# DYSLEXIA BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The aim of this guidance document is to support best practice in Plymouth schools enabling a consistent approach to identifying and supporting pupils with dyslexic difficulties. The key principles of this are a whole school approach to high quality teaching and appropriate targeted intervention. The guidance was developed by SENCOs and LA representatives and is based on up to date research and evidence based practice from across the UK.

This guidance:
- explains and defines the term Dyslexia
- provides advice for identifying Dyslexic difficulties
- outlines the role of high quality teaching in meeting the needs of pupils with dyslexia
- gives a summary of interventions to improve literacy skills

SECTION 2: DEFINITION OF DYSLEXIA

The definition of Dyslexia adopted in Plymouth is that proposed by an independent, multi-professional review commissioned by the Government, known as the Rose Report (2009):
- Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling.
- Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed.
- Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities.
- It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points.
- Co-occurring difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organisation, but these are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia.
- A good indication of the severity and persistence of dyslexic difficulties can be gained by examining how the individual responds or has responded to well-founded intervention. (10)

SECTION 3: IDENTIFICATION OF DYSLEXIC DIFFICULTIES

In this guidance we refer to identification of Dyslexia and Dyslexic difficulties rather than diagnosis which is a medical term. Dyslexia is an educational difficulty and identification is the responsibility of educational practitioners and specialists not doctors.

Dyslexia occurs across all ability levels and socio-economic groups and is best thought of as a continuum with mild to severe forms. There is no single assessment to identify Dyslexia. While some pupils with Dyslexic difficulties have particular strengths and abilities there is no single profile associated with the difficulties. Assessment is an ongoing process of information gathering over time rather than a single event in which a judgement is made about the young person's difficulties. The primary focus of assessment is on the acquisition of key literacy skills, for example, underlying phonological awareness and memory. Identification of dyslexic difficulties should be seen in light of the young person’s response to the teaching of these skills.

Identification and assessment should involve a clear analysis of the pupil’s needs, drawing on:
- previous progress and attainment
- the views of parents, teachers and the pupil
- formative assessment of key skills
A more detailed assessment may be appropriate if:

- the pupil demonstrates persistent literacy difficulties over a sustained period of time
- class teachers notice individual differences and adjust their teaching, with support from the SENCO/SEN Department, but the student still does not make expected progress.

If a pupil presents with dyslexic difficulties it is important to assess the extent to which any of the following are actually the underlying cause:

- Speech and language difficulties or disorders
- Social factors such as lack of early stimulation or access to literacy in the home
- Gaps in their education
- Visual impairments
- Hearing impairments

All young children up to the age of 6/7 years may show characteristics which could be considered dyslexic. However this is often part of expected development of literacy skills.

SECTION 4: FOUR-PART CYCLE: ASSESS, PLAN, DO, REVIEW

The purpose of identification is to meet the needs of young people by providing appropriate support and effective intervention rather than finding a label.

The SEN Code of Practice (2014) sets out statutory guidance for schools to follow in assessing and supporting pupils with special educational needs, including specific learning difficulties and Dyslexia:

Where a pupil is identified as having SEN, schools should take action to remove barriers to learning and put effective special educational provision in place. This SEN support should take the form of a four-part cycle through which earlier decisions and actions are revisited, refined and revised with a growing understanding of the pupil’s needs and of what supports the pupil in making good progress and securing good outcomes. This is known as the graduated approach. It draws on more detailed approaches, more frequent review and more specialist expertise in successive cycles in order to match interventions to the SEN of children and young people. (6.44)

Assess

Teachers and parents become aware that a pupil is struggling with literacy. Class teachers notice individual differences and adjust their teaching. They gather information about the pupil, including:

- Strengths and difficulties
- Other factors that may be impacting on literacy development
- Attainment across curriculum areas
- Accuracy and fluency of reading and spelling skills
- Monitoring and tracking progress in order to make a judgement of if expected progress is being made
Assessment methods include:

- Work samples
- Classroom observations of the pupil’s approach to literacy
- Reading and spelling tests
- Identification checklists/profiles

**Plan**

- Intervention forms an important part of the assessment
- Classroom based intervention, teaching and access strategies should be planned
- A support plan and programme to help the pupil develop key skills identified should be put in place

**Do**

- Carry out the intervention

**Review**

- Evaluate the impact of the intervention against expected progress
- The class teacher may consult with the SENCO

The main purpose of an assessment undertaken at this level is to plan further teaching in the expectation that it will significantly advance the pupil’s progress.

The majority of pupils will have their needs met through high quality teaching and in some cases targeted intervention. This will be evaluated through the assess, plan, do and review cycle. If progress is still not evident, the SENCO may seek further advice from a specialist teacher or an educational psychologist. In consultation with parents, the young person and class teacher, further in depth assessment may be needed and further targeted interventions set up.

**SECTION 5: THE ROLE OF HIGH QUALITY TEACHING**

Supporting literacy development across learning is the responsibility of all teachers. This is clearly reflected in the Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years (January 2015).

‘Teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the pupils in their class…’

6.36

*High quality teaching, differentiated for individual pupils, is the first step in responding to pupils who have or may have.* 6.37

There are a wide range of intervention strategies that may be used to support pupils with dyslexia. Some strategies are clearly suited to particular stages of literacy development, whilst others may not be appropriate for a particular pupil’s needs or within the context of a particular classroom.

Young people with dyslexic difficulties will benefit from teaching that is effective for all. One such approach is personalisation which aims to capitalise on the strengths of the learner by providing them with opportunities to learn in ways that suit their individual learning styles. Characteristics of personalisation include:

- applying different didactic strategies to promote personal potential
- the learner’s active participation in the construction of their own curriculum
- acknowledgement and praise of all dimensions of the learner, not only the cognitive (emotional, social, life experience etc.)
- giving value to previous knowledge, competence, life and work skill, also informal aptitudes and achievements
- recognising the learner’s self-direction as a fundamental skill

Taken from Personalised Learning, DFE, 2012

High quality training materials that are available free for schools include:
- Inclusion Development Programme Dyslexia module
  http://www.idponline.org.uk/psdyslexia/fscommand/launch.html
- Advanced training materials dyslexia module units 9 to 16
  http://www.advanced-training.org.uk/module4/M04U01A.html
- Dyslexia SpLD trust
  http://www.thedyslexia-spldtrust.org.uk/

SECTION 6: INTERVENTIONS TO IMPROVE LITERACY SKILLS

The Rose review (2009) states there is a ‘well-established evidence-base showing that intervention programmes which systematically prioritise phonological skills for reading and writing are effective for teaching reading to children with dyslexia’. (13)

Rose also states that pupils with dyslexic difficulties particularly benefit from teaching that adheres to the following principles:
- highly structured
- systematic
- ‘little and often’
- using graphic representation
- allowing time for reinforcement
- encouraging generalisation

and that intervention sessions for dyslexia should have a strong, systematic phonic structure and be sufficiently frequent to secure pupil’s progress and consolidate learning.

It is also important that schools involve parents/carers as equal partners. Alongside this pupils should be active and valued participants in designing and reviewing the support that is put in place for them.

There are many published schemes for teaching literacy and specific interventions for helping pupils with dyslexia to build key skills. In some cases these have been tested through programmes of research to measure their effectiveness and impact.

Greg Brooks, from Sheffield University, has compiled details of the evidence for how effective interventions are in ‘What works for children with Children and young people with literacy difficulties’ (2013). This latest version was commissioned by the Dyslexia-SpLD Trust which has updated information about interventions on their website http://www.interventionsforliteracy.org.uk/

Another resource to help schools target their resources most effectively is provided by the Education Endowment Fund. The ‘Teaching and Learning Toolkit’ (2014) gives a summary of educational research into strategies to improve the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.
SECTION 7: TEST AND EXAM ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS

There will be a number of students who, despite appropriate support and intervention, will not sufficiently develop their literacy skills to be able to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in examinations.

Exam access arrangements can be hugely beneficial part of the support for students with dyslexia, however, because dyslexia is a spectrum condition learners with dyslexia do not automatically qualify.

Primary schools

The Standards and Testing Agency is responsible for the development and delivery of all statutory assessments from early years to the end of key stage 2. Guidelines for putting access arrangements in place are set out in the Access and Reporting Arrangements (ARA) document. This process requires evidence of arrangements that are the normal way of working for the student.

Secondary schools

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) set out the mandatory procedures for requesting and making arrangements for students with physical disabilities, sensory impairments and learning difficulties. This process requires evidence of the normal way of working and an assessment report prepared by an appropriately qualified specialist assessor or psychologist.

Key principles

- Access arrangements must be based primarily on normal classroom practice
- Access arrangements should never provide an unfair advantage
- The support given must not change the exam questions
- Answers given must be the pupil’s own
- Always consult with the pupil before putting the arrangement in place

Examples of access arrangements that may assist pupils with dyslexia include:

- Extra time (eg if speed of processing is affected)
- Use of a laptop (eg if writing is slow or illegible)
- Reader (eg for poor readers with difficulty decoding or understanding text).

It is important to note that exam access arrangements put in place by a primary school may not be always needed in secondary schools as needs may change over time.

The JCQ regulations can be found at http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration
SECTION 8: TRANSITIONS

It is important that transition processes are as smooth as possible to enable continuity of provision where this is needed.

Primary to secondary school

Feeder primary schools should highlight students with special educational needs, including those with dyslexic difficulties, to receiving secondary schools so that support strategies can be seamlessly carried through. There is a clear Plymouth transition protocol which can be found at www.plymouth.gov.uk/sendsas under ‘SENCO documents’.

Secondary to further/higher education

When making applications for courses it is important to encourage students to disclose any additional support needs including dyslexia. The purpose of this is to allow appropriate plans to be put in place (with the student’s agreement).

In order to increase a college or university’s understanding of how dyslexia has impacted on a student’s learning it is helpful to share as much information as possible. This can include:

- examples of a student’s written work
- copies of relevant assessments
- details of successful strategies
- information about any exam access arrangements that have been put in place.

REFERENCES


Rose Review (2009) Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties
APPENDIX

Two examples of guidance for subject teachers in secondary schools about how to make adaptations for young people with dyslexic difficulties:

Example 1

- Support with structuring writing with post its/ scaffolds/writing frames
- Give additional time for reading or opportunities for Pre-reading.
- Print slides from power points using coloured paper if appropriate.
- Give students the chance to rehearse ideas with peers before committing to paper.
- Avoid time pressured tasks or reading aloud without Pre- warning.
- Use keyword and high frequency word maps to support with spelling.
Example 2: Dyslexia

As teachers, we need to be very flexible in approach when working with a dyslexic child so that they can find the method of working that suits them best. Here are some strategies, but you will need to know the pupil and their preferred learning style.

Support strategies:

- Finish a lesson with a summary of what’s been taught to help pupils make the shift from short-term memory to long-term memory
- Break tasks down into small, easily remembered pieces of information
- If the pupils are copying from the whiteboard try to use a different colour pen for each line
- Have the text copied for the dyslexic pupil onto a small board/paper in the colour that the pupil finds easiest to read
- Writing frames and scaffolds can be used to help with planning, structure and organisation.
- Try to find ways that help pupils compose without too many constraints – for example, using a computer
- When working with extracts from texts or a class novel, it is helpful to give the pupils the extracts to be studied before the lesson so that they can familiarise themselves with the text
- Some dyslexic pupils find it difficult to check and proof-read their work. Aim to offer direction and give the pupils plenty of opportunities to practise
- Allow time after a writing task before asking the pupil to proof-read the work
- Encourage the pupil to look at content and organisation then focus on grammar, expression and sentence structure. The final check should focus on spelling.
- Avoid rewriting pieces of work as this can dishearten a child who has put a lot of effort into the original piece
- Homework should always be written on a board so that pupils can copy it down correctly (use a pen in the colour preferred by the dyslexic child)
- To help organisation, never leave setting homework until the end of the lesson so that the instructions are hurried
- Set a limit on the time to be spent completing homework, for dyslexic pupils a task will generally take them longer than a child with good literacy skills
- Try to give credit for effort as well as achievement so that a dyslexic child who tries hard gains self-assurance
- Positive comments in pencil are much less off-putting than work covered in red ink.
- Use Kincaid-Fleisch readability statistics to assess reading age of texts used in lessons (file – options – proofing – show readability statistics (2007 onwards)) and differentiate where necessary
- Regular use of RWC marking symbols to aid pupils understanding of where errors are being made
- Incorporate time for green pen marking to allow pupils the opportunity to correct work
- Plan opportunities to use dictionaries to help improve spelling
- Plan to incorporate reading in pairs/groups rather than whole class