CLIFTON COLLEGE

# *PRESS RELEASE*

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## *Dyslexics Learn Better When a Font is Difficult to Read*

***Finding this hard to read? You'll retain the information better!***

*A new study suggests that school children - and dyslexic pupils in particular - benefit significantly from reading information in a font which is difficult to read.*

*The research, conducted by teachers at Bristol independent school Clifton College and recently published in The Journal of Educational Research, goes against current guidelines from the British Dyslexia Association which recommend that a plain, evenly spaced sans serif font such as Arial or Comic Sans is used when working with dyslexics.*

*Previous studies have shown that more challenging fonts encourage a deeper cognitive engagement to process the information which leads to better information retention, but up until now no studies have evaluated the impact of using hard-to-read fonts on pupils across a range of abilities or those with dyslexia.*

*The new study, led by physics teacher Matthew French, shows that dyslexic pupils scored an average of 19% higher in a memory test when using a hard-to-read font compared to a sans serif font. The average score increase for pupils across all abilities when using the hard-to-read font was 13%.*

*Since completing the research, Matthew French has started to use hard-to-read fonts in his lessons at Clifton College and they are also being trialled by other teachers at the school including those working with dyslexic pupils in the Learning Support department.*

*Matthew French says: "This is a significant finding and one that should certainly be investigated further, as it challenges current educational thinking.*

*"Our study suggests dyslexic pupils benefit significantly from reading information in a hard-to-read font and supports the idea that it is the greater cognitive processing that helps students remember what they have read.*

*"Pupils at Clifton College are now benefitting from revision material and some printed class notes being available in hard-to-read fonts. The evidence suggests this will help them to recall the information more readily in future as well as during the upcoming GCSE and A-Level exams."*

*275 Clifton College pupils in years 9-11 took part in the research, which was conducted during normal forty minute physics and biology lessons. Pupils were shown a slide at the beginning of the lesson which described eight facts about a fictional star and were given 90 seconds to read the text in silence, before the lesson continued as normal. 121 pupils were shown the facts in Arial, with 154 pupils given the identical facts in the harder-to-read font Monotype Corsiva.*

*Around 35 minutes later the pupils were asked a series of seven questions about the fictional star, and were not warned about the test when they read the text. Their results were separated into pupils' ability bands (using the MidYIS system) and whether pupils had a formal diagnosis of dyslexia.*

*Notably there was a higher average score for pupils in every ability band when using the hard-to-read font, indicating that reading text in Monotype Corsiva did not hinder students at any level.*

*However, Matthew French suggests that there are limitations to the study which will require further investigation.*

*He says: "What is not yet clear is whether providing a dyslexic student with large blocks of text in a hard-to-read font on a regular basis has an impact on retention – does the student tire of reading or does their motivation to continue reading decrease?*

*"There are also questions over whether the effect can wear off over time as readers become accustomed to the hard-to-read font. Further research should focus on investigating the long-term effect of using the same hard-to-read font and whether there is a point at which the font becomes so difficult that it becomes a hindrance."*

*Clifton College actively encourages teachers to continue their own learning journey when working at the school, as there are a range of benefits to both teachers and pupils of being involved in pioneering and exciting research.*

*Another Physics teacher, David Richardson, was awarded an MBE in October for his contribution to science teaching in Africa, where he has been pioneering projects with the Institute of Physics to train teachers and provide them with the apparatus to conduct practical lessons. In recent years Clifton College pupils have helped to produce apparatus for their counterparts on the other side of the world and have even accompanied David Richardson on his annual trips to Africa.*

***ENDS***