

HELP IN DEALING

MULTIMILLIONAIRE Wynford Dore set up the DDAT (Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Attention Deficit) Centre in a bid to find a cure for his daughter who suffered from acute dyslexia. Treatments include juggling with beanbags and standing on a

wobbleboard; but can simple co-ordination exercises really help those with reading and writing difficulties? **SANDRA SHANNON** interviews two mums whose daughters have completed the treatment at Kenilworth.



BALANCING ACT: Lauren Watson with a bouncy ball and beanbags. Lauren now really enjoys reading – especially her fortnightly Mizz magazine. Picture: MARK RADFORD

CASE STUDY ONE

LAUREN WATSON was always very bright and the first to put her hand up in class.

But when it came to writing, the 11-year-old could not put down her answers on paper.

Her mum Joanne, aged 33, a hairdresser from Balsall Common, said: "It was very frustrating for her."

Lauren, who has a brother Morgan, aged five, was diagnosed as dyslexic at the age of seven and started to receive extra tuition.

Joanne said: "At Lauren's first school, in Castle Bromwich, they were very supportive. I also tried to help Lauren at home, but we would get frustrated with each other, so I arranged for a dyslexia teacher to come to the house once a week.

"When we moved three years ago, we were very worried because we didn't know whether the new school, Balsall Common Primary, would be 'dyslexia friendly'. We thought it would be a case of either 'make or break'.

"But the school was excellent and asked if we wanted to take part in an experiment with the DDAT (Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Attention Treatment) Centre in Kenilworth. We were sceptical but decided as no drugs were involved to give it a go."

The experiment, which involved 40 children from Balsall Common Primary School, was a tremendous success.

Treatment is based on simple exercises which stimulate the brain.

Twice a day Lauren would have to sit on a large bouncy ball, throw a beanbag from her left hand to her right and balance on a wobbleboard for 10 minutes.

Over 12 months the children's reading ages improved by more than three times, their comprehension by five times and their writing skills by 17 times.

Joanne and husband Colin, aged 34, an auto-electrician, have seen huge changes in their daughter's ability, confidence and happiness.

Joanne said: "It was crazy to think balancing on a ball would help, but gradually you could see her getting better.

"Lauren is now much happier in herself. Her confidence and self-esteem have soared. She took part in a radio interview and is also a school counsellor.

"She is now able to organise herself and her schoolwork has improved dramatically. We still have a long way to go with her spelling but she actually enjoys reading now. I buy her favourite magazine Mizz every fortnight.

"We didn't have to pay for the treatment as it was part of an experiment. It is expensive and I don't think at first I would have paid until I knew it was recommended. But because I have seen the results I am no longer sceptical."

'IT HELPS TO KNOW YOU'RE NOT ALONE'

THE BACKGROUND . . .