alex Brown.

**Meetings** held at Oxford Community School, Glanville Rd, Cowley 01865 428234

**Adult Meeting:** Oxford & Cherwell College, Oxpens Road, Oxford 01865 551977

**Didcot Parents' Group:** Ladygrove Community Centre, Tamar Way, Didcot 01235 815175.

# ODAnews

## AGM 10 May

At the AGM on May 10 we were pleased to welcome Barbara Creed and Linda Cheong as trustees. Barbara is going to help with publicity and plans a 'new look' for the Newsletter. Linda runs the Didcot Parents' Group. We said goodbye to Freda Yeang and Dan Ganly and thank them for all they have done as trustees during the past three years.

At the end of the meeting there was some discussion about the BDA proposals for changes in the constitution to provide a more encompassing and inclusive membership structure. A review of the current membership structure has taken place over recent years. Although it was felt that that the ODA council members should vote against the resolution because there had been no time for consultation, at the BDA EGM on May 14 the proposal was explained clearly and we were assured that further consultation on the bye-laws would take place before details are drafted for the BDA AGM in November. The proposal was approved.

After the business meeting there was a chance to chat to other members and look at a colourful and varied display of work by children attending Saturday Tuition Scheme. Examples of their work included Mind Maps, stories, poems, work books and models. It also showed a variety of teaching methods and resources used to help dyslexic children and those with a different learning style. Well done, Saturday pupils!

## ODA 2004–2005

### Chairman's Report

It has been a mixed year for ODA, with the downside the failure to secure a lottery funding for an administrator. There are always the positive sides though, not least the appreciation of those connected with dyslexia, whether teachers, parents or adults seeking information and advice.

### Lottery application

After the disappointment of the failure of our lottery bid, we immediately started on the next bid, necessary if ODA is to survive and provide a more professional service. I have been helped enormously by Vanessa Kenyon, our adult helpline, who has had experience in fundraising. The first bid was considered too much work for one person and we were advised to take a small part of it for another bid. Our decision was an

enhanced and improved Helpline and Drop-in service to reach the wider community. It will include a new website with an email helpline service as used in Milton Keynes, and a members' forum as used in Birmingham, as well as a stronger link with other service providers, particularly the Oxfordshire library service. At the moment, Oxford Community School is applying for Business and Enterprise status and we have realised that some of our plans overlap. Valuable support by the BDA Development and Regional Development Officers has been helpful with the second Lottery bid, to be in by the end of May.

### BDA

The BDA Regional Development Officer is playing an ever-increasing role in supporting Local Associations. Ali Bazley, the officer for the South Central Region, organised an area meeting at Oxford Community School in February. Valuable discussion with our neighbouring Local Associations has proved helpful and we look forward to the next meeting in October. Changes this year include the abolition of capitation fees for Local Associations and payment for 'Contact' instead. One important recent success is the Dyslexia Friendly Schools Kite Marking process for LEAs, highly respected by OFSTED and now completed by some other LEAs around the country. There are proposals for a new scheme to increase membership and prevent loss of members from associations too small for affiliation.

### News of ODA

This year some trustees attended Oxford Council for Voluntary Action workshops on publicity, grant applications and budgeting and, for the future, we have used their facility for exploring possible funders.

We have produced several policies, some of which are required for grant applications. They include Equal Opportunities, Health and Safety, Financial, Complaints Procedure and a Child Protection Policy.

ODA is one of the largest local dyslexia associations and has a steady membership of about 260 members, including 57 new members in the past year. We are grateful to all those members who include a donation with their subscription, as well as the Masons from whom we have received £500, and Christ Church, Oriel and Jesus colleges, from whom we have received £400.

### Even more to offer members

Our new collection of teachers' assessment materials has proved popular with teacher members, and we hope an increasing number of teachers will benefit from them in the future. The new ODA library, now in Oxford Community

School library, has not been used as much as we had hoped, despite a very good selection of up-to-date books. We need to consider extra publicity and other possibilities before thinking about an alternative home for the books.

### **Working in the wider community**

Our aim is always to reach as many people as possible, through many channels. Visitors to the Saturday morning Drop-in advice sessions remain steady with an average of three visitors each Saturday. About 450 people have contacted the helpline by telephone for advice and information. Email enquiries continue to increase. We have agreed to replace the video 'A Taste of Dyslexia' that we are still selling after 10 years, and pleased that Ginny Stacey has agreed to make another one. Meetings with the Inclusion team from the Oxfordshire Library are resulting in a closer working relationship, and we are grateful for their support of our lottery bid, including use of libraries for new Drop-in sessions.

### **Public meetings**

In October there was a meeting on Inclusion with Marian Halliwell and Honor Hollis, who outlined the government guidelines for inclusion and explained how Oxfordshire's special needs policy fits in with this.

Also in October was the annual Adult Meeting. Jo Todd of Key 4 Learning, Joe Carter of Oxfordshire Basic Skills and Buffy McClelland, a Brain Gym expert, were the speakers and there were lots of information stalls.

Topics at the termly adult meeting at the Oxford and Cherwell College have included Supportive Software, Neuro-Linguistic Programming and Reflexology and Stress.

### **Adam Davies lecture**

On 20 April at Oxford Community School, we were delighted to welcome Patience Thomson as our speaker for this year's lecture. As Patience mentioned in her introduction, she has long associations with the ODA. She was part of the formation not only of our local association but also of the British Dyslexia Association at the beginning of the 1980s.

Patience gave a wonderful talk. As head teacher of Fairley House School in London, she was very aware that the ability to read is essential for a good start in life. She also knew of the lack of good books to help older children and adults who were finding it difficult to read. All 'easier' books were written for young children. When a sponsor offered to help her, she began to create the type of book needed.

Patience knew what was necessary: a clear font, specific spacing between words, an uncomplicated sentence structure, plenty of conversation and an interesting storyline. She

asked well-known authors to write stories for reluctant readers and was delighted that almost all of them agreed. After the draft of a book is written, she asks a committee of reluctant readers to give an opinion of the book and to suggest changes. Barrington Stokes publishers was born.

*Liz Coleridge*

### **Parents' Group meetings**

Parents meetings continue in Didcot and Oxford. In Oxford, topics have included An artist's perspective of dyslexia, Being an adult dyslexic, How a Specialist School teaches dyslexic pupils, and Games for dyslexic children.

### **Didcot Parents' Support Group**

The Didcot Parents' Support Group meets in the Community Hall at All Saints Primary School, Didcot from 7.30-8.30pm on the third Tuesday of each month during term. It is run by two mothers, each with a dyslexic child, who work in local primary schools as teaching assistants.

We have had various guest speakers, including a primary school SENCo, a specialist trained secondary school support teacher and an adult dyslexic scientist who gave an inspirational talk to children who were there on the evening. Over 50 adults and children attended various meetings.

*Linda Cheong*

### **Activities – courses and classes**

The Foundation and Spelling Courses, with tutor Kate Bodle, continue to be well-attended and in September we are delighted that a Maths course will be added. We have agreed to advertise a few grants for teachers or LSAs, from schools with deficit budgets, so that they too will have the opportunity to attend any of these courses. Among others, the courses were started at East Berkshire College by Elizabeth Chacksfield. We are pleased to have worked with Elizabeth and grateful for her years of support but will miss her when she retires in July.

### **Touch-type Read and Spell course**

TTRS is a multi-sensory computer-aided learning programme for students with spelling, reading or writing difficulties. The purpose of TTRS is to help develop the literacy skills of students who have difficulties with reading, writing or spelling while they learn how to touch-type and at the same time increase their confidence, self-esteem and motivation.

I have been teaching TTRS since September 2003. Not knowing much about the programme initially I have since noticed how students are already able to touch-type by the time they reach the third level and have become progressively quicker throughout the programme.

Although being able to touch-type is important for dyslexic students nowadays, as schools will only issue laptops to students with special needs once they have reached a certain speed, I feel the most important benefits gained from touch-typing are increased confidence and very notably increased concentration. When students first come to the class, their confidence is lacking and some students are only able to concentrate for half an hour and complete very few modules. After about five sessions of being motivated by achieving better marks than they do at school in an encouraging environment, these students are able to concentrate for a full hour and their work out-put doubles and in some cases triples.

*Catherine Pitt*

### **Computer workshops**

The computer workshop was set up to provide an opportunity for anyone over the age of eight to try out a range of assistive software which might be helpful to dyslexics. These programmes are offered to dyslexic students who are going to university but they can assist a wide range of people much earlier on. The programmes are: Inspiration: mind-mapping; Text Help Read and Write – text readback; and Dragon Dictate – speech recognition. I have set up two workshops per term where up to five people can attend and each has the use of a laptop. In reality, the number attending is between one and three, with parents. Those who come have found it useful and we have also had a session with some of the teachers from the Saturday school. My feeling is that software and computers are a necessity for many dyslexics but teachers and parents who are not comfortable with the technology are reluctant to use it. Any ideas on how to attract more people to try out the software would be welcome!

*Ellen Lessner*

### **Saturday Tuition**

The Saturday Tuition scheme is now in its twelfth year and we continue to have a steady stream of enquiries. In the last few months, more people seem to have been using the website before phoning for further information. The majority of applications are for children, aged eight to 10. About two years ago we had 10 teachers and between 50 to 60 pupils. We now have only eight teachers and 44 children. Two teachers have chosen to teach for just two sessions each week. We hope to recruit two more teachers for September. However, as one teacher is leaving in July, this would still be only nine teachers. It is not easy to find people who are suitably qualified and also willing to give up both Saturday morning and time during the week for preparation. I would like to thank our current teachers for their continuing

commitment, and also Freda Yeang who does the initial assessments of candidates on a voluntary basis.

We were very pleased that Andrew Smith MP found time to visit in March. He stayed for about an hour and a half, listening to parents explaining what mainstream schools were offering, why they felt the need to send their children to Saturday Tuition and how much they benefited from the extra help.

*Sue Newey*

### **Thanks**

Although ODA must move with the times and become a more professional organisation, it continues through the hard work and enthusiasm of its volunteers. I would like to thank all those who have helped in the past year – Elna Mayor, our membership secretary, a helpline, and contact for orders of a 'A Taste of Dyslexia' video, Anne Weir, the Teachers' Register secretary, Frank Augur, the ODA befriender, the Drop-in team – Margaret-Alice Stewart-Liberty, Ingrid Skilbeck, Bea Jaspars, Alex Brown, Lesley Lovell, Marion Rae, a helpline, Vanessa Kenyon the adult helpline, Ellen Lessner who runs the computer workshops, Sue Moon who organises adult group meetings at the Oxford and Cherwell College, Linda Cheong who organises the Didcot Parents Group, and the Saturday Tuition Scheme organisers, Liz Coleridge, who looks after the finances (as well as organising the Adam Davies lecture ), Sue Newey, the coordinator, and Freda Yeang who screens new pupils for pairing.

Thank you also to Steve Mohammed who ensures smooth running of the tuition scheme on Saturday mornings, the Saturday Tuition teachers and Catherine Pitt who teaches the Touch-type, Read and Spell course.

We are also grateful for the support of Pat Norman and Sandie Alcock in the Community Office at Oxford Community School, but above all for the help of the caretakers. Nothing is too much for them to do and we are indebted to James, the Assistant Site Manager, and Jerome, for the smooth running of our meetings. In July we were sorry to say goodbye to headmaster, Ian Johnson, but pleased to have the continued support from the new Head, Steve Lunt.

### **Farewell**

This year we say goodbye to Freda Yeang and Dan Ganly and thank them for all they have done for the past three years as trustees. Freda will continue to be involved in Saturday Tuition. Some of us have been trustees for some years and as the constitution allows only seven years there must soon be a change for ODA – new, younger blood, fresh ideas and an exciting future – the need is there – it is up to its members. ODA is run by members for the members.

*Maureen Devenish May 2005*

## Membership renewal for 2005–2006

Thank you to those who have renewed their membership for 2005. For those who have not yet done so, another renewal form is enclosed with this newsletter. The subscription fee is £16 for an individual or family, and £20 for a school or organisation, in line with most other local organisations affiliated to the BDA. If you feel you would like to add a small donation to the membership fee, we would be very grateful. Please renew soon. Only members will receive the September issue of *Contact*.

*Sheila Cowley, Treasurer*

## useful-info

- ✿ **Drop-in Centre** Advice and information Office (helpliners and Saturdays 9.30–11.30am answerphone) 01865 428234
- ✿ **Membership** (£16) or change of address: Sheila Cowley 01865 247570
- ✿ **Saturday Tuition Scheme:** Co-ordinator Sue Newey 01865 761908
- ✿ **Teachers' list:** Application form/changes Ann Weir 01235 522298
- ✿ **Parents' Group Office:** 01865 428234
- ✿ **Didcot Parents' Support Group:** Linda Cheong 01235 816060.

## recent events

### Adult Meeting, Neuro-Linguistic Programming, 27 April

A small group of adults heard a very interesting talk on Neuro-Linguistic Programming. Paula Rome told us how we need to think through how to get from where we are now to where we desire to be, how our beliefs can influence our behaviour positively by empowering us or negatively by limiting our behaviour, and how we need to be flexible in finding new ways of doing things. She left us with an example of the damaging effect of negative language: having told us 'Don't think of purple spotted oranges', we all instantly imagined them and will now always associate NLP with purple spotted oranges!

*Alex Brown*

## snippets

**ODA LIBRARY BOOKS** are in the **Oxford Community School library** and available for members and teachers to borrow. Open weekdays only, from 8am to about 4.30pm.

## ODA TEACHERS' ASSESSMENT MATERIALS

are available from the **ODA office** and can be collected on Saturday mornings or by arrangement during the week. A deposit will be necessary and a small charge made.

**THE BDA HANDBOOK 2005** is now available from the **ODA office** at £5 per copy.

**ODA LIBRARY FORMS** are no longer required by Oxfordshire Public Libraries. Anyone with special needs or dyslexia is now able to borrow audio tapes free of charge.

## workshops & courses

### Dyslexia Foundation Course & Structured Spelling Course

**Places available!** Excellent courses run by Kate Bodle (7–9.15pm) for teachers, SENCOs and LSAs. Organised by East Berkshire College/ODA, and accreditation by the Awarding Body Consortium.

### How to Identify and Teach Dyslexic Learners

Oxford Community School  
Tuesday 27 September to 6 December.

### NEW COURSE – How to Teach Structured Maths: ????

Thursday 29 September to 8 December  
Phone Elizabeth Chacksfield 01753 793482 or ODA office 01865 428234.

### ODA Computer Workshops

**Places available!** Groups of up to five (from aged nine to adult) are able to try out software with advice from Ellen Lessner, who trains dyslexic students in using the right information and learning technology. Cost is £5. Advance booking is necessary. Contact Ellen on 01235 531107 or lessner@nildram.co.uk.

### ODA Touch-type, Read and Spell

**Places available!** Catherine Pitt is the ODA tutor. Mondays 5pm and 6pm. Some grants available. Phone Catherine on 07714 674924 or the ODA office, 01865 428234.

### Banbury Centre for Touch-type, Read and Spell (private)

A new TTRS Centre. Mondays, 3.30–5pm, at the Christopher Rawlins Primary School in Adderbury. Free trial session. Contact Paul Godwin, Holly Cottage, Oxford Road, Adderbury, Oxon OX17 3HG, or phone 01295 811 580.