



Number of dyslexia-friendly schools on the increase

By PAM JONES

A STEADY increase in the number of 4D schools in Central Otago and the Queenstown Lakes district is being praised by the Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand (DFNZ), as more and more teachers are tweaking programmes to make them more dyslexia-friendly.

DFNZ chair of trustees Guy Pope-Mayell said it was encouraging to see the increase, from two schools in the region when the 4D programme was started in 2008, to 12 now.

The DFNZ hosted a visiting expert in Queenstown last June and this had probably led to a boost in the number of schools turning to 4D after that, Mr Pope-Mayell said.

4D stands for “For dyslexia”, but also “For Difference”, and “For Diversity”.

The programme gets no Ministry of Education funding, but instead gives

schools DFNZ support, information and resources to help them make changes to accommodate the differences of those within the dyslexic spectrum.

“4D is all about schools making small changes that make a big difference for dyslexic students and others that think differently,” Mr Pope-Mayell said.

“Although this leads to many changes that are similar, each school and teacher applies the 4D way of thinking to their own unique circumstances — both in the classroom and school-wide.”

DFNZ was hopeful that the numbers of 4D schools would continue to increase, and said the “true test” of 4D’s success was whether schools were making the changes necessary to cater for pupils that learned differently, Mr Pope-Mayell said.

FACTS ABOUT DYSLEXIA

- One in 10 people are thought to have dyslexia, which was recognised by the government in 2007.
- Dyslexic individuals tend to think in pictures rather than words, receiving and retrieving information in a different part of the brain to word-based thinkers. Dyslexia can therefore be characterised as a learning preference — as dyslexics think differently, they naturally prefer to receive, process and present information in the ways that make more sense to them.
- Although often the most immediate attribute is a problem decoding words and their meanings, dyslexia impacts on much more than literacy and numeracy and is just one aspect of a broader spectrum of issues that may affect auditory and information-processing,

planning and organising, motor skills, short-term memory and concentration.

- On the flip-side, dyslexia can deliver great creative and innovative gifts.
- Various philosophies and programmes can be employed in and out of school to help those with dyslexia develop strategies to cope with their weaknesses and strengths. The Lucid Rapid dyslexia screening programme is used at Kip McGrath centres in Alexandra, Cromwell and Wanaka. The Davis Dyslexia programme is available throughout the region. Some schools use the Steps to Literacy programme. Local screening is available for the Irlen Method.
- More information about the programmes or the Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand is available online.