



Chad Prior and mum Linda-Sue are angry a city school would not allow him back.

Picture: **Picture: Susan Siu**

## WHAT DYSLEXIA IS

People with dyslexia have trouble reading and writing. Sometimes they see words or numbers back to front, or put letters in the wrong places.

Conservative figures say at least one in 10 people have some degree of dyslexia.

Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand managing trustee Guy Pope-Mayell said dyslexics are visual learners.

In the classroom, teachers are in the "unenviable position" of having to identify dyslexia and manage the resulting behaviour.

Standing in front of a class to read out loud or give a speech can be traumatic for someone with dyslexia, Mr Pope-Mayell said.

Early intervention is imperative.

When this doesn't happen, some students become aggressive to avoid the spotlight or to cope with increasing frustration and alienation from their peers.

"Dyslexics don't respond well to time pressures in a classroom, such as quizzes," Mr Pope-Mayell

said. Childhood is a critical time to manage dyslexia, he said.

The Ministry of Education does not recognise dyslexia as an official learning disability.

The government, by not recognising dyslexia, is doing an injustice to all dyslexics who could otherwise be productive and earn a living, he said.

Rather, many are left to flounder, providing ample opportunity to get into trouble. About half the people in prison have a form of dyslexia, Mr Pope-Mayell said.

"Dyslexia is a disability not a dirty word, and behind it is a gift and someone who can think outside the square."

The apprentice system is an effective way to harness teen dyslexics who struggle in mainstream schooling. "They're great with their hands and at problem-solving." Dyslexic students are mainly taught in mainstream classes, which puts a great onus on teachers to tailor their teaching to certain students, he said.