DYSLEXIA GUIDANCE: PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND POST-16 SETTINGS

Contents

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 learners with dyslexia. This document forms part of the wider Plymouth SEND Local Offer which covers information on the local provision for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The Plymouth SEND Local Offer can be found at https://www.plymouthonlinedirectory.com/kb5/plymouth/directory/localoffer.page

This document will be reviewed every three years or as required. This guidance has been produced in consultation with parents, young people and a range of professionals working in the field of literacy development.

This guidance is underpinned by up to date research and evidence based practice. Its aim is to provide access to information to enable parents/carers and settings to have a common understanding of dyslexia and current best practice in order to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people.

Therefore this guidance:

- explains and defines the term dyslexia
- provides advice for identifying dyslexic difficulties
- outlines of the role of high quality teaching in meeting the needs of children and young people with dyslexia
- gives a summary of interventions to improve literacy skills

Throughout this document the term 'parent' refers to parents and carers, and the term 'setting' refers to all schools, early year's settings and further education (FE) colleges. The term 'learner' applies to all children and young people up to the age of 25 years who are attending schools or FE settings. Finally, 'classroom' refers to any space where learning takes place.

Section 2: What is dyslexia?

It is widely acknowledged that dyslexia is an emotive and often contested issue and it is recognised that there are many different definitions 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)*

The Rose Report definition acknowledges current research that:

Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities. The definition does not rely on identifying a discrepancy between a child's ability in one area and his/her abilities in other areas.

There isn't one specific profile of cognitive strengths and difficulties that needs to be identified in order to classify a child as having dyslexia.

There are clear genetic and biological bases to dyslexia. There are differences in the brain functioning of those with significant reading difficulties compared to typical readers. Studies report that many parents of children identified with dyslexia also have reading difficulties.

Based on current research and theory the term dyslexia can be used interchangeably with reading difficulties and literacy difficulties.

In Plymouth we also recognise the British Psychological Society (BPS) definition from 1999 (reprinted in 2005):

"Dyslexia is evident when accurate and fluent word reading and/or spelling develops very incompletely or with great difficulty. This focuses on literacy learning at the "word" level and implies that the problem is severe and persistent despite appropriate learning opportunities. It provides the basis of a staged process of assessment through teaching".

Within this model we recognise that the biggest question is: What is the nature of the dyslexic difficulties and what are the best interventions to support an individual's particular needs relating to reading, spelling and some wider areas of literacy?

Section 3: How do children learn to read?

- Early language and literacy (reading and writing) skills development begins in the first few years of life and is closely linked to a child's earliest experiences with language, books, stories and nursery rhymes.

- Children usually begin to read with a whole word awareness of visual and spoken words (for example, recognising their name or a shop logo) and then tend to become aware of increasingly smaller units over time. Reading development is supported by exposure to print (regularly reading to children from a very early age, singing nursery rhymes) and vocabulary development (talking to a child).

- Being able to hear and identifying the different sounds in words (phonological awareness) is a key skill and predictor of later reading success. As children learn to read, phonological awareness is used to work out the relationships between parts of words and what they sound like (syllables, onset and rime, phonemes). Children learn to pronounce and identify the whole word. This may occur through breaking down the sounds in words (decoding) or through other approaches such as recognising whole words or rhyme.

- In order to begin to read fluently and efficiently in a way which allows for comprehension (understanding of what has been read), eventually words which have been decoded will need to move into memory so that they can be identified quickly by sight.

- Skilled reading is a complex process and it is therefore not surprising that there is a great deal of individual variation in reading development. In summary, the reading process is based on speaking and listening, phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension.

Section 4: Developing early literacy skills (0-3 years)

Formal reading instruction which pushes very young children to achieve adult models of literacy (reading and writing words) is, for the vast majority of children of this age, not developmentally appropriate. Early literacy theory highlights the importance of providing young children with a language and literacy rich environment. All Early Years children should have access to mediated experiences of:

- a language rich environment, where babies and toddlers are talked to and listened to from the earliest age

- a wide range of books available to suit their age.

- regular opportunities to explore and play with books (board books, cloth books, plastic books, real books).

- singing nursery rhymes and developing awareness of rhythm, rhyme and syllables in words.

- listening to stories and encouragement to look at favourite pictures, point to familiar objects, imitating an action seen in a book, encouraging babbling/ talking in imitation of reading.

- opportunities to recognise whole words e.g. the child's name.

- scribbling and mark making.

Section 5: How is dyslexia identified?

In this guidance we refer to *identification* of dyslexia. This recognises dyslexia as an educational difficulty and the responsibility of educational practitioners.

The primary focus of assessment for dyslexia is on the acquisition of key literacy skills. Identification should be seen in light of the learner's response to the teaching of these skills. Due to the complexity of literacy development, identification of dyslexia is an ongoing process of information gathering over time rather than a single event in which a judgement is made about the learner's difficulties.

Principles of assessment

The primary purpose of any assessment will be to inform effective teaching and learning. Any assessment should:

- ideally be conducted over time and in relation to different contexts

- be formative, which is to inform any future intervention. The impact of any intervention
- should be reviewed on a regular basis

- involve parents, the learner and setting staff as essential contributors to the
- process

- consider the learner's strengths and development needs and generate a number of hypotheses that consider the range of issues

- incorporate the learner's understanding of his/her world

- be a collaborative process involving other professionals where necessary.

Assessment may seek information on:

- the severity and persistence of difficulties with reading, writing, spelling and related areas such as maths and organisational skills

- potential reasons for the severity and persistence of difficulties in areas such as phonological awareness (sounds) and orthography (correct spelling)

- the current learning environment

- the role that social and emotional responses play in contributing to literacy difficulties. This may include the learner's self-perception and self-esteem

- the key gaps in the learner's knowledge.

If a learner presents with difficulties it is important to assess the extent to which other factors, including any of the following, are an 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 education
- visual impairments
- hearing impairments
- social, emotional and mental health difficulties which act as a barrier to learning.

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

Section 6: Considering the perspectives of learners

An expectation of the 'The special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years' (The Code) is that learners and parents are involved in all aspects of planning and decision making. This guidance reflects this principle, and the following letters from learners are intended to support settings and parents in understanding the perspective of learners at different points of their education.

Primary pupil

Dear teachers,

Hi, I am someone who loves to learn but can sometimes find learning difficult. I have dyslexia which means that although I have good ideas, I often find it tricky to write them down. I struggle to write my sentences in the right order and I also find it difficult to read flowingly. I often feel frustrated when I can't do things by myself.
I worry that my friends and my teachers will think I am stupid.
I often feel nervous in my lessons if I don't know what we are going to be doing. I don't find it easy asking for help but it is easier for me if I am sat next to my friends because I can ask them first.

Sometimes I find it difficult following lots of instructions especially if my teacher talks too quickly. But when he comes to check on me after the input, I can make sure I know what I have to do. I still do silly things like forgetting to put my name on my work or write the date, even though I have been told this a billion times!

I like to sit near the front of the class so I am facing the white board and the teacher. My teacher often gives me the information on a sheet beside me so that I don't have to focus on the whiteboard all the time – else the words get all jumbled up in my head.
I have a spellchecker that I prefer to use rather than a dictionary but I also need to learn how to break down big words for myself like: diff i cult y.

Whenever I have to do a big piece of writing my teacher gives me a writing frame so that I can organise my ideas. I do have good ideas but they get mixed up so the writing frame helps me to put them in order. I like to do word maps or mind maps with colours too. I like to do some of my writing on a lap top too because it helps me to get my spellings right.

When I read a book, I usually lose my place and sometimes I read words on the wrong line. I don't read very fast but a green overlay helps me and stops me jumbling up the words. I definitely don't like reading aloud to the class or even to a group because I get embarrassed when I am told to hurry up.

One thing that some teachers don't know is that dyslexia makes me very disorganised. I seem to forget my lunch box and book bag more often than other children so we have made a checklist of things for me to remember to bring to and from school which I can tick off.

*The best way you can help other children like me is to make sure that all the adults who work in the class, know who has dyslexia so that they won't be asked to read aloud or look words up in dictionaries. And if you **have** to give us homework, please give us a couple of examples so that we can remember what we have to do.*
Thank you for reading my letter.

From

Mystery

Aged 9 ½ years old

Secondary pupil

Dear teachers,

Hi, I am a Year 10 student who enjoys coming to school and loves learning new things however learning can be very difficult for me. I have special educational needs, which means that I often find it hard to write my ideas down. I struggle to write my sentences in the correct order and reading is not the easiest thing for me to do. This makes me frustrated at myself, as I want to be independent.

I get extremely anxious and worried that my friends and teachers will think I am dumb.

I regularly feel embarrassed and nervous in my lessons especially if I do not know the topic we are studying. Asking for help can get me embarrassed as I feel like it is a sign of weakness. I know many teachers do not like putting students next to their friends but this way I can ask friends for help first.
Sometimes I find it hard to follow many instructions especially if the teacher is talking too fast. This gets me anxious that I will never finish the work that is being set. I find it helpful if the instructions can be written on a handout for me to be able to tick off as I go. Copying teacher's handwriting and reading people's handwriting is a struggle as I often struggle to read my own handwriting. This is why I find PowerPoints and worksheets/handouts helpful.

I prefer to be sitting near the front of the classroom or near the teacher when in a classroom. This allows me to focus on the white board. However, handouts will be more useful as lots of information and words can be jumbled up when focusing for too long.
When having to write an essay or piece of coursework, I find it beneficial using a writing frame, which is given to me by my teacher. This helps me organise my ideas, as sometimes my ideas get mixed up in my head and do not come out clear on paper. Word maps and mind maps are a helpful way for me jot down my ideas on paper.

Spelling is extremely challenging for me and using a dictionary is not as simple as you may think. Sometimes I like to work on a computer to help me correct my spelling.
Putting me on the spot in a lesson makes me extremely nervous and anxious. Reading aloud to the class or even a small group gets me flustered as I often lose my place and sometimes read the wrong line. This is why using a ruler or an object such as a pen to point at each word really helps me.
When teachers set me homework at the end of the lesson and rush through, the instructions confuse me, as I am not always sure what is expected of me. Giving me an example of an answer can just help me to jog my memory so I can remember how to do it. Alternatively, setting it at the beginning of the lesson where I will have time to ask questions is always helpful.

Working outside the classroom can help me focus. When there are too many conversations or noise, it distracts me and I find it hard to concentrate.

The best way you can support other children like me is to make sure that all the adults that work in the class are aware of all the students' needs. This way it can help us manage our anxiety and worry and we will not be made to feel embarrassed or stupid.
Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.
From

Mystery

Aged 15 ½ years old

The following words are from an 18 year old male doing an Apprenticeship in 'Performing Engineering Operations' who has dyslexia:

'I was at primary school when it became obvious that I was having problems. My mum and the teachers noticed that I was further behind than the other students and having problems reading. My primary school brought someone in to test me for dyslexia when I was about 8 years old. I remember having to have extra phonic lessons when everyone else was doing French. I found that the phonics did not help me because I still don't read that way. I either guess a word or I recognise what it looks like if I see it time and time again.

When I was at secondary school they let me bring in a laptop for my lessons because my handwriting was really messy and my spelling was bad (it still is!) When I was in Year 7 and 8, I had a teaching assistant that helped write notes for me but not in year 9. I would have liked to have had more support with my spelling and for people to have helped me learn more words. Due to these problems with my reading and writing, my parents and I felt that another school might be better so I changed secondary schools and ended up at a school which was more specialised, had more practical lessons and smaller groups so I received more support. They also ensured that I had 25% extra time, a reader, a scribe and a separate room for my exams.

I have learned just to deal with my dyslexia and get on with my work. When I was younger, I used to rely on people telling me how to spell words but now I am much more independent and use spellcheck or my phone. I used to struggle to remember things but with practice this has improved so I have tried to become more organised in my life and in work.

I have always relied on my parents helping me. My mum used to always sit next to me whilst I did my homework as I struggled to concentrate so this was the only way that I did my work. I still have them help me check my work for accuracy as they tell me that my written work often doesn't make any sense although it looks fine to me. I also have help during my apprenticeship from a learning support assistant who gives me help for an hour a week and she makes sure that I have met deadlines and that my work is accurate and that I have understood what tasks I have been set.

I have never been bullied over my dyslexia or felt that it was a huge issue but I have a feeling that my mum has worried more about me and my future. I realised that many of my friends were going to university and that I would struggle with the workload there so that was one of the reasons I began an apprenticeship in engineering. I was quite happy to disclose my dyslexia when having my apprenticeship interview because I felt that it was best to be honest and then they could help me as much as possible. For me an apprenticeship is a better idea as there is a possible job at the end of it, much of my apprenticeship is practical and you get paid to learn. It has helped me increase in confidence and I feel that my dyslexia will not hold me back in the future.'

Section 7: Considering the perspective of parents

Research has demonstrated that 70% of academic success depends upon the belief of the learner that they can succeed (SpLD Trust). A learner's constant failure with regard to literacy skills will lower their self-confidence (the belief in what they can do) and may affect self-esteem (their feelings about themselves).

The issue of self-esteem was raised by families through consultation events which were held to inform the production of this document. Many parents talked passionately about the importance of emotional well-being and the negative impact on home life when their child is struggling.

The application of effective teaching strategies which enhance the self-confidence of learners was viewed as essential by parents. In particular, feedback from parents indicated that settings should consider strategies for:

Independent learning away from the setting or homework:
- is the learner taking far longer to complete tasks than is reasonable?
- are tasks recorded accurately?
- do tasks require differentiation so that they can be accessed independently?
- should a time limit be set?
- is help available in the school or college?

Useful guidance for supporting learners with homework can be found at:
https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/parent/getting-help-for-your-child/homework-tips

Writing tasks:
- are strategies in place, such as writing frames, which support the learner to complete extended writing tasks?
- are these strategies applied consistently?
- are learners asked to copy from a board?
- is the impact of this task on each learner understood by each teacher/tutor?

Reading tasks
Are learners asked to read aloud? Is the impact of this task on each learner understood by each teacher/tutor?

Reports:
Does the setting's standard report format emphasise areas of strength and achievements or lack of progress and a growing gap with peers? For example, do report formats require differentiation so that parents are able to share them with children whose literacy skills make it harder for them to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding?

Assistive technology:
Can a learner's independence be enhanced through the use of assistive technology, for example, the use of a lap top or reading pen? The cost, over time, is usually significantly less than an additional adult.

Feedback and motivation:
Giving learners positive feedback to help them understand what they can do is essential. It ensures learners know their strengths, helps them to be motivated, to persevere and think positively. Learners need to value who they are (personal qualities) as well as what they can do (performance).

In addition to this, parents also talked about:

1. Good communication with staff:
   Poor communication often leads to the perception that 'nothing is being done' and the need to 'battle' for resources.

2. 'Catching up':
   Parents understood the importance of additional support and time to develop literacy skills. However, this was seen as counterproductive when it was at the expense of activities that the learner enjoyed.

3. Parents' evenings/consultations:
   It is important that teachers/tutors are fully briefed about a learner's needs and key traits of literacy difficulties so that clumsy comments are not made.

Finally, settings should consider strategies to evaluate the emotional well-being of all pupils including those with dyslexia.

Section 8: What should all settings be doing?

Good practice for learners across all phases of education

Dyslexia friendly policies in settings are most effective when they form part of the 'whole setting development plan' and when progress towards the goals and targets on the plan are regularly monitored. Dyslexia friendly settings recognise that teaching staff, as individuals, are key to the success of learners overcoming their difficulties.

The four key elements of good practice, identified in the Rose Report and OFSTED (2010) are:

- *a whole school ethos that respects individuals' differences, maintains high expectations for all and promotes good communication between teachers, parents and pupils*

- *knowledgeable and sensitive teachers who understand the processes of learning and the impact that specific difficulties can have on these*

- *creative adaptations to classroom practice enabling children with special needs to learn inclusively and meaningfully, alongside their peers*

- *access to additional learning programmes and resources to support development of key skills and strategies for independent learning*

Settings are also encouraged to:

- complete dyslexia awareness training

- to regularly review their training in order to keep up to date with national developments. This could also be achieved through staff attending a course about dyslexia; whole staff INSET or department INSET provided by a suitably qualified member of staff or an external agency including SEND Specialist Services

The role of high quality teaching

Supporting literacy development across learning is the responsibility of all teachers/tutors, and this is clearly reflected in The Code:

Teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the pupils in their class, including where pupils access support from teaching assistants and specialist staff (6.36)

Learners with dyslexic difficulties will benefit from specific teaching strategies. In particular learners with dyslexia will be benefit from planning that gives careful consideration to:

1. Pre-teaching
2. Access to text (for example, desk-based resources) and support for reading
3. Support for writing and alternative methods of recording
4. Support for spelling
5. Developing memory and organisational skills
6. the demands of and support for homework tasks

Strategies that fit into each of these categories can be found in the appendix 1 'High Quality Teaching Access Strategies for Learners with Dyslexia'. In addition to this, a key element to all teaching should be the development of metacognition and the provision of effective feedback.

Supporting literacy in your setting

Within settings there is clear evidence that early identification is key to providing effective interventions and preventing difficulties from becoming worse. This graduated approach is called the 'assess, plan, do, review process' (see fig.1); and planning in light of a learner's response to intervention is the cornerstone of this approach. This stands in contrast to a 'wait to fail' approach where by an assessment and identification of needs would traditionally have come following a period of not making progress and falling further behind.

The assess, plan, do, review process is also described in The Code:

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).

The majority of learners will have their needs met through high quality teaching and in some cases targeted intervention in the form of SEN Support. This will be evaluated through the assess, plan, do, 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 learner and class teacher/tutor, further in depth assessment may be needed and further targeted interventions set up.

Fig. 1

THE GRADUATED APPROACH
PLYMOUTH
CITY COUNCIL

Review
Assess
Plan
Do

High Quality Teaching → Targeted intervention → SEN Support
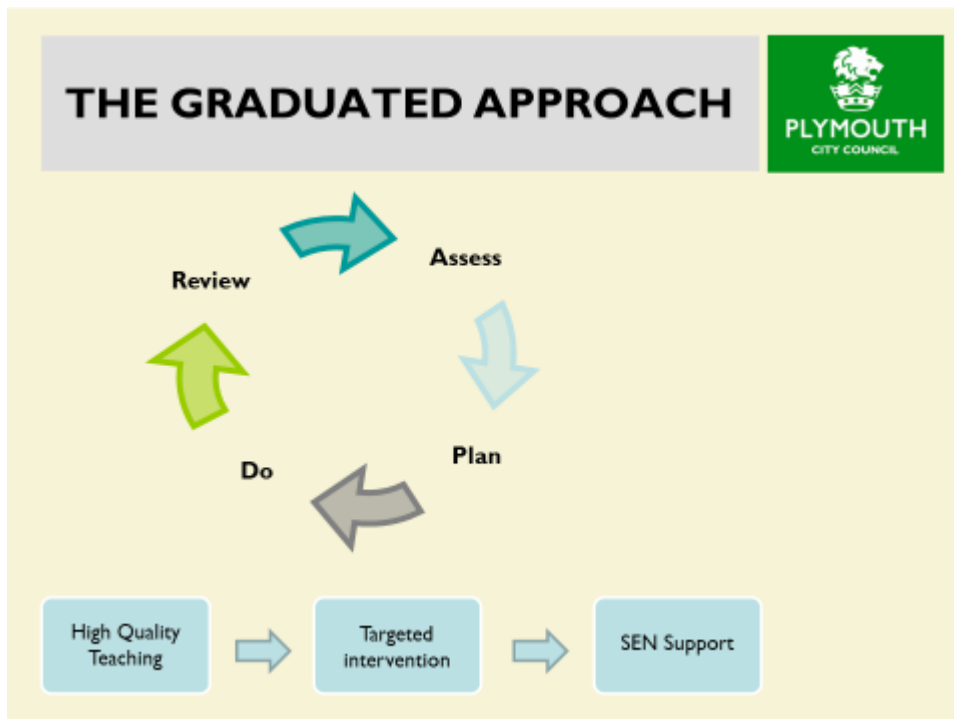
Each of the graduated response elements will be explored further below.

Assess

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

When teachers/tutors become aware that a learner is struggling with literacy, they will first notice individual differences and adjust their teaching. If difficulties persist they will gather information about the learner, 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 as to whether expected progress is being made

Assessment methods include:
- work samples
- classroom observations of the pupil's approach to literacy
- relevant universal screening
- reviewing a Learner with Literacy Difficulties (appendix 2)

The tool, 'Reviewing a Learner with Literacy Difficulties', details a four step approach to investigating a learner's potential dyslexic profile and includes suggested actions.

Plan

Information from initial assessments should be used to implement appropriate interventions. Interventions may include planning classroom based teaching and access strategies and/or individual or small group support to develop key skills in line with identified outcomes from the 'assess' phase.

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 learners 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

In addition, intervention sessions for dyslexia should have a strong, systematic phonic structure and be sufficiently frequent to secure learner's progress and consolidate learning.

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

There are a wide range of intervention strategies that may be used to support learners with dyslexia. Some strategies are clearly suited to particular stages of literacy development, whilst others may not

be appropriate for a particular learner's needs or within the context of a particular classroom. A list of strategies that can be helpful for pupils experiencing literacy difficulties can be found in appendix 1.

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
http://www.advanced-training.org.uk/module4/M04U01A.html

Dyslexia SpLD Trust Professional Development Framework
http://framework.thedyslexia-spldtrust.org.uk/

There are also many published schemes for teaching literacy as well as specific interventions for helping learners 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 (Sheffield University), has compiled details of the evidence for how effective interventions are in 'What works for children and young people with literacy difficulties' (2016). This latest version was commissioned by the Dyslexia-SpLD Trust which has updated information about interventions on their website:
http://www.interventionsforliteracy.org.uk/home/research/

A further resource to help settings target their resources most effectively is provided by the Education Endowment Fund (EEF). The 'Teaching and Learning Toolkit' gives a summary of educational research into strategies to improve the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.

For details this can be downloaded from the EEF website:
https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit/

Do

Once assessment has been carried out an appropriate plan devised, the programme of intervention, based on the nature and severity of the learner's needs, should be carried out.

Effective intervention must be:
- needs led
- have clear entry and exit criteria
- have careful baseline and post-assessment of skills
- be well structured and developmental
- involve regular sessions with plenty of practise opportunities
- involve skilled teaching by a well-trained adult
- include a balance of pupil/adult talk
- involve multi-sensory input with good visuals and ensure application to the classroom.

A single intervention cycle should normally last between 6 and 10 weeks.

Review

The impact of any programme of intervention should be formally evaluated against expected progress. Outcomes and next steps should be discussed with the learner, appropriate professionals and parents so that next steps can be planned.

Section 9: Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments

There will be a number of learners 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 learners with dyslexia, however, because dyslexia is a spectrum condition learners with dyslexia do not automatically qualify.

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 learner's own
- always consult with the learner before putting the arrangement in place.

Primary schools

The Standards and Testing Agency (STA) 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.

https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/standards-and-testing-agency

Secondary schools and colleges of further education

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 guidance is updated on an annual basis. This process requires evidence of the normal way of working and an assessment report prepared by an appropriately qualified specialist assessor or psychologist.

https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration

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

- extra time (e.g. if speed of processing is affected)
- use of a laptop (e.g. if writing is slow or illegible)
- reader (e.g. 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 or post-16 education as a learner's skills may develop over time.

Section 10: Transitions

It is necessary for established systems to be in place to support the transition of learners with literacy difficulties as they progress through their education. 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 learners with special educational needs, including those with dyslexic difficulties, to receiving secondary schools so that support strategies can be seamlessly carried through. The Plymouth Enhanced Transition Framework provides a suite of tools that can be used to support this process. The framework can be found at:

https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/schoolseducationchildcareskillsandemployability/specialeducationalneeds anddisabilityandlocaloffer/sendsasstrategicadviceandsupport2

Secondary to further/higher education

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

In order to increase a college's understanding of how dyslexia has impacted on the learners it is helpful to share as much information as possible. This can include:

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

Employment

When making applications for work placements and jobs it is important to understand what help, advice and support is available. The 'Workplace Information' document (appendix 3) provides detailed consideration for learners who are about to enter the workplace.

Section 11: Frequently asked questions for schools and parents

1. Are all learners with reading difficulties dyslexic?

No, there are some other reasons why learners may struggle to develop their literacy skills, for example, poor vision, poor hearing, early speech and language difficulties, not having access to appropriate teaching or extended absence from education.

Reading difficulties lie on a continuum, and the most severely affected learners will need ongoing literacy support throughout their education. These learners are likely to be described as dyslexic although at this time there is no clear or absolute cut off point where a learner can be said to have dyslexia.

2. Is dyslexia hereditary?

Dyslexia has a strong hereditary influence and appears to run in families, if there is a family history of dyslexia it is important to share this information. Research suggests that individual differences in reading performance are partially accounted for by genetic variations and that the relationship is stronger for those with significant difficulties. Future work in this area should provide more information.

3. My child has a number of complex needs. Are they also dyslexic?

There are many reasons why learners may struggle to develop their literacy skills, for example, poor vision, poor hearing, early speech and language difficulties, not having access to appropriate teaching or extended absence from school.

It might also be that a co-occurring difficulty, such as autism or ADHD, has an impact on a learner's ability to acquire age-appropriate literacy skills due to associated difficulties with communication skills and/or memory.

Reading difficulties lie on a continuum, and the most severely affected learners will need ongoing literacy support throughout their education. These learners are likely to be described as dyslexic although at this time there is no clear or absolute cut off point where a child can be said to have dyslexia.

4. Is the involvement of a specialist teacher or educational psychologist needed in order to have dyslexia recognised?

Literacy difficulties, including dyslexia can be identified by following The Code, using the Assess, Plan, Do, and Review approach. If settings have access to the appropriate screening and assessment tools it is not always necessary to have an educational psychologist or another external specialist to identify dyslexia and support the learner accordingly. However, staff in settings often discuss the difficulties with other professionals, and seek further, in depth assessments, if a learner's difficulties appear to be significant and persistent.

5. A parent has had an independent assessment carried out for their son or daughter. How should settings respond?

Setting staff will always read reports and discuss them with parents. It is important to remember that a diagnosis by a specialist who does not have access to information about the learning context and response to interventions over time will only provide a snapshot of the learner's difficulties.

The main focus for discussion should be to:
  A. *Acknowledge concerns*
  B. *Discuss recommendations made in the report*
  C. *Discuss current setting support and its impact*
  D. *Agree next steps*

The following information may be helpful in discussion:

  A. *There is no single assessment for dyslexia, however, an independent assessment can contribute to the overall picture of a learner's strengths and weaknesses and provide helpful information that will help you support the learner in your setting. It is therefore, important to read through the assessment and invite parents in to meet with you to discuss their concerns and hear how you are supporting their child.*

  B. *Professionals outside the Local Authority may be using a different definition or description of dyslexia, for example, the discrepancy model. If this is the case and the learner appears to have average reading ability, reassure the parent, discuss their concerns and use the information provided in the assessment to help you support the learner (for example, do they need to be stretched in some areas of the curriculum? Do you need to reconsider settings and groupings?)*

  C. *If the private assessment recommends a number of interventions to support the learner, discuss these with parents, and share what you are already doing in the setting that may be similar to the suggestions or, if you disagree, explain why and provide your evidence. The private report may provide some very helpful new information and it is important to identify which interventions are evidence based and manageable given the expected available resources*

  D. *Parents should be reassured that staff at the setting are aware of their child's needs and that appropriate support is available.*

6. I have heard that people with dyslexia have particular strengths, for example, they are artistic and creative. Is this true?

It is not true that all learners with dyslexia are creative, however, many are! All learners have strengths in areas and it is important to find, encourage and develop these, whatever they may be. These can have a significant impact on confidence and self-esteem. It is worth sharing with your child the many successful people in all fields who have dyslexia.

7. What is a 'spiky' profile?

A spiky profile may be referred to in a report when a learner has strengths in some areas assessed and weaknesses in others.

8. Why do some learners find it easier to read using a coloured overlay?

Some learners find it easier to read when using a coloured overlay, as this reduces their visual stress, and their reading speed improves, although this in itself is not an indicator of dyslexia. Speak to your setting about this as they may be able to do an informal assessment using coloured overlays.

9. Why do some learners find it easier to read using glasses with coloured lenses?

Some learners find it easier to read when using glasses with coloured lenses, as this reduces their visual stress, and their reading speed improves, although this in itself is not an indicator of dyslexia. Parents can privately commission assessments for glasses with coloured lenses through a variety of sources, however, a lack of research evidence means that this cannot be recommended as part of this guidance.

10. A learner has been identified as dyslexic. What support should they be receiving and should it be delivered by a specialist dyslexia teacher?

Learners with severe and persistent literacy difficulties should have received a graduated response to their needs in line with the Code of Practice (2015). If their difficulties are severe, they are likely to be accessing targeted provision. Support should include effective literacy teaching and intervention based on the needs identified during assessment, as well as high quality teaching and access to dyslexia friendly classrooms. Many learners with dyslexia experience feelings of low self-esteem and high levels of frustration and it is important that emotional support is also available.

The research favours good quality, small group or individual catch up intervention using evidence based approaches. This can be provided by a teacher or teaching assistant trained in the intervention in school; there is no evidence to suggest that outcomes are more favourable when this is delivered by a specialist dyslexia tutor. If progress is not made in response to intervention, further advice could be sought as part of a graduated approach, for example, from an educational psychologist.

There are many training courses that setting staff can attend in order to support learners with literacy difficulties/dyslexia. Some training courses are available from the Local Authority and settings are encouraged to take this up in order to ensure that they are following the most up to date understanding, interventions and approaches to support learners with dyslexia.

11. Why might a learner who has not previously experienced literacy difficulties begin to struggle? For example, when they reach Year 5, or start studying for GCSEs or A Levels?

Some learners find ways of coping with literacy difficulties earlier on in their education, but struggle with the amount of reading and writing expected as they move through phases of their education; for example, at Year 5 or at the start of Key Stage 4. Difficulties may relate to the demands of new complex vocabulary and/or their speed of reading and writing: this may impact on their accuracy when expected to read/write for an extended length of time, particularly when under pressure. It is important for teachers/tutors to monitor this and discuss concerns with learners with regard to how they may be supported to develop new coping strategies.

12. What support will a learner with literacy difficulties get during exams?

Support is based on a learner's presenting needs and is not dependent on the learner having any written identification of dyslexia. If a learner has a history of requiring additional support, and meets the criteria, they will be eligible for extra support. This can be extra time, a reader or a scribe. Equally, access to additional resources in a setting is not contingent on the identification of dyslexia but on a needs-led basis.

13. What can I do if I am unhappy with the support the setting is providing?

If you are unhappy with the support your child is receiving, request a meeting with the SENCO at which you can express concerns and listen to the views of staff at the setting. Please see appendix 4 for a letter format which has been designed by a parent.

Remember that learners make most progress when schools and parents work together.

The Plymouth Information, Advice and Support for SEND Service (PIASS) can provide advice and support with regard to meetings in settings.

https://www.plymouthias.org.uk/

14. Do I need a specific qualification in order to identify literacy/dyslexia needs?

Using the definition in this guidance, teachers/tutors have the skills needed to identify persistent literacy/dyslexic difficulties. Parents need to feel confident that a formal identification of dyslexia is not necessary in order for you to address their child's difficulties in this area.

Teachers/tutors following this best practice guidance will be able to address the needs of learners with difficulties in this area. As part of their continuing professional development all teachers/tutors have access to a range of training materials. For example, The Advanced Training Materials http://www.advanced-training.org.uk/.

Additionally, as part of the graduated approach teachers/tutors are able to seek further advice from a range of professionals including the setting's link educational psychologist.

15. Is 'dyslexic' a helpful way to describe a learner?

Consideration should always be given to whether using the term 'dyslexia' is helpful for the learner. Many learners and parents find it reassuring to be able to describe their difficulties in this way; however, professionals and parents should also be aware of the danger of creating low expectations from those who don't understand the term, including the belief that the learner is not able to make progress.

If a learner has made very little progress despite following a graduated response of 'Assess, Plan, Do, Review', and you are confident that you have used evidence based interventions that focus on the learner's needs, then, according to the Rose Report definition and the BPS definition, a teacher/tutor can use the term dyslexia as a description of a learner's needs. Teachers/tutors will need to be very clear about current literacy levels and that interventions have been implemented appropriately. Teachers/tutors will need to describe to parents and learner what is meant by the term as an identification of need.

16. What is the best way to talk to a learner about their needs?

Learners and families may ask about diagnosis and cure for dyslexia. A key purpose of this guidance is to explain that dyslexia is not a medical condition but is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. It is best thought of as a continuum of need, not a distinct category and there are no clear cut off points. Therefore, the key questions are: 'what is the nature of the dyslexic difficulties?' and, 'what are the best interventions in order to support an individual's particular needs?' As a result, dyslexia has an educational rather than medical focus.

Section 12: References

Brooks, G. (2016) **What works for children with literacy difficulties**

Department for Education (2015): **Special Educational Needs Code of Practice: 0-25 years**

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

The Dyslexia SpLD Trust http://www.thedyslexia-spldtrust.org.uk/

Useful links

British Dyslexia Association – Homework Tips
https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/parent/getting-help-for-your-child/homework-tips

Inclusion Development Programme Dyslexia module
http://www.idponline.org.uk/psdyslexia/fscommand/launch.html

Advanced Training Materials: Dyslexia
http://www.advanced-training.org.uk/module4/M04U01A.html

Dyslexia SpLD Trust Professional Development Framework
http://framework.thedyslexia-spldtrust.org.uk/

The Education Endowment Fund 'Teaching and Learning Toolkit'
https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit/

Appendices

Appendix 1: High quality teaching access strategies

Appendix 2: Reviewing a learner with literacy difficulties

Appendix 3: Workplace information

Appendix 4: Parent letter format

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