

**WHAT IS DYSLEXIA?**

**HOW TO IDENTIFY DYSLEXIA**

**DYSLEXIA AND NUMERACY**

**GOOD PRACTICE**

**PRIMARY SCHOOL TIPS**

**SECONDARY SCHOOL TIPS**

**INFORMATION**

**BDA QUALITY MARK**

**PLANNING A DYSLEXIA FRIENDLY SCHOOL**

**POLICY**

**REFERENCES AND LINKS**

**POEMS**

Dyslexia is a learning difference, a combination of strengths and weaknesses which affects the learning process in reading, spelling, writing and sometimes numeracy. Dyslexic learners may also have accompanying weaknesses in short term memory, sequencing and the speed at which they process information. These are skills that everyone needs if they are to learn effectively in a busy classroom. They are also key skills for life.

Learning problems arise if dyslexia is not recognised and the teaching is inappropriate. To best understand how to meet the needs of dyslexic learners in mainstream, an appreciation of the subtle changes required in policy and practice is needed. If it is the policy to view dyslexia as a learning deficit, essentially because there is something “wrong” with the child, then practice will tend to focus on special educational needs, remediation and teaching. However if it is the policy to view dyslexia as a learning difference, one which conveys a range of strengths and weaknesses in common with all learning styles and preferences, then practice is able to focus on inclusion, differentiation and learning.

Viewing dyslexia as a learning difficulty implies that something is “wrong” with the learner. This leads to a focus on identifying weaknesses rather than celebrating strengths. This, in turn, can result in an emphasis on remediation by specialists rather than resolution by knowledgeable class and subject teachers. One inevitable consequence has been to focus on a school’s special needs provision. However, this places responsibility for remediation on the SENCo and diverts attention away from the mainstream classroom which is, after all, the place where dyslexic students spend most of their time.

## Specific learning difference

Acknowledging a “specific learning difficulty” as a “specific learning difference” places the focus firmly on how all lessons are planned, resourced and taught and also on the way teachers are supported through school policy, practice and ethos. This offers real opportunities for an emphasis on inclusive mainstream strategies which are designed to empower all learners to be the best they can be. In dyslexia friendly schools the focus has changed from establishing what is wrong with children in order to make them “better”, to identifying what is right in the classroom in order to enhance the effectiveness of learning.

Placing the focus on learning in the mainstream classroom also offers the potential to improve the quality and quantity of discrete intervention. This can take the form of in-class support, withdrawal or a needs based combination. This can lead to opportunities for more, higher quality intervention as additional needs are met in dyslexia friendly mainstream settings.

One of the basic principles of becoming a dyslexia friendly school is the expectation that teachers take immediate action when faced with learning needs, rather than refer for assessment and wait for a “label”. In a dyslexia friendly school all teachers are empowered, through training, policy and ethos, to identify learning issues and take front line action. This is the policy of “early intervention” being translated into classroom practice.

Defining dyslexia as a specific learning difference also conveys a realistic balance of opportunities and costs, strengths and weaknesses for the child. The “straight line thinking” typical of some learners is effective for the step by step processing of certain types of material, yet is less effective when creativity is required. The eclectic style of others students may enhance creativity yet fail to yield results when a task calls for step by step processing.

Whilst it is acknowledged that some dyslexic learners will still require discrete specialist support at some time, the notion of dyslexia as a specific learning difficulty is arguably unhelpful, certainly within the inclusive ethos of a dyslexia friendly classroom. The skill of the teacher lies in achieving a balance between empowerment and challenge within clearly understood patterns of strength and weakness. Therefore, viewing dyslexia as a difficulty may be to fundamentally misunderstand the situation. In the mainstream classroom setting the class teacher, guided by school ethos, policy and practice, has the power to make dyslexia a learning difficulty or a learning difference – it really is as simple as that.

## **Constitutional in origin**

A learner who is dyslexic is just that – and teaching “harder” cannot change that reality. Research into the architecture of the brain suggests that very real differences occur as the foetus develops and these differences are responsible for the familiar pattern of strengths and weaknesses that typify dyslexic learners. While research continues to focus on a range of neurological issues, for the classroom teacher it is enough to appreciate that dyslexia defines dyslexic learners, making them what they are. Paying attention to empowerment, emotional intelligence and self esteem may prove to be more valuable than a detailed knowledge of a learner’s neurological makeup.

## **Unexpected and persistent difficulties**

It would be foolish to suggest that dyslexic learners do not experience difficulties in learning certain skills. However, there is growing awareness of the extent to which these difficulties are “institutional”, that is created by policy and practice. The key to recognising dyslexia in mainstream settings is to focus on “unexpected” aspects of performance in relation to ability. Teachers often readily recognise learners who find it very difficult to produce ability appropriate evidence of learning. Yet these teachers also acknowledge that dyslexic learners are often as effective as their peers during the oral, group work phase of a lesson. Therefore, a helpful starting point is to focus on learners who “think” a subject. These are pupils who perhaps demonstrate a clear verbal understanding of concepts but who experience unexpected difficulties when it comes to getting it down on paper.

“Persistent difficulties” are also an important concept. Once again it helps to focus on learners who continue to have persistent difficulties in certain areas despite quality learning opportunities, which have helped others with apparently similar needs. Teaching “harder” does not address persistent learning difficulties, though teaching differently does. The most effective response to persistent difficulties is to acknowledge that “if they don’t learn the way we teach them, we must teach them the way they learn.”

## **Acquiring certain skills**

The “unexpected” problems tend to arise in the acquisition and application of aspects of basic skills. These problems often occur despite adequate opportunity to learn and are highlighted against a background of ability appropriate skill acquisition in other areas. Dyslexic students are usually as good as their peers at many things until, for example, they need to write it down. In the mainstream classroom, problems seem to occur in areas such as speed of processing, short term memory, sequencing and possible weaknesses in auditory and/or perceptual skills.

Family history is significant as dyslexia is often inherited. But remember that parents may not be aware of their own dyslexia, as a generation ago people were not well informed.

## 'Tell-tale' signs

### General

Throughout their school careers a dyslexic child may:

- Appear bright and able, but can't get their thoughts down on paper;
- Have areas in which they excel, particularly in drama, art and debating;
- Be clumsy;
- Act as the 'class clown' to mask what they see as their academic failure;
- Become withdrawn and isolated, sitting at the back and not participating;
- Be able to do one thing at a time very well but can't remember an entire list;
- Look 'glazed' when language is spoken too quickly;
- Go home exhausted at the end of a normal day because they have had to put so much effort into learning;
- Be bullied.

### Pre-school children may show:

- persistent difficulty in learning nursery rhymes or the name for things, like 'table' or 'chair';
- enjoyment in being read to but showing no interest in letters or words;
- signs of apparently not paying attention;
- continuing difficulties in getting dressed efficiently and putting shoes on the correct feet;
- problems with catching, kicking or throwing a ball or with hopping or skipping;
- difficulty with clapping a simple rhythm;
- delayed speech development.

### Primary school children may show:

- a poor sense of direction and confuse left and right;
- difficulty tying shoe laces and dressing;
- a discrepancy between receptive and expressive language;
- short-term memory limitations, for instance, finding it hard to remember arithmetic tables, the alphabet or classroom instructions;
- pronounced reading difficulties – but don't forget that not all dyslexic children have these problems. Specifically look out for:
  - hesitant or laboured reading
  - omitted lines or repetition of the same line – loss of place in the text
  - muddling words that look alike, e.g. 'no' and 'on', 'for' and 'off' and 'was' and 'saw'
  - difficulties in saying multi-syllabic words
  - problems understanding what they have read.
- Difficulties with writing and spelling. Errors might include:
  - a disparity between written and spoken language
  - messy work, for example, curled pages, crossings out and badly set out
  - handwriting that looks heavy and laborious

**Before I could write it down it swung away from my  
fumbling memory.**

*William*

- confusion of similar letters, like 'b' and 'd', 'p' and 'q' and 'w' and 'm' – resulting in bizarre spelling
- the same word spelt differently in the same piece of work, such as 'more', 'mor' and 'mro' – confusion between upper and lower case letters, and concepts of letter name and sound

They may also surprise you, as in all other ways they are bright and alert, often artistic and creative.

### **A young person at secondary school may:**

- continue to experience the same problems as at primary school, for example:
  - still read inaccurately;
  - still have problems spelling;
  - confuse places, times and dates;
  - have difficulty remembering maths tables and formulae;
  - need to have instructions repeated;
  - get 'tied up' using long words, such as 'preliminary' or 'philosophical';
  - have difficulty planning and writing essays;
  - suffer poor confidence and low self-esteem.

In addition, secondary school offers a new set of challenges which place immense pressure on dyslexic pupils, who already have problems with their short-term memory and organisational skills. This may demonstrate itself as:

- forgetting which books to bring to class;
- difficulty organising life around a timetable;
- misunderstanding complex instructions;
- problems trying to write down notes at speed, and completing work on time;
- memory difficulties which affect the marshalling of learned facts effectively in exams.

As a result of the strain, the student may be extremely tired and fractious and employ avoidance techniques whenever possible. It is easy to see how motivation and self esteem drop rapidly. For some these manifest themselves as challenging behaviour.

There are many persisting factors in dyslexia which will still be noticeable when the dyslexic child leaves school. These include:

- obvious good or bad days, for no apparent reason;
- disjointed written work;
- misreading which may affect comprehension;
- forgetfulness in everyday life.

Concern that a learner may be dyslexic should trigger an assessment, ideally from a specialist dyslexia teacher in the school. A good understanding of the nature of their difficulties and strengths should inform classroom practice and any extra help the child requires. If they continue to fall behind they should be 'fast-tracked' to more specialist assessment and support.

## Mathematics and dyslexia

Traditionally, dyslexia has focused very much on literacy – the learning of the reading and writing processes. For some dyslexic children and adults difficulties also transfer into the learning of mathematics. Research results vary considerably and a conservative estimate, based on initial studies (Joffe, 1981), would suggest that about 60% of dyslexics have some difficulty with school maths. Of the 40% of dyslexics who don't seem to have maths difficulties, about 11% of dyslexics excel in mathematics. The rest (29%) do as well as children of the same age, who have no learning difficulties.

**Dyscalculia** is like dyslexia for numbers, but very little is known about its prevalence, causes or treatment. Most dyscalculic children and adults will have cognitive and language abilities in the normal range. They may excel in non mathematical subjects.

It is well known that dyslexic people are as able as many others but that they need to learn in ways which suit them best. Too many dyslexic children are put in low sets for mathematics where they receive “more of the same”. Such methodology is of little value to them. As a result, frustration and tension grow. Many highly able dyslexic children are in these sets through misdiagnosis.

It is hoped that many of them will be helped directly through the National Numeracy Strategy but, for those who are not, alternative methods must be found. We look forward to seeing both teachers and student teachers trained in the recognition of dyslexia within the area of mathematics as well as literacy.

## Why should there be difficulties in numeracy?

People often have difficulty with aspects of numeracy, for example, learning times tables facts, yet they can be successful in mathematics. Mathematics is made up of many varied topics such as shape and space. It is not just numeracy.

Mathematics begins with numeracy and it is these early experiences of numbers that can be so influential in setting the attitudes to learning mathematics. If these initial problems can be addressed then there are no reasons why a dyslexic pupil cannot achieve good grades in GCSE and beyond.

It is not surprising that those who have difficulty in deciphering written words and learning patterns involving symbols should also have difficulty in learning the various facts, notations and symbols which are used in mathematics. If teachers are aware of the potential learning barriers and if they can present the work in ways which minimise these effects, then the dyslexic pupil can succeed in numeracy.

The Numeracy Strategy will have some benefits for dyslexic pupils, for example, it encourages pupils to extend known facts as with deriving  $4 \times$  facts by doubling  $2 \times$  facts. The structure allows for frequent returns to topics thus allowing revision opportunities. There are also areas and approaches which will be less ‘dyslexia friendly’ such as the emphasis on rote learning basic facts and the general pace at which the Strategy moves along.

## Possible pointers

### Speed of working

- Is the person slower in doing simple  $+$   $-$   $\times$   $\div$  calculations than might be expected from his/her age and intelligence?

## Addition and subtraction facts and multiplication tables

- Does the person use finger counting (because recall from memory is slow, unreliable or not available)?
- Does the person have difficulty recalling times table facts other than  $2 \times$ ,  $10 \times$  and  $5 \times$ ?
- If asked for  $7 \times 2$  does he/she start at  $2 \times 2$  and count up to  $7 \times 2$ ?

## Counting backwards and counting from a different starting point

- If the person is asked, say, to count backwards in twos or threes from 30 or to say which number is back 5 places from 21, does he/she have any difficulty?
- Is he/she slower and more hesitant when counting on in tens from, say 13 (instead of 10)?

## Adding up a column of numbers

- Is there a preference for doing several small sums rather than adding up the whole column?
- Does he/she lose track of the addition and keep re-starting?
- Does he/she use tallies?

## Direction

- Does he/she find the second of these questions harder or slower to do:  
From 76 take away 35. Take away 42 from 85.
- Is there a general tendency to start in the wrong place?

## Understanding the language of mathematics

Numeracy has a broader and more varied range of language than, say algebra. For example, there are several words that can be used to imply add or subtract. In addition to this, these words may also have everyday meanings such as 'take away'. Even worse for those learners who seek the security of consistency, the same word can be used to imply more than one operation. For example, it is possible to use 'more' to imply subtraction as well as addition. Dyslexic learners may show these confusions.

## Memorising the order in which to carry out operations

- Dyslexic pupils may show more difficulty than non-dyslexics in sequencing a procedure such as long division (though many people find this particular procedure bewildering).

## Understanding place value

- Some dyslexics do not readily pick up the idea of place value, particularly when there are zeros in a number (20,040).
- They may also take longer to absorb the patterns of multiplying and dividing by 10, 100, 1,000 etc.

## Problems with copying

- When under pressure to work too quickly, dyslexics may have problems in copying accurately from a board or paper.
- They may mix up lines of work, by taking part from one line and part from another line.
- This problem will be exacerbated by work which has been poorly designed or written.

## Notation

- Some dyslexics may have difficulty if a new piece of notation is introduced, for instance:
  - an algebraic symbol, such as 'x'
  - a geometric term such as 'obtuse angle'
  - a trigonometric term such as 'cosine'

- the use of a colon to express ratio
- the use of the symbols  $>$  and  $<$  to mean 'greater than' and 'less than'.
- Fractional and decimal notation may also prove difficult.

## Ways of helping

The suggestions which follow are not intended as firm guidelines but should be adapted in the light of individual needs. Not all dyslexics have the same pattern of difficulties, nor the same ways of absorbing information.

- Some older dyslexics may be interested in the origins of the number system and some may enjoy discussing why numbers are important in ordinary living.

They can be shown that the decimal system is more convenient than the Roman system (I, II, III, IV, V etc.) and that there can be systems which use base 2, base 3, etc. instead of base 10.

Concrete examples are often very helpful if used in conjunction with the written symbols they represent. For example if base ten blocks or coins are used the operations of adding, taking away, etc. can be demonstrated in concrete terms, and this is easier for dyslexics than having to deal with 2-dimensional symbols on a blackboard or paper.

As with the teaching of literacy the approach should be multisensory: the blocks should be examined visually, touched, and moved about in space.

- If dyslexics attempt to learn tables by rote this will take an enormous amount of effort for relatively little success. If possible they should be encouraged to let their strong reasoning power compensate for their relatively weak immediate memory.

For example, it is unnecessary to memorise separately:

- $7 \times 8 = 56$
- $8 \times 7 = 56$
- $56 = 8 \times 7$
- $56 = 7 \times 8$

They can be encouraged to make use of regularities in the number system, in particular those which are found in the 2 x, 5 x and the 10 x tables facts.

Work from what the learner knows to take him/her to what they do not know. For example:

- if  $2 \times 6 = 12$ , then  $3 \times 6 = 12 + 6$
- $4 \times 7$  is  $2 \times 7 \times 2$  ( $2 \times 7 = 14$  then  $14 \times 2 = 28$ )
- 9 x facts can be estimated as 10 x facts and then adjusted to be the accurate answer ( $10 \times 7 = 70 : 70 - 7 = 63 : 9 \times 7 = 63$ . This is a good pattern to learn).
- Dyslexics need to know enough about how the number system works to enable them to estimate the approximate order of magnitude that is needed in a given sum. Once they can do this, there is every reason for encouraging them to use calculators. They should be good enough at estimating to know if they have entered something into the calculator wrongly.

- When they are given mathematical problems they need practice in being able to tell which operation is needed (addition, multiplication, etc.). For example:
  - If 4 boys have 5 sweets each and it is asked how many sweets there are altogether, they need to be aware, before doing any calculation, that multiplication is what is needed.
  - If John walks for 8 metres and Jane walks 6 metres more than John and it is asked how far Jane has walked they need to be aware that this is a matter for addition.

The skill of interpreting the special language of maths word problems needs to be taught carefully. The Numeracy Strategy suggests that learners be allowed to make up their own word problems from number statements. Doing this can help the dyslexic understand how the language is structured.

- They should not be discouraged from using their own special strategies. For example, if no calculator is available, or to check that one has used the calculator correctly, it is appropriate to think as follows:
  - '9 x 7, don't know: but 10 x 7 = 70, so 9 x 7 = 70 - 7, that is 63'.
  - '17 - 9, don't know: but 17 - 10 = 7, so 17 - 9 is 7 + 1, that is 8'.
- Anxiety has a huge effect on learning maths. Dyslexics (and indeed many non-dyslexics) can feel that maths exposes them to failure.

A typical reaction is not to attempt a question rather than try and possibly get it wrong.

Dyslexics tend to be slower at maths (though not all) due to contributing factors such as poorer short term memory, slower writing speeds and weaker knowledge of basic facts.

- **Computers** can be extremely helpful. However it should be remembered that many computer programmes available under the title of 'mathematics' aim at reinforcing numeracy skills; fewer are designed for mathematical concepts.

For example, at a simple level, a child may repeatedly perform multiplication correctly (by remembering the answers), which is a numeracy skill, but not know what multiplication is or does and what he/she achieves by doing it, which would be to understand the concept.

Many programmes, e.g. adventure programmes, provide multiplication practice but fewer attempt to illustrate and explain multiplication.

Generally, the computer can help in the following ways:

- It is associated with enjoyment.
- It provides a welcome change in presentation.
- It does not criticise, nor condemn.
- It has endless patience.
- It can provide extensive practice in numeracy skills.
- It can do many basic calculations, especially using spreadsheets, graph and statistics programmes.
- It can improve presentation.

Programmes need to be selected with care, taking into account the pupil's age, the presentation of the program and the level(s) and topics of work available.

## Dyslexia Friendly Schools Strategy



### What is a dyslexia friendly school?

Dyslexia friendly schools are able to identify and respond to the “unexpected difficulties” that a dyslexic learner may encounter.

Teachers are expected, quite rightly, to identify and respond to a range of diverse learning needs in mainstream settings. It is also becoming recognised that differences between teachers are far greater than differences between schools.

Parents are also becoming more aware of their rights and are becoming vociferous in ensuring that the learning needs of their children are being met. This is creating a developing culture of accountability and evidence that is supported by the inspection process.

It is appropriate to begin by making some claims for dyslexia friendly schools and then see if they can be supported by fine tuning policy and practice.

### **Dyslexia friendly schools are effective schools because they identify and select best practice to get the job done.**

Being aware of trends and initiatives, dyslexia friendly schools demand excellence from their pupils and support them by linking new ideas and traditional values. Pupils are required to be the best they can and the school culture has a “zero tolerance” of failure. This is not an aggressive response, but is more one of “tough love”. Such schools do not accept or allow

**It wasn't until my son was diagnosed as dyslexic that I realised why I had such a rotten time at school.**

*James Whale, tv and radio presenter*

institutionalised failure in terms of an “accepted percentage” of pupils leaving without ability appropriate basic skills and/or national qualifications.

A particular feature of such schools is the awareness among all teachers of what each pupil should be able to achieve, together with a range of response strategies when targets are not met. Also the dyslexia friendly school’s aims and targets are part of the whole school development plan (SDP). Progress towards these goals and targets is the responsibility of a member of the Senior Management Team. This means that all staff are proactively led to:

- demand excellence;
- have a zero tolerance of failure and take action when targets not met;
- promote whole staff awareness;
- adopt flexible approaches - “if children don’t learn the way we teach, we will teach them the way they learn”.



**Dyslexia friendly schools are proactive schools because they believe in the importance of “rigorous scrutiny followed by immediate intervention”.**

These schools actively “look for trouble”. They make best use of the data available on all children to screen for unexpected difficulties in relation to ability. Using existing data as the basis for screening cuts down the testing burden, leaving time and money available to respond when the need arises.

Such schools are also likely to engage in teacher delivered diagnostic assessments when good practice in the classroom fails to secure progress rather than rely on referrals to Educational Psychologists. In consequence the delay between identification and response is kept to a minimum.

A particular feature is the way that the identification of learning issues results in action in the classroom in the first instance. Many perceived learning difficulties respond well to classroom based fine tuning delivered by dyslexia aware and well trained class and subject teachers.

Placing all learners under regular scrutiny requires contact staff to understand the implications of test scores and also to accept responsibility for identification and response. The ensuing culture of target setting effectively offers all learners the benefit of an educational plan. It also limits potential IEPs to those learners whose needs are “additional to” and/or “different from” those which are met through inclusive mainstream practice. A realistic outcome of adopting dyslexia friendly good practice is a reduction in the number of IEPs due to more needs being met through top quality “classroom action.”

These schools:

- set targets, review and monitor progress of all pupils and intervene when necessary;
- seek out opportunities to replace current practice with best practice;
- engage in a constant drive to improve achievement of all pupils;
- target issues through INSET;
- make whole school targets explicit in the SDP and evident at the chalk face;
- ensure that assessment and monitoring result in action.

### **Dyslexia friendly schools are empowering schools because they recognise the importance of emotional intelligence.**

The acceptance of dyslexia as a specific learning difference enables teachers to place it on the continuum of learning styles and preferences and to recognise the implicit opportunities and costs. In consequence there is a “feel good factor” throughout the school as all pupils are empowered to be the best they can be. This is best represented by a keen interest in the way children learn, which is then translated into action in the classroom. These schools are typified by the ability of teachers to meet a wide range of individual needs without always needing to give individual help.

In these schools:

- teachers hold specialist qualifications and are required to influence whole school teaching and learning;
- individual differences are recognised and celebrated;
- everyone is important;
- all pupils are empowered to “be the best they can”;
- individual differences in learning styles are recognised and harnessed.

### **Dyslexia friendly schools are inclusive schools because they recognise that “there is nothing so unfair as the equal treatment of unequal people.” (Thomas Jefferson)**

These schools are typified by a desire and determination to teach the child rather than just cover the curriculum. In consequence they have the confidence to interpret and mould the National Curriculum to the needs of certain children and to justify their actions when challenged.

A particular feature of these schools is a willingness to balance the need of children to acquire literacy and numeracy against their right of access to a broad and balanced

curriculum. Therefore it is not unusual for children who are currently less “equal” in terms of basic skills to receive intensive intervention at the expense of certain aspects of the curriculum. The schools make such decisions with the full involvement of learners and parents. The resultant improvement in literacy and numeracy will accelerate the acquisition of other knowledge and skills through the spiral curriculum.

In these schools:

- social, emotional and intellectual inclusion is a top priority;
- weak basic skills are not a bar to “top sets”;
- the focus is on strengths rather than weaknesses;
- progress is monitored via achievement of “can do” statements.

### **Dyslexia friendly schools are improving, “value added” schools**

The drive for effectiveness on behalf of all pupils stems from an inclusive and proactive approach to the identification and fulfilment of all learning needs. This develops the confidence of pupils who feel empowered to perform at ever increasing level of competence.



## Tips for primary school teachers

Everybody has an individual learning style. Dyslexic people process information, particularly the written word, slower than other people. Understanding how they learn best, and being flexible enough to adapt teaching approaches, are vital factors in enabling dyslexic children to learn effectively in the classroom.

### Practical help and advice for teaching primary school children in a dyslexia friendly way:

#### Useful ground rules for teaching dyslexic children

You may find the following useful:

- Make expectations high for their intellectual stimulation but reasonable for their written response.
- Be prepared to explain things many times, in a variety of ways, individually.
- If you have to mark a piece of work in a child's absence, use two colours – one for content and another for spelling and presentation. Correct only spellings they have been taught specifically.
- While you are looking at a child's work, try to understand the reasons for their mistakes and give them the chance to explain their difficulties to you. This will help you to know what they need to be taught or to practise.
- Watch out for signs of tiredness and fatigue – dyslexic children have to work much harder than other pupils which is exhausting.
- Be slow, quiet and deliberate in your instruction giving, allowing time for the meaning of the words to 'sink in'. Ensure they understand, by getting them to explain it back to you.



- Where possible, use multi-sensory methods of learning. These use all the senses so that information is most effectively absorbed and stored.
- Enable dyslexic children to show their interest, knowledge and skills, despite their difficulties with writing. Often they will be able to 'shine' orally and teachers should encourage this.
- Give guidance about how to tackle tasks systematically. Dyslexic children often need to be taught many things that other children pick up without specific adult help. This might include: how to tidy a drawer; put their toys away; get dressed; look for something they have lost; pack their school bag; tie a tie or shoelaces. Adults, need to recognise the importance of taking time to teach these skills in a systematic and repeated regular routine.
- Watch out for signs of falling confidence and self-esteem.

## **Classroom Arrangements**

The working environment can be the 'make or break' for a dyslexic child. They may be having difficulties with listening, hearing, looking, sitting still, concentrating, writing and finding things they need. If their class environment works against them, no matter how hard they try, they will not succeed.

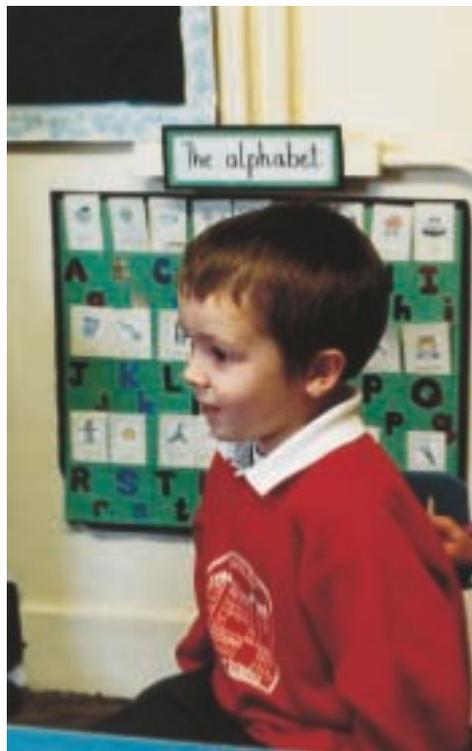
Dyslexia friendly classrooms should be:

- arranged so that during class lessons, the dyslexic child can sit near the front;
- adapted so that, wherever possible, dyslexic children sit alongside well motivated children or a 'study buddy' who they can ask to clarify instructions for them;
- organised so that there is little movement around the room which is kept as quiet as possible, as some dyslexic children find background noise and visual movement distracting;
- equipped with clearly marked and neatly arranged resources so that they can be found easily.

## **Dyslexia friendly methods that help primary school children learn to read and write**

- Recognising words forms a crucial part of learning to read. Irregular words need 'whole word' learning and there are a number of dyslexia friendly techniques that can be used to good effect. These include:
  - Flashcards which are linked in some way, for instance:
    - opposites like 'big' and 'little'
    - words that have the same beginning, like 'has', 'had', 'have'
    - words that have the same ending, like 'me', 'we', 'be' or 'he'
  - Presenting new words in small batches of no more than six at a time, preferably with similar structures
- Teach handwriting in very small groups or preferably one-to-one, using 'continuous cursive handwriting'. This technique is particularly useful because the child's pencil stays on the page throughout and so the motor-memory in their hand will help them memorise the order of the letters. Practise in sand and in the air.

- Use computers whenever possible to enhance specific aspects of teaching. Good software is available for all aspects of learning at primary school level and one of the many advantages is that children can receive one-to-one help for long periods of time. Many programmes are written with dyslexic children in mind. The BDA computer committee booklets are updated frequently.
- Check that children are keeping up, and not just sitting passively, during shared reading and writing times. One idea is to give dyslexic children the books or text to be used in shared reading the week before, so that they can practise.
- Help dyslexic children understand the text they are reading. Comprehension can be a continuing problem for dyslexic people of all ages. Dyslexic children may be able to read a passage but get no meaning from it at all. Constant reference to the meaning of what they are reading is essential and should be practised frequently. Tips include reading each word or sentence twice; reading aloud, thinking or explaining the meaning of words or sentences as they read them or picturing what they have just read at full stops or commas.



### How best to use white or blackboards

Copying from a white or blackboard – a distant vertical plane – to a piece of paper – a near horizontal plane – presents serious difficulties to almost all learners with a significant level of dyslexia. They find it difficult to reproduce words accurately and, worst of all, they cannot find their place on the board after they have looked down at their book.

**I always seem to miss out on things like Cubs and swimming badges because something I could do or remember the week before didn't stay in my mind when I needed it for the proper test.**

*Alistair*

The following tips may be helpful:

- Use the board for reminders, but not large pieces of work.
- If the board must be used, a photocopied transcript given to dyslexic pupils will give them a better chance of succeeding.
- Never keep a child back at break time to finish copying from the board.
- Writing should be large, clear and well paced.
- Allow plenty of time for children to read from the board.
- The board could be divided into sections using different colours to ease place finding.

### **‘Don’ts’ of which dyslexia friendly teachers should be aware:**

- Don’t shout at dyslexic children when they lose or forget things, miss the meaning of something or have a ‘bad day’. Would you get annoyed with a deaf child who could not hear you?
- Don’t expect the same quantity of written work as you do from other children.
- Don’t ever mock or laugh at a dyslexic child for showing signs of dyslexia – and don’t allow others to ridicule them or call them ‘thick’.
- Don’t expect dyslexic children to copy from the board.
- Don’t overload dyslexic children with instructions.
- Don’t ask them to read aloud unless they are comfortable with the idea.
- Don’t make sudden changes in their timetable, teacher or task.
- Don’t expect them to learn strings of facts by heart, e.g. multiplication tables.



## Tips for secondary school teachers

The transition from primary to secondary education is a worrying time for many 11 year-olds, but particularly for those who are dyslexic:

- They know it will take them longer than their peers to get used to a new routine.
- They may be embarrassed by their limited literacy and/or numeracy skills, poor memory and lack of organisation.
- They may also be worried that their new teachers and classmates will think they are stupid.

## Pointers to help in day to day teaching:

Regardless of the age of your students you may want to ask yourself the following questions:

- Is your teaching as multisensory as it could be?
- Are as many of the learner's senses as possible being stimulated?
- Are you interspersing 'listening' times with 'seeing and doing' activities?
- Is the learner using a variety of different learning methods, for example, speaking out loud, writing on cards or talking about a topic with a friend?
- Are you making the best use of the learner's strengths and learning styles?
- Are you making the most of the fact that the ridiculous/humorous is retained in the brain better than anything else?
- Are you encouraging the use of pocket notebooks and personal checklists (stuck to the learner's bedroom and/or classroom wall) to remind them of equipment needed for specific tasks, for example, playing netball?
- Do you display a large timetable in the classroom with illustrations showing the days they need to bring particular items?
- Are you making the best use of registration times to encourage self-organisation, such as ensuring that the learner has sharpened pencils and a pen that works?
- Are you labelling equipment to help with spelling and displaying key words in the classroom?
- Are your worksheets written simply, in large print with clear spacing?
- Do you hand out revision sheets with a time structure to follow?
- Do you remind the learner of the best methods of active revision, taking account of their individual learning styles?
- Do you ask yourself whether they are sitting next to the right person for maximum concentration? Will you allow the learner to move if necessary?
- Are you encouraging the child to wordprocess their work?

- Do you begin every lesson by outlining its content? Do you end with a summary of what has been covered?
- Has the school organised somewhere that children can go for help and advice as needed?
- Are the learners given short breaks in examinations if needed?

### **Techniques which help dyslexic learners play a full part in the classroom, for instance, by encouraging them to answer questions!**

Speed of processing can be a problem for dyslexic learners. As one young person expresses it:

“When the teacher is looking at me I can’t always get the answer out – even though I know it when I put my hand up.”

A helpful tip is to have a previously agreed signal, which tells the dyslexic learner that the question is theirs to answer, but not necessarily straight away.

The signal, which means ‘I will ask you for the answer in a minute’, could be eye contact or standing next to or in front of the pupil. During that time, you could look around the class, clean the whiteboard or talk about the question to give the dyslexic learner the opportunity to collect their thoughts. Give them the chance to nod or shake their head before you ask them to answer. An orderly classroom, in which shouting out is unacceptable behaviour, is clearly crucial to the success of this technique.

### **Special methods for giving instructions**

Speed of processing also affects a dyslexic learner’s ability to take in instructions. They say:

“I really do try to listen to the teacher, but I forget. When I ask for help I get shouted at for not paying attention.”

- Try teaching an active listening strategy to dyslexic pupils – “Stop, Look and Listen” every time the teacher speaks. By practising responding in this way dyslexic learners may find, that they recall and understand more. Remember however, that they will not be able to take notes at the same time as listening.
- Make certain the learner is listening before giving instructions. You may need to use the learner’s name so that they are focused.
- Don’t move around too much and make sure you have eye contact. Talk in close proximity to the learner to minimise distraction. Give one instruction at a time, until there is evidence they can deal with more.
- Consider whether the learner needs to be given an instruction verbally and in writing or whether a visual representation is helpful.
- Bear in mind that a weak short-term memory is usually accompanied by a reduced capacity for processing sentences. This may mean that complex instructions need to be broken down, with each part understood before the next is given. Keep sentences short and grammatically simple.
- Be prepared to repeat instructions and clarify them by changing or redefining words and terms.

**‘Learning how to learn’ and understanding how they learn best seems to be a key issue for dyslexic children. Get them to question their activities and required outcomes**

Discuss the following with the class and encourage children to ask themselves:

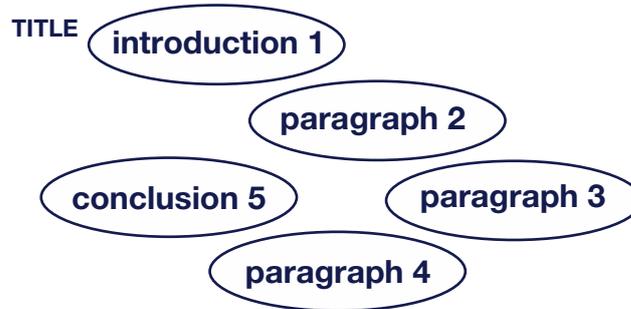
- Why am I doing this? – Purpose.
- What is the required end product? – Outcome.
- What strategy should be used? – Strategy.
- Was it successful? – Monitoring.
- How can it be improved? – Development.
- Can it be transferred to another skill? – Transfer.

**Methodologies include:**

**1 Think tank plan**



**2 Flow diagram**



**3 Linear plan**

	<b>TITLE</b>
1 Beginning	a) b) c)
2 Middle	a) b) c)
3 End	a) b) c)

**Secondary school pupils will obviously have to face more exams than younger children. The following are useful tips:**

Active revision is one tried and tested way to help children who have short-term memory difficulties associated with dyslexia:

**I learned...that many people can spell correctly, but not as many can write a good story.**

*Lynda La Plante, author and dramatist*

- Read the work – this is the visual channel.
  - read it aloud onto tape (someone else may need to do this) so it can be played back.
- Reduce it – this requires thinking skills.
  - highlight the key words and note the associated ideas – try Mindmapping® or drawing a diagram
  - invent mnemonics, rhymes, acronyms or word associations – use coloured pens or arrows to link ideas
  - list key facts and number them.
- Write it – this is the kinaesthetic channel.
  - writing down the main points helps commit them to memory. If a week later the notes are not sufficient to enable the pupil to remember all the facts then they need to go back to the text.
  - when good enough notes can be transferred to large sheets of paper and hung on bedroom walls.
- Say it – this is the auditory channel.
  - reading notes aloud helps to reinforce memory.
- Check it – again, this is using the thinking channel.
- Teach someone else.
- Encourage pupils to write a summary at the end of each topic throughout the year. This provides ready made revision material.
- Practise exam techniques, for example accurate reading of questions and planning answers. Dyslexic pupils will always tend to read more slowly than their non-dyslexic peers of equal ability and be more prone to misreading, especially under stress. They will usually qualify for extra time in public examinations, but only if such access arrangements have been made prior to the examination.

### **‘Don’ts’ to be aware of:**

- Don’t overload the learner, either with too many oral instructions or demanding too much written work.
- Don’t ever ridicule errors – very easy to do, even unintentionally – “Not you again ....”
- Don’t make the learner completely rewrite their work.
- Don’t ignore the signs that the learner is not understanding or losing concentration.
- Don’t make the learner work for too long without a break.
- Don’t make the learner copy from the blackboard.
- Don’t always expect an immediate answer.
- Don’t be afraid to use ‘tough love’ – in other words, if you know the learner can do better, don’t allow them to get away with a poor standard of work whereby they let themselves down. Talk through the task so they understand how to start again.

## Dyslexia friendly and whole school effectiveness? Where is the evidence?

LEAs with well established schemes for identifying, monitoring and rewarding their own dyslexia friendly schools are beginning to identify success indicators, as is OFSTED and ESTYN. Although dyslexia friendly measures are aimed initially at a notional 10% of pupils in a school, the potential benefit is for improvements in whole school effectiveness.

LEAs are beginning to report improvements in key indicators of effectiveness such as:

- attendance;
- performance at SATs, GCSE and A Level;
- pupil confidence, self esteem and behaviour;
- parental confidence;
- teacher confidence following whole school training;
- use of in-class support;
- primary-secondary liaison and transfer arrangements

LEAs are also beginning to report reductions in:

- exclusions;
- tribunals;
- appeals;
- numbers of IEPs as more needs are met in class

Working alongside the BDA Education Office, parents, governors and local dyslexia associations, a comprehensive development group of 12 LEAs have made significant contributions to developing the BDA Quality Mark.

## Swansea – five years on

The City and County of Swansea has been actively pursuing dyslexia friendly education since 1997 (see Achieving Dyslexia Friendly Schools Information Pack, 4th Edition). Dyslexia friendly practice is widespread throughout Swansea's schools. In 2004, many schools took the initiative even further by incorporating exemplary dyslexia friendly practice within their whole school development plan. They also linked it in with other inclusive approaches including promoting positive behaviour, accelerated learning, brain gym and peer mentoring. Action research projects in a range of schools include:

- accrediting all staff to support dyslexia;
- learning styles;
- peer mediation;
- spelling approaches;
- subject guidelines for Key Stage 3 + 4.

## “Listen to us: Some teachers are easy to learn from – others are not”

Working independently, and with startlingly similar conclusions, South Cumbria Dyslexia Association and Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) surveyed dyslexic pupils about how teachers made learning easy or difficult.

**Dyslexics do have many hurdles to overcome and we do need practical strategies.**

*Lord Richard Rogers, architect*

## Teachers who are easy to learn from – what do they do?

The following are drawn directly from comments made by pupils:

### Primary

- At the start of the lesson, they are clear about what they want us to do.
- Show us as well as tell us.
- Give us time to listen.
- Use pictures and structural material – these make it easier to understand.
- Show enthusiasm for the subject.
- Let us ask questions – check that we are doing it right.
- Help when we get stuck .
- Are patient with our mistakes and when we need help.
- Are nice to us – please do not shout when we get it wrong.
- Create a peaceful environment in the classroom.

### Secondary

- Understand us and spend time helping us.
- Prepared to repeat instructions.
- Happy to answer questions.
- Proactively check we are doing it right.
- Explain, check that we understand – if not, explain with pictures.
- Write things down clearly – preferably on a white board.
- Teach the basic information “without rambling on about other things”.
- Smile when we ask for help – explain it again and do at least two examples with us.

Both primary and secondary pupils seem to place more importance on a teacher’s personal characteristics than on the provision of support materials. However the importance of quality support materials also mentioned by both groups. In particular they appreciate it when teachers:

- use a white board;
- number lines at both ends – different coloured lines can be helpful;
- leave instructions/spellings etc on the board for a long time;
- prepare individual crib sheets to minimize copying from the board;
- put homework instructions on tape;
- accept and encourage work to be presented in different forms – tape, web cam, oral responses etc “You choose the best way to show me what you know for this task”.

“Pupils with dyslexia need teachers who are clear and concise, pleasant with their classes and prepared to recognise that not everyone understands the first time.” (Johnson, Manchester Metropolitan University).

## Teachers who are difficult to learn from – what do they do?

### Primary

- Give too many instructions, too fast.
- Don’t check that we have understood.
- Get angry when we haven’t understood.
- Don’t encourage us or allow us to ask questions.
- Rush us – tell us off if we don’t get enough done.
- Don’t let us think for long enough before we have to start.
- Shout – it makes it hard to think.

Also they:

- show us up in front of the rest of the class – by asking for test scores out loud etc;
- put writing on the board that we can't read;
- stand in front of it so we can't see it;
- rub it off before we can copy it down

## Secondary

- Overemphasis on grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Too much writing.
- Dictation.
- Too much reading.
- Having to remember facts or formulae.
- Don't give us enough time.
- Make us copy from the board or overhead project.
- Talk too much – and too fast.
- Put us down in front of the class.
- Shout.
- Unwilling to explain.

## Subject based issues

Primary pupils reported English, Maths and Science to be the most difficult due to problems relating to literacy; specifically writing, spelling and reading, in that order.

Secondary pupils reported English to be the most difficult subject, followed by Maths, Modern Foreign Languages, Science and Humanities. The survey carried out by Manchester Metropolitan University observed that “the reasons given related to curriculum delivery rather than content or process”.

## Some of the worst things about school life

### Primary

- Feeling stupid – “you ask for spellings all the time and the teacher writes them on the board which makes the rest of the class think how stupid I am”.
- Feeling different – “I am never picked to do cool things because I can't read or remember things like everyone else”.
- Not knowing as much as others.
- Working slowly.

### Secondary

- Not being able to read, write or spell easily.
- Being different.
- Not being understood – confusing “dyslexic” with “stupid”.
- Work takes ages to complete.
- Being expected to produce the same amount of work as non-dyslexic pupils in a given time.
- Too much copying off the board and/or dictated notes.
- Bullying.
- Being embarrassed to keep asking for help.
- Being made to read out loud.

**But after 100 years, it is time too to look not only at the difficulties, but at the abilities and the potential that many dyslexic people have.**

*Lord Richard Rogers*

- Having test results read out loud.
- Going to the special needs group.
- People explain things to you as if you are stupid.
- Teachers saying “Children like you .....”.
- Being patronised.
- Being told off when asking a friend for help.
- Being followed around by a teaching assistant.

### **If you could tell all teachers something?**

- Explain better in the first place.
- Check that we have understood.
- Give us more time.
- Talk plainly, clearly and to the child.
- Watch over our shoulders every so often and write spellings in the margin for us.
- Concentrate on what we are saying – give us your full attention for that moment.
- Explain as many times as we need– at least twice the same way before trying a different approach.
- Give handouts with summaries of work.
- Mark work tidily, in dark colours – make clear, helpful comments.
- Find things to praise in your marking.
- Grade us on our improvement.
- Judge work on content, not spelling.

### **Also**

- Please don't shout.
- Be patient – “don't get in a stress when we get something wrong”.
- Give us time to finish.

### **What do good teachers do? A dyslexic pupil sums it up**

“They notice when you are having problems and they don't dismiss you by ignoring you and your questions. When I am stuck I know I can put my hand up and not get shouted at for not listening. The teacher smiles at me and then explains again, doing at least two examples with me.”

The final word comes, once again, from Mike Johnson who worked on the MMU study:

“Overall, it is clear that these pupils have no difficulty recognising the learning environment in which they can succeed. It is interesting that the underlying theme is the emotional climate in the classroom rather than any specific techniques or special methodology. They want calmness and security, the feeling that teachers might actually like them and are enthusiastic about their subject, quiet recognition of their difference and the provision of two key structures, differentiation and support.

This all builds up to a picture that suggests enhancing the achievements of pupils with dyslexia does not make unreasonable demands on teachers at either primary or secondary phases of education, it is the way they go about teachers go about teaching and organising classrooms that are seen as either facilitating or frustrating. The key comes in understanding how each pupil thinks and feels.”

## The challenge for the LEA and BDA partnership

### Promoting inclusion through dyslexia friendly LEAs and schools

#### Mission Statement

The aim of the Dyslexia Friendly LEAs Initiative and the associated BDA Quality Mark is to promote excellent practice by the LEA as it carries out its role of supporting and challenging its schools to improve accessibility to learning to more children.

The aim of the BDA Quality Marking Initiative is to identify, promote and celebrate excellent practice by LEAs as they carry out their role of supporting and challenging schools to improve access to learning for more children.

It is acknowledged that excellent practice is already in place in a number of LEAs. The BDA wishes to acknowledge and recognise the efforts already made on behalf of dyslexic learners. The excellent practice of schools is also acknowledged and recognised. The challenge is to support LEAs and schools to “level up” to the standard of the best.

A number of LEAs have already developed well established and successful procedures for promoting, recognising and celebrating the achievements of their dyslexia friendly schools. Part of the role of the BDA has been to:

- identify excellent practice already taking place in LEAs across the UK;
- accept the challenge of ensuring that dyslexia friendly schools meet certain core ideals and standards across the range of participating LEAs.

Key to this process is the principle that, with appropriate guidance and support, LEAs can subsume the identification and support of schools aspiring to dyslexia friendly status within their standard procedures for the evaluation and monitoring of school effectiveness. This is an important principle since it offers LEAs the flexibility to use best local practice to deliver, without being forced necessarily to conform to additional regulations and documentation. It also allows LEAs the freedom to include additional requirements to meet local priorities – in other words, providing there is clear evidence that the core values are addressed, the initiative is responsive to, and can be driven by, local needs and requirements.

Another cornerstone of the initiative recognises the ability of LEAs to “self-audit” their schools as they work towards the Quality Mark. To support this work, a peer verification process has been established to monitor and maintain quality control and to support participating LEAs as they support their schools. A verification visit will establish that standards have been met, permitting the LEA to use the BDA Quality Mark logo and to refer to themselves as a BDA Quality Marked LEA

The independent good practice has been subsumed within a standards document, entitled “The Dyslexia Friendly Standards” for LEAs’ performance measures. These standards establish the core evidence required for an LEA to be recognised by the BDA, and some examples of the Standards are included in this pack.

**I left school at 15 years-old, barely able to read and write. I spent the next 18 years in and out of prison, sleeping rough and begging.**

*Bob Turney, writer and probation officer*

## The challenge for the LEA/School Partnership

During the BDA's work with LEAs who had already established dyslexia friendly schools, it became clear that the schools shared certain core values. It was especially noted that they recognised the process was best driven at a senior management level both within schools and LEAs. In particular there was acknowledgment of two important principles:

- 1 Because of the implications for whole school policy and practice, the process of becoming a dyslexia friendly school goes far beyond the traditional remit of the SENCo unless, of course, the SENCo is already part of a school's senior management team.
- 2 Without the proactive support of the senior management team, guided by the LEA, to actively intervene in the fine tuning of policy and practice, a school is unlikely to make progress towards dyslexia friendly good practice.

What became evident is that dyslexia friendly good practice is, in fact, good practice for all. Therefore any classroom based intervention made on behalf of dyslexic learners has the potential to enhance the learning of a majority of pupils especially as it enshrines the notion of responding to learning differences by changes in teaching. Therefore dyslexia friendly good practice is seen as being at the core of school based responses to inclusion, differentiation, value added and general effectiveness.



**Then a teacher told me that he thought I might be dyslexic. I did not really believe it, my thinking was so entrenched on the lines that I was a complete idiot, just a waste of space.**

*Bob Turney*

## **The BDA Quality Mark Initiative for LEAs: The Dyslexia Friendly Standards**

Below are a sample of the types of Standards that LEAs must meet in order to be awarded the BDA Quality Mark.

### **Standard 1: Leadership and management**

Evidence that:

- policies on inclusive education and dyslexia have been developed following wide consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including parents/carers and effectively communicated to those stakeholders;
- the stipulated definition of dyslexia is accepted and promoted;
- the LEA Education Development Plan contains targets related to dyslexia within inclusive provision;
- regular monitoring is in place which shows progress towards targets;
- the dyslexia friendly scheme is led and managed by an LEA officer with dyslexia knowledge and experience.

The full section contains 11 Standards.

### **Standard 2: Teaching and learning**

Evidence that the LEA is supporting school improvement with regard to dyslexic learners by:

- identifying good practice through monitoring and dissemination of knowledge;
- the production of guidance to include information on identification and assessment;
- the updating and dissemination of dyslexia friendly guidance to enable schools to develop evidence based and effective intervention strategies;
- requiring that the Primary Strategy and Key Stage 3 Strategy Teams work closely with SEN support teams;
- providing schools with criteria for the achievement of dyslexia friendly status (based on BDA Exemplar Standards);
- creating a mechanism for a support/monitoring process leading to the award and renewal of the BDA Quality Mark.

The full section contains 9 Standards.;

**Today, I have completed a degree in social work, published my first book, am working on a second and have started a career as a probation officer.**

*Bob Turney*

### **Standard 3: Classroom environment**

Evidence of LEA supporting and challenging schools to:

- develop self review of classroom environment and the adequate deployment of resources;
- show a culture and ethos that is able to respond flexibly to the needs of dyslexic learners within the whole school environment.

The full section contains 4 Standards.

### **Standard 4: Partnership and liaison with parents, carers, governors and other concerned parties**

Evidence that:

- parents are aware of, and have confidence in, arrangements to meet the special educational needs of their children;
- schools have a process in place for:
  - notifying parents of concerns at an early stage;
  - actively listening to the concerns of parents;
- the LEA monitors graduated response and consultation meetings in schools.

**I have been able to overcome my disability and manage it in a positive way. I have been able to fulfill my... potential which has allowed me to lead a happy life, instead of remaining 'that idiot boy'.**

*Bob Turney*

The ideas and challenges launched by the BDA's original "Achieving Dyslexia Friendly Schools Information Pack" struck a chord across the UK and beyond. Teachers began to realise that the fine tuning needed to make schools dyslexia friendly has the potential to improve the learning of all pupils. Now, with the active and enthusiastic support of their LEAs, more and more schools are aspiring to become dyslexia friendly.

Becoming a dyslexia friendly school requires a review of the implementation of major whole school policies, especially teaching and learning, monitoring and assessment, differentiation and inclusion. The issue then becomes one of how these policies are monitored, evaluated and reviewed to ensure top quality learning right across the range of ability and need.

We have included below some examples of criteria which fall into four areas and are designed to be a balance of validating existing good practice.

- Leadership and Management. \*
- Teaching and Learning.
- \* The Classroom Environment.
- Partnership and Liaison with Parents, Carers, Governors and other Concerned Parties.

Individual LEAs are responsible for working with their schools to ensure they become dyslexia friendly.

The full set of exemplar criteria is available to LEAs who are involved in the BDA Quality Mark scheme.

## **Standard 1: Leadership and management in the school (whole school approach)**

- 1 The School Development (Improvement) Plan (SDP/SIP) includes targets for focusing, developing, establishing and enhancing Dyslexia Friendly Status. It also shows how this will be monitored and evaluated.
- 2 Guidelines for meeting the needs of pupils with dyslexia are contained within other whole school key policy documents. For example:
  - SEN, differentiation and inclusion;
  - assessment and monitoring;
  - partnerships with parents;
- 3 All staff are proactive in promoting dyslexia friendly practice to meet the needs of pupils with dyslexia (as revealed in their planning documentation).
- 4 School governors and parents are involved in the process and participate in ongoing training.
- 5 A plan for ongoing continuing professional development (CPD) is either in place or in the process of being put in place. For example:
  - whole school awareness training (including governors);
  - learning support assistants are being trained and have ongoing support;
  - courses leading to an award – one teacher with a Diploma and OCR level 5 certificate where possible per school or cluster of schools. Alternatively, access to such expertise within the LEA;

**My first memory of school is of fear. I spent all my time hiding my difficulties as I did not want the teacher to notice me and I became an expert at it.**

*Mike*

- specialist qualifications to enable teachers to assess for examination concessions for national tests and public examinations;
- 6 Induction procedures for new staff (and supply staff) make explicit reference to expectations relating to Dyslexia Friendly Status.
  - 7 Resources are allocated to ensure effective implementation of the Initiative, linking targeted resources to measurable outcomes.
  - 8 The school recognises the need for pastoral support for pupils with dyslexia.

## **Standard 2: Teaching and learning**

### 1 Underpinning knowledge:

- Class and subject teachers and key colleagues (e.g. SENCo who has dyslexia expertise gained through appropriate training) know the indicators of dyslexia and strategies for support and how to access available sources of information.
- Training to be updated through CPD.
- Learning support assistants are valued members of the teaching team and apply support strategies for pupils with dyslexia. They are supported by the class teacher and SENCo and know when to refer back for extra support or different strategies.
- Pupils are taught about the nature of their difficulty where appropriate, including areas of strength and preferred learning styles and teachers are aware of the suitability of their teaching styles.

### 2 Assessment and identification.

- Systems and assessments are in place to identify pupils with literacy difficulties throughout their education.
- There is regular monitoring of the whole class to assess the progress in reading and spelling to reveal unexpected difficulties. Adjustments are made where necessary. Attainment in other curriculum areas is similarly monitored.

### 3 Programmes of learning.

- Appropriate, evidence-based Wave 3 intervention programmes are implemented. There should be clear evidence that suitable learning challenges are set.
- Pen portraits of all pupils with SpLD include individual teaching and learning strategies and are available to all staff including supply teachers.
- Pupils work in a variety of groupings (including opportunities to work in mixed ability groups) as well as working with an adult in groups. Care is taken to ensure that pupils' cognitive ability is taken into account in any setting or streaming system so that teaching presents dyslexic pupils with an appropriate level of cognitive challenge. Diverse learning needs are met and potential barriers to achievement are overcome.

**I always had a reason why my homework was not done or why I was on the wrong page. I eventually left school with no confidence and a GCSE in woodwork.**

*Mike*

These include:

**Whole class:**

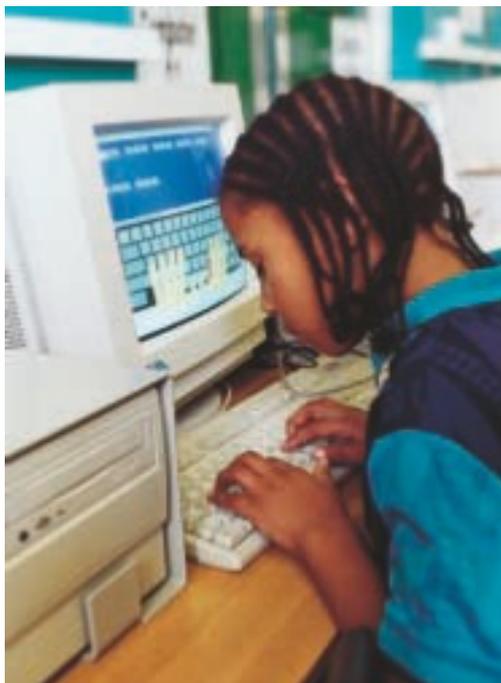
- Multisensory teaching and learning opportunities (e.g. Mind Mapping®). These lessons should be scheduled with adequate frequency that reflects the IEP.
- There is provision for one to one and small group teaching and specialist support which is dictated by need (Wave 3).

**Homework:**

- Provided on separate sheets, scribed into homework diaries or recorded on a dictaphone and discussed with parents as required.

**Other:**

- A marking and assessment policy ensures pupils are assessed on the basis on their knowledge (rather than poor spelling). Marking should be for success and identifying development and improvement points.
- Pupils are encouraged to develop 'life skills', such as problem solving, decision making, stress management, communication and emotional literacy.
- Expertise is in place to manage reasonable examination adjustments (formerly known as special arrangements) for school tests, national tests and public examinations. Provision is made in good time and throughout the school career so that pupils are taught how to use the time and any resources appropriately.



**Standard 3: Classroom environment (curriculum and learning environment)**

Implementation of access strategies and dyslexia friendly teaching strategies and support is evidenced across all curriculum subjects. Evidence of adapted classroom organisation is found and attention is paid to adaptive practices, such as:

- Seating, lighting and the position of resources.

**I found out I was dyslexic after I was made redundant.  
I have found that I can learn, if the teaching is done in a way  
that I can use the information. I am starting an MA, having got  
a 2.1 in my first degree.**

*Mike*

- Information on non white paper (e.g. cream) where relevant with an accessible font and layout.
- Alternatives to copying from the board.
- ICT is used to support pupils learning. Computer screens and text size is adjusted where appropriate.
- There is an audit of resources available within school for supporting pupils with dyslexia and SpLD. For example:
  - magnetic letters;
  - literacy games;
  - 'goody box' of resources (word mats, coloured filters/overlays, alphabet on the wall etc).
- Self esteem is promoted through valuing the individual, praising their efforts and achievement, promoting strengths and providing a stress free learning environment
- Effective measures are in place to deal with harassment or bullying related to SEN.

## **Standard 4: Partnership and liaison with parents, carers, governors and other concerned parties**

### **Partnerships with parents**

- Provide evidence to show the following:
- Effective communication is in place for parents to understand dyslexia and the basis on which the dyslexia friendly school teaches and supports their child. This should include reference to the Code of Practice.
- Promoting ongoing working partnerships with parents which contribute to effective learning at home and school. Parents should be encouraged to express concerns as they occur and schools should ensure that parents know to whom to address them.
- A complaints procedure is in place and parents should be familiar with how it works.
- Parents are informed of where they can go for help e.g. local dyslexia association or support groups.

### **Working in partnership with pupils.**

- Help pupils to understand their dyslexia and value their achievements and help them with emotional and behavioural issues.
- Involve pupils in IEP planning and identifying and implementing their own learning strategies. Include pupils' interests, strengths and weaknesses.
- Promote the pupil advocacy service, mentors and counsellors where appropriate.
- Promote a "can do" culture.
- Raise an awareness of dyslexia and SEN amongst peers. Remove the stigma and provide positive role models for all pupils.

**I can take on information and express ideas in flowcharts and mind maps. Colour is also very helpful when the flow of ideas change or new topics arise.**

*Mike*

## Changes in Legislation

### Code of Practice 2001

Dyslexia is to be found in para 7:58 in an area of need headed 'Cognition and Learning'. If a dyslexic child has needs that cannot adequately be met, there may be a requirement for the protection of a Statement of Educational Need. Their procedures are a matter of law. The statement should clearly specify the provision necessary to meet each identified need (para 8:36/7). Provision should normally be quantified (e.g. in terms of hours of provision, staffing arrangements etc.) although there will be cases where some flexibility should be retained in order to meet the changing needs of the child concerned. It is now officially recognised that pupils should be deeply involved in any plans made for them, whether or not these are set in IEPs.

The difference in approach between the new and old Codes emerges in the sections describing desirable practice in early years, primary and secondary provision. The old five stages of assessment have been transformed into three action steps within a graduated approach:

- School Action;
- School Action Plus;
- the Statement.

Stage 1 and Stage 4 of the 1994 Code of Practice have no equivalent in this new Code. The disappearance of Stage 1 is highly significant. This was the initial monitoring stage in which an individual was logged as a cause of concern. The change reflects the requirement for 'normal' teaching to cater for a wide range of learners. The highlight has shifted from 'difference' in the classroom to the 'ordinary'; difference is something that all teachers must value and with which they are required to work. This implies that schools promote an understanding of, and responsibility for, inclusion amongst its entire staff.

In another new development, the Code is explicit about the strands of 'differentiation', matching provision to needs. It expects teachers to consider in their classrooms:

- assessment, planning and review;
- grouping for teaching purposes;
- additional human resources;
- curriculum and teaching methods.

We can see these in terms of the balance sought by two sections of the Inclusion Statement of the National Curriculum:

### National Curriculum Inclusion Statement

#### Responding to pupils' diverse learning needs

Teachers should take action to respond to pupils' diverse needs by:

- creating effective learning environments;
- securing their motivation and concentration;
- providing equality of opportunity through teaching approaches;
- using appropriate assessment approaches;
- setting targets for learning

## **Overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment**

Teachers must ..... make provision, where necessary, to support individuals or groups of pupils to enable them to participate effectively in the curriculum and assessment activities. During the end of key stage assessments, teachers should bear in mind that access arrangements are available to support individual pupils. As a result, OFSTED teams will now be looking at the whole of a school's planning system when inspecting for inclusion in relation to SEN; they will not just check IEPs.

Annex A at the back of the Code contains Statutory Instrument 2218. This tells LEAs that they must make clear, in relation to those with SEN without a statement, what they expect the school to provide and what they expect to provide themselves. This is an important development and should result in much clearer expectations for schools, LEAs and users of the system.

## **The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001**

Whilst strengthening the inclusion agenda, the Act attempts to:

- improve the procedures for assessing and meeting a child's needs;
- give greater powers to the Special Educational Needs Tribunal;
- place a duty upon the LEAs to provide and advertise both a parent partnership scheme and conciliation arrangements;
- inform parents when any SEN provision is made for their child.

It is now unlawful for state and private schools to treat disabled children less favourably because of their disabilities. The Special Educational Needs Tribunal has now extended powers to hear appeals relating to disability and is known as the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal. OFSTED/ESTYN will also be monitoring schools to ensure that they are meeting the requirements of the Act.

## **Parent Partnership Service (PPS)**

LEAs are now required to set them up on a statutory basis. There is no national standard of a PPS. The aim is to provide a range of services for parents whose children have SEN, in order to empower them play an active and informed role in their child's education. This includes access to an Independent Parental Supporter for those parents who want one.

## **References**

1. DfES (2001) Special Educational Needs Code of Practice DfES Publications.
2. DfE (1994) Code of Practice on the identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs Department for Education.
3. QCA/DfEE (1999) The National Curriculum Handbook for primary/secondary teachers in England: The Inclusion Statement London: HMSO.
4. QCA/DfEE (2001) Planning, Teaching and Assessing the Curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties. London: QCA

## Further Help

1. Some of the information in this Resource Pack is taken from “Removing Dyslexia as a barrier to achievement – The Dyslexia Friendly Schools Toolkit” by Neil MacKay and published by SEN Marketing.
2. British Dyslexia Association – [www.bdadyslexia.org.uk](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk).
3. Department for Education and Skills – [www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk)
4. The DfES Standards Site – [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk).
5. Link with National Numeracy Strategy resources – [www.wave3.net](http://www.wave3.net).
6. Resources Discovery Network for information on special education and government publications. Resource links to SEN sites – [www.sosig.ac.uk](http://www.sosig.ac.uk).
7. Dyslexia Institute – [www.dyslexia-inst.org.uk](http://www.dyslexia-inst.org.uk).
8. Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre – [www.arkellcentre.org.uk](http://www.arkellcentre.org.uk).
9. Dyslexia Research Trust. Information on research, particularly vision, genetics and nutrition – [www.dyslexic.org.uk](http://www.dyslexic.org.uk).
10. European Dyslexia Association – [edasecretary@axelero.hu](mailto:edasecretary@axelero.hu)
11. International Dyslexia Association – [www.interdys.org](http://www.interdys.org).
12. Listening Books (The National Listening Library) – [www.listening-books.org.uk](http://www.listening-books.org.uk).
13. The Psychology of Education. General information about dyslexia, links to other sites, spelling information and readability check for texts – [www.psych-ed.org](http://www.psych-ed.org).
14. PATOSS (Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties) – [www.patoss-dyslexia.org](http://www.patoss-dyslexia.org).
15. Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists – [www.rcslt.org](http://www.rcslt.org).

## Specific learning difficulty

Jon Adams

Specific learning difficulty  
 copy these words off the board  
 just repeat after me  
 specific learning difficulty  
*separate me from this learnt incompetence*

specific learning difficulty  
 no! don't do it like that its your stupidity  
 that same word again wrong deliberately  
 specific learning difficulty  
*isolate me from all teacher indifference*

specific learning difficulty  
 no your getting it wrong this is really insane  
 just write it again and again and again  
 specific learning difficulty  
*withdraw me from your rote religiousness*

specific learning difficulty  
 your just wrong again cant you see what I'm saying  
 why do you sit there like that in your permanent daydream  
 specific learning difficulty

*please celebrate my creative ability  
 as I see more than you will ever know  
 feeling times smooth surface arc and flow  
 touching with hands of remembered imagination  
 walking neural paths with memory visualisation my  
 specific learning difference*

## Dislexser

I was born with it  
But because of it  
I got hit for it  
I cried about it Fought  
because of it Tried to  
get rid of it Albert  
Einstein had it Sulked  
about it  
Called names because of it I  
didn't like it  
Mum had enough of me because of it  
Couldn't be bothered to live with it Do  
we really have to have it?  
Mum thought I was lazy because of it  
I thought I was crazy because of it  
Punched walls because of it  
Got in trouble over it  
Disrupted class because of it Walked  
out, away from it Embarrassed  
because of it  
I'm ashamed of it  
I swore at teachers because of it Just  
have to live with it

## John Rogers and Lea Bourne



**I wouldn't exchange being a positive dyslexic or my "specific learning difference". Without it there would be no "words" for me to share.**

*Jon Adams, artist and poet*