



Policy for provision for children with dyslexic difficulties.

Definition

We use the following definition of dyslexia

Dyslexia is evident when accurate and fluent word reading and/or spelling develops very incompletely or with great difficulty, despite appropriate learning opportunities – that is, learning opportunities which are effective for the great majority of children.

(British Psychological Society, 1999)

In terms of the National Strategy (literacy) dyslexia can be defined as a marked and persistent problem with 'word level' work.

We follow the current research evidence that states that dyslexic difficulties can occur in children of all abilities. The definition we have adopted does not rely on identifying a 'discrepancy' between a child's abilities in one area and his/her abilities in other areas. It should, though, be recognised that dyslexic children can demonstrate marked differences between their abilities in different areas – particularly oral versus text based skills – and that recognising their strengths can increase their success and engagement with learning.

The definition we use does not rely on identifying a particular profile of cognitive skills – although positive indicators would be difficulty in processing the sounds in speech and linking them to written letters, and in the short term or working memory, since these 'phonological processing' difficulties are core to most scientific hypotheses about the causes of dyslexia.

We recognise the particular links there can be between dyslexia, low self esteem and the development of emotional and behavioural difficulties in some children. We see an entitlement to early and effective support in overcoming the barriers to achievement presented by dyslexia as essential in securing children's social and emotional adjustment, as well as their measured attainment.

As the most commonly occurring type of special need (affecting 4-15% of the population including children of all abilities, from all social classes, and from all linguistic backgrounds) we see dyslexia as one of the most fundamental barriers to achievement of children in our schools.

Our belief is that all learning difficulties, including dyslexia, are complex and interactive in their nature and so can only be fully understood with referent to a range of contexts in which they occur.

Aims and Principles.

The principles of our SEN policy are as relevant to dyslexia as to other types of special educational needs. These involve a focus on raising attainment and the importance of equality of opportunity, early intervention, working in partnership with parents / carers, inclusive education (that is all children being able to learn together in ordinary schools) and a coherent training framework for school staff.

We work within the following additional, specific aims and principles for children with dyslexic difficulties:

- That all teachers, teaching assistants *and learning mentors* who work in schools should have awareness level training (Appendix A) to enable them to identify children with dyslexic difficulties, to develop an understanding of the potential frustration and emotional response that accompany such difficulties, and to develop appropriate practices to help them access the curriculum.
- That all schools should have at least one member of staff who has accessed the level of training above 'awareness level' – that is training which will give hands on knowledge of effective methods of teaching dyslexic children to read and spell.
- That schools are able to access specialist advice (either in-house, in the case of secondary and large primary schools, or from outside the school) from teachers who have accredited diploma level training in dyslexic – leading to a qualification recognised by the British Dyslexic Association
- That schools should be able to learn from local 'centres of excellence' in provision for dyslexia.
- That schools should be in a position to help parents/carers understand their dyslexic child's strengths and difficulties and support their learning.
- That all schools should be in a position to make appropriate 'catch up' provision in Key stage 1 for all children who show signs of early difficulties in literacy – for example, daily work in small group with a trained teaching assistant on a programme such as the Primary National Strategy's Early Literacy Support.
- That all schools should be in a position to make further intensive provision for children for whom difficulties persist in Key Stage 1,2,3 and 4.
- That interventions should be evidence based, that is, have a proven track record of success and allow ongoing evaluation. These interventions will use structured systematic and multi sensory methods for teaching word level work and be delivered with regularity and consistency.
- That teachers are able to employ a range of teaching styles, skills, strategies and resources to allow children with dyslexic difficulties access the curriculum, and to ensure that their difficulties in reading and/or spelling do not hold them back in other subject areas.
- That teachers will continue to monitor and support pupils (particularly at secondary school level) who have made progress with 'word level' attainment, but still have persistent difficulties with fluency, speed of accessing information, organisational skills and generalisation of skills to the classroom.
- That children should, as far as possible, be able to access any necessary and appropriate support without the lengthy and complex bureaucratic process involved in the Statementing system.
- That for all primary aged children and for all but a handful of secondary aged children, the key features of successful support and intervention can be delivered in their regular local mainstream school and (where ever possible) within the mainstream classroom.
- That for the very small number of children of secondary school age who (because of complex needs arising from intractable reading and spelling difficulties) require more specialist provision, this should be available locally within Bristol – so that children do not have to go away from home or from their community in order to receive appropriate education.

What schools should be able to provide from their own resources.

All schools should be able to identify early on children who are experiencing difficulties in phonological processing and early word reading and/or spelling. They should have in place appropriate Wave 2 (catch up) provision.

For children whose difficulties persist after such programmes, they should be able to take and document school action, in partnership with parents/carers as set out in the DCSF SEN code of practice including the use of appropriate Wave 3 provision. This should involve:

- Utilising structured reading and spelling programmes and multi sensory teaching strategies.
- Capitalising on the potential of innovative teaching appropriate to children's different learning styles, as these are often of particular benefit to dyslexic children – for example, strategies for visual learners such as mindmapping.
- Exploring the possible benefits of and where practicable, securing access for the child to appropriate information technology, for example, word processing facilities and spellcheckers, providing training in the use of that technology for the child, his or her parents/carers and staff.
- Help in sequencing, organisational and study skills
- Planned strategies to make sure the child's difficulties do not hold them back in other areas – for example alternatives to pencil and paper tasks and providing other methods of presenting information.
- Ensuring that the child and all who work with her/him are aware of the child's strengths as well as their difficulties.
- Access to pastoral personal and social support so as to provide opportunities to discuss anxieties and frustrations and improve self-esteem.
- Involving parents so that they are clear about what is being done to help their child and how they can contribute.

Provision should, in all areas across the curriculum, recognise the strengths and talents of the child in overcoming areas of weakness. The child should have access to multi-sensory and flexible approaches to classroom learning complimented where necessary by additional support 1:1 or within a small teaching group. Schools should be able to record and document progress over time whilst taking the planned school action.

What the LA should provide.

- 1 The LA has a role in making available training and information to schools. It should:
 - Make sure that schools can access the levels of training described earlier on in this policy.
 - Provide schools with information and updates on identified best practice in planning Wave 2 and 3 provisions.
 - Provide schools with information which they can give to parents/carers on how the needs of children with dyslexic difficulties are met in Bristol.
 - Provide schools with information on how to put parents in touch with parent partnership organisations – in Bristol, 'Supportive Parents for Special Children'.
2. The LA has a role in making specialist advice available to schools. This can include information on undertaking more detailed assessments, advice on programme planning, modelling of appropriate teaching approaches, advice on resources and technology, and advice in relation to emotional and behavioural

difficulties which may arise as a consequence of dyslexic difficulties.

3. The LA will make additional funding available to schools to meet the needs of children identified with SEN . This funding gives schools the ability to respond in a flexible way to the needs of individual pupils.

It is expected that the funding, and the specialist expertise and support the LA makes available centrally will enable the needs of all primary aged pupils and all but a handful of secondary aged pupils to be met in their regular mainstream school.

4. In addition, however, the LA has specialist provision in the form of a resource base within one mainstream secondary school for children who are amongst the most severely dyslexic and who may be experiencing emotional problems as a result of their learning difficulties i.e. have low self esteem, lack confidence in their ability to learn and have poor social relationships.

Assessment, diagnosis and the role of the educational psychologist.

Because dyslexia affects such a high percentage (between 4 and 15%) of all children, we believe that the skills necessary to identify dyslexic children should be available within the school, rather than reliance on 'diagnosis' by a small number of specialists such as educational psychologists. Teachers can identify dyslexic children: this does not have to be done by other 'experts'.

To this end the LA will provide information and training to school staff on how they can identify dyslexia – for example, by using standardised literacy assessments to ensure rates of progress, alongside checklists of common indicators of dyslexia and simple assessments of phonological processing skills.

Educational psychologists will only become involved in further assessment where children are not making adequate progress (as defined in the SEN Code of practice and supporting LA guidance) as a result of school based action. Educational psychologists and the Learning Improvement Team will work with the school staff (not necessarily directly with the child) to achieve a better understanding of the factors that may be helping or hindering progress and to identify ways forward

Where a detailed assessment from an educational psychologist is called for in order to achieve this understanding, the LA EP will be examining the interaction between the cognitive processes in the child and the learning opportunities and teaching methods which have been available.

The assessment will seek information on:

- the severity and persistence of the problem with reading and spelling
- the key gaps in the child's knowledge
- potential reasons, in terms of cognitive mechanism, for the severity and persistence in area such as phonological and orthographic
 - awareness and memory, taking account of compensatory styles, such as a heavy reliance on context when reading, and unhelpful coping strategies, such as the avoidance of frustrating learning opportunities
- the learning opportunities the child has and the teaching methods s/he has experienced – in light of the knowledge we have about those aspects that

enhance learning in general and reading/ spelling acquisition in particular.

- -he role that social and emotional responses, including the child's self perception and self-esteem, may be playing in contributing to the literacy difficulties.

Psychologists undertaking any detailed assessment will make use of the most recent professional guidelines available to them on appropriate assessment tools – currently the 1999 report of the British Psychological Society working party 'Dyslexia, Literacy and Psychological Assessment'.

Psychological assessment will:

- Ideally be conducted over time and in relation to different contexts
- Be formative and provide the necessary results informal any required
- intervention -Involve parents/carers as essential contributors to the process
- Consider the young person's strengths and difficulties and generate a
- number of hypothesis that consider the range of issues
- Incorporate the child's understanding of his/her world
- Draw, where appropriate, on the views of other professionals.

The primary purpose of a psychological assessment will be to clarify an appropriate teaching programme, rather than to arrive at a diagnosis, since it is highly likely that where a child has reached School Action Plus stage of the Code of Practice, their difficulties will meet the definition of dyslexia adopted by this policy. The assessment will, however, clarify difficulties by evaluating the three sections of the definition:

- that the pupil is learning/has learnt accurate and fluent word reading
- and/or spelling very incompletely, or (in older children) continues to have difficulties in applying learnt skills in a classroom context
- that appropriate learning opportunities have been provided
- that progress has been made only as a result of much additional effort/instruction and that difficulties have, nevertheless persisted.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the LA publication 'Wave 3. A Management Guide '2004.

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APPENDIX A

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Dyslexia Awareness Training Day

- You are entitled, under the Bristol Dyslexia Policy, to receive this **free INSET** day for all staff in your school.
- It is run by dyslexia specialists from the Learning Improvement Team.
- In the last 5 years, 70 mainstream and specialist schools/provisions have already taken advantage of this training, which has been very well received with positive comments such as:

“Well delivered, kept interest going, informative and enabling”,
“So many ideas/suggestions to put into practice and new signs to look for”,
“Loved the whole day”.

Did you know that?

- 4 – 15% of the population are dyslexic
- Dyslexia is the most common learning difficulty
- 70% of pupils permanently excluded from school have literacy difficulties
- 54% of the prison population is dyslexic

What do teachers ask?

- How can I identify dyslexia?
- What strategies can I use in the classroom?
- How do I deal with parents'/carers' concerns?

What will staff gain?

- **Awareness of the Bristol Dyslexia Policy**
- **An understanding of dyslexia**
- **The skills to teach to different learning preferences**
- **Knowledge of strategies, methods and materials to support all pupils.**