Policy and Guidance for supporting pupils with Dyslexia/Literacy Difficulties

London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
Children's Services
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Purpose of the Policy

This document sets out the policy of the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham Children's Services in order to have

- a shared and coherent rationale and understanding and a common approach to the identification, assessment and support provided for pupils with dyslexia and literacy difficulties.

The Hammersmith and Fulham Dyslexia/Literacy Difficulties Policy forms part of the guidance from the Local Authority to assist schools in meeting the needs of children with special educational needs (SEN) and in implementing the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (2015). It provides guidance to professionals and parents on current approaches to support the successful inclusion and attainment of children and young people with dyslexia/literacy difficulties. The Hammersmith and Fulham specialist teachers and educational psychologists adhere to the principles outlined in this document.

Identification: Defining Need

The LA currently recognises 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)

We also accept the working definition adopted within the Rose report (2009) which is as follows:

- 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.

Some of the identified difficulties that have been associated with dyslexia include:

- **Speed and Fluency**: Taking longer to process information. Pupils may be slow to develop fluency in skills, including reading and spelling, that usually become automatic with practice.
- **Phonological Awareness**[1]: Showing difficulties in linking sounds with symbols in reading and spelling.
- **Visual Discrimination**: Lacking visual perceptual skills, the ability to differentiate one object from another or discriminate letters/words visually.
- **Processing symbols and signs** e.g. numeric or musical notation.
- **Sequencing and organisational skills** in terms of recording work, thinking, planning and self-organisation.
- **Working/short term memory and attention skills**.

In most cases a combination of these factors is seen. There is not one specific profile of cognitive strengths and difficulties that needs to be identified in order to classify a child as having dyslexia. Each individual is likely to be different and the support required will be different.

Dyslexia occurs independently 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. Dyslexia can occur across the range of intellectual abilities.

Whether or not a child or young person is identified as having dyslexia, reading difficulties or literacy difficulties the support they will need will depend on their own particular range of strengths and needs. Not all pupils who have literacy difficulties will be identified as being dyslexic.

[1] Phonological awareness is the conscious sensitivity to the sound structure of language. It includes the ability to auditorily distinguish parts of speech such as syllables and phonemes. It is a skill that is usually acquired by pre-school children through, for instance, the learning of songs and rhymes. As the child becomes older s/he usually starts to understand grapheme–phoneme correspondence. This refers to the relationship between the way in which words are spelt and how they can be sounded out by blending together the separate sounds that make up words. In English this can be a particularly difficult skill to acquire. In the case of most words there is no consistent one-to-one correspondence between the ways in which words are spelt and the ways in which they sound.

Assessment Over Time

Identification of dyslexia does not take place through a one-off assessment but is evident over time following on going specific/tailored support as evidenced by school/provider.

Assessment over time (where the child/young person's response to intervention is monitored) identifies any child/young person who is not making the expected literacy progress and provides the necessary information required to plan further intervention. Assessment over time enables staff to build up a clear picture of an individual's strengths and weaknesses and thereby inform appropriate targeted interventions required to address the weaknesses.

All children, including those with literacy difficulties/dyslexia should have access to **high quality** or **quality first** teaching. The DfE Code of Practice (2015) states that 'High quality teaching that is differentiated and personalised will meet the needs of most children and young people. Some children and young people need educational provision that is additional and different from this.' The graduated approach as described in *Appendix 1* will provide sufficient support for most children and young people. A diagnosis of dyslexia is not necessary for children to access support either within the classroom or as part of a small group/individual intervention outside the classroom.

There is clear evidence that early identification of dyslexia/literacy difficulties is key to providing effective interventions and preventing an attainment gap from widening. The focus of any assessment should be on identification of need and the best way to respond. Focussed assessment will inform the Assess, Plan, Do, Review process in the school.

A diagnosis of dyslexia does not necessarily provide any additional information that is useful for addressing the difficulties nor does it predict the rate of progress. Consideration will also need to be given as to whether the term will be helpful for the individual child/young person concerned. Some find it reassuring to have their difficulties described in this way, for others it can seem to limit achievements and motivation.

As part of an assessment environmental factors, background and medical history must also be taken into consideration, for example lack of exposure to reading, reduced motivation and self-esteem in relation to reading and spelling, too rigid methods of teaching word reading and spelling.

(For further information on assessment over time, see **Appendix 1:** The Graduated Approach and Literacy Difficulties)

Effective Intervention

- An accurate assessment of literacy skills is required to identify specific areas to address.
- It is important that the teaching methods used within any intervention are shown in research to be effective.
- An effective intervention for children and young people with dyslexia/literacy difficulties should reflect the profile of strengths and weaknesses of the pupil(s).
- A whole school ethos that respects individual differences, maintains high expectations for all and promotes good communication between teachers, parents and pupils.
- Knowledgeable and sensitive teachers who understand the processes underpinning literacy learning and the impact that specific difficulties can have on these.
- Creative adaptations to classroom practice enabling children with dyslexia/literacy difficulties to learn inclusively and meaningfully, alongside their peers.
- Access to additional learning programmes and resources to support the development of key skills and strategies for independent learning for example training in strategies to promote metacognition.
- Some children and young people will require an individualised programme to be taught
- The SEN Code of Practice (2015) is clear that parents should be fully involved in the school's response to their children's learning needs and understand the purpose of any intervention of the programme of action.

Access Arrangements

SATs: Pupils with dyslexia/literacy difficulties can have special arrangements made for them. Please see guidance in the QCA Assessment and Reporting Arrangements http://testsandexams.qcda.gov.uk/21551.aspx.

Examinations: Schools may apply for access arrangements for GCSE, GCE and other external examinations for students with a history of SEN, including literacy difficulties. The assessments used to inform the arrangements must be conducted by an appropriately qualified specialist teacher or Educational Psychologist. Guidance is available for schools and colleges from www.jcq.org.uk .

Any access arrangements provided in examinations should reflect the student's normal way of working in the classroom.

Support available in Hammersmith and Fulham:

Responding to Need: Hammersmith and Fulham LA support the view that special educational needs (SEN) is the responsibility of all practitioners. Good practice for all pupils will promote their full and independent inclusion in both primary and secondary schools. Effective provision requires a whole school approach, reflected in policies, classroom practice and with appropriate support available to individual pupils. Research has shown that early intervention for pupils with dyslexia/literacy difficulties is vital to promoting enhanced outcomes. Identifying need at the earliest opportunity and then making effective provision improves the long term outcomes for the child or young person.

Schools are encouraged to:

- Refer to the 'Ordinarily Available Provision' document which outlines the support that mainstream schools or settings should be able to provide for pupils through their agreed funding and resource arrangements in advance of a referral to external professionals. See below link:

  http://search3.openobjects.com/kb5/lbhf/fis/advice.page?id=yGDc6fydDwc&localofferchannel=0

- Regularly review their training to keep up to date in line with national developments. Whole school or department training can be provided by a suitably qualified member of staff or an external agency including LBHF InSpire Team and the Educational Psychology Service.
- Ensure that children and young people are grouped and/or set in a variety of ways that allows them to achieve their best, rather than set solely according to literacy skills
- Ensure that there is appropriate task differentiation

- Ensuring that there are opportunities to record ideas in a variety of ways

InSpire: The InSpire service includes a team of specialist peripatetic teachers of literacy and numeracy who all have additional qualifications in teaching and assessing pupils with dyslexia/literacy difficulties. The team offers advice/training to primary and secondary schools as well as direct support to individuals and small groups of pupils. The team can carry out detailed assessments which identify strengths and weaknesses and inform school programmes of intervention matched to pupil's needs. The work of the specialist teacher complements that of the school. The specialist teachers are also able to meet with parents/carers to discuss pupil progress and advise on support at home. The team is up to date with current research on effective practice. Team members can provide in-service training to teaching and support staff. They are able to advise on suitable resources including the use of information communication technology (ICT).

Currently the budget for this team is delegated to schools. Schools may buy back the service to provide support at any stage of the SEN Code of Practice.

Educational Psychology Service: The Educational Psychology Service in Hammersmith and Fulham works in accordance with British Psychological Society (BPS) guidance on dyslexia, literacy and psychological assessment. The service also offers training sessions in schools, support with planning specific literacy interventions and support to parents

In cases where there is concern about a child's lack of progress and persistent difficulties acquiring literacy skills, EP time allocation can be used to carry out a more in-depth assessment of the child's literacy difficulties. This might include consultation with parents and teachers; individual work with the child; observation of the child in context.

Appendix 1: The Graduated Approach and Literacy Difficulties

Steps	Practical Implications
Step One ASSESS Baseline literacy assessment	Assessment could include: • Background history • Classroom observations • Standardised assessments (e.g. reading ages) • Curriculum-based assessment (school assessment) • Skill-based assessments
Step Two PLAN Instructional content: Deciding what to teach	Considerations for whole class teaching: • Make learning objectives clear • Ensure that learning tasks cater for all cognitive and linguistic skill levels. Organise interventions so that: • Accurate assessment has been completed to identify the areas of literacy that need targeting; • The focus is on skills that are most useful and highly generalizable; • Skills that are readily confused are separated; • Focus on a limited number of skills at a time. • Focus on the most useful skills first. Teach meta-cognitive skills so that:

	• Children understand what is being taught and why.
Step Three PLAN/DO Instructional delivery: Deciding how to teach	Organise whole class teaching so that: • Reasonable adjustments are in place to enable all students to access (read) and produce (write) the written word using alternative methods of reading and recording as required. Whole class teaching is made explicit across the range of cognitive and linguistic skills through: • Clear differentiation; • Reducing task demand to match need; • Direct instruction; • Use of questioning and feedback. Organise specialist interventions so that: • All skills are taught to high levels of fluency (practice); • New skills are taught directly and explicitly; • Skills are taught in a range of contexts; • Revisit learned skills/concepts regularly.
Step Four DO Classroom organisation	Organise the learning environment so that: • All teaching staff are trained in determining what to teach and how to teach it; • Alternative methods for reading and recording are accessible; • Students are grouped amongst peers with a range of skill levels; • There are frequent opportunities for practice; • Teaching assistants and peers are used to the greatest effect.
Step Five REVIEW Assess and evaluate learning	Ensure that the access to the curriculum is evaluated by assessing the effectiveness of the reasonable adjustments. Ensure that evaluation of interventions includes assessment of: • Accuracy, fluency and generalisation; • New and old learning. Ensure that children and young people are aware of their progress and the next steps in moving learning forward.

Appendix 2: **Resources/Interventions**

There are a number of sources that school can access to find out what evidence-based assessments are available. This is not an exhaustive list of evidence-based literacy interventions available. However, useful sources to access include:

Greg Brooks (2016) : https://www.helenarkell.org.uk/documents/files/What-works-for-children-and-young-people-with-literacy-difficulties-5th-edition.pdf

https://www.evidence4impact.org.uk/

http://www.sendgateway.org.uk/resources.sen-support-research-evidence-on-effective-approaches-and-examples-of-current-practice-in-good-and-outstanding-schools-and-colleges.html

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/

https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/ (From USA)