



Dyslexia Scotland

Dyslexia: Information for Guidance and Behaviour Support Teachers



No 1.8 in the series of
Supporting Dyslexic Pupils In the Secondary Curriculum
by Moira Thomson

Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit

Dyslexia Scotland's Dyslexia Assessment Working Group, chaired by Dr. Margaret Crombie, developed the online toolkit for teachers and early years workers to use to assess literacy difficulties and dyslexia.

The toolkit, funded by the Scottish Government was formally launched by our President, Sir Jackie Stewart, and Mike Russell, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning on 1 June 2010. Following additional funding awarded by the Scottish Government in November 2011, the Working Group extended the Toolkit to help teachers to support pupils with dyslexia.

The extended Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit was launched on **19 September 2012** at the Scottish Learning Festival by Dr. Alasdair Allan, and is now online at:
www.addressingdyslexia.org

The Toolkit provides a resource for all who are involved in the identification and support of learners who are exhibiting literacy difficulties. The resource provides guidance through the steps from initially identifying some early signs of difficulty in literacy development, putting in appropriate teaching and support, evaluating that support, and where appropriate, considering whether the term dyslexia is appropriate. The priority throughout is to ensure that through the process of identifying needs, the teaching and support given is appropriate to the identified needs, whatever these may be.

SUPPORTING PUPILS WITH DYSLEXIA IN THE SECONDARY CURRICULUM

DYSLEXIA: INFORMATION FOR GUIDANCE AND BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT TEACHERS

by Moira Thomson

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Dyslexia Scotland 2nd
floor - East Suite Wallace
House 17-21 Maxwell
Place Stirling FK8 1JU

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Supporting Pupils with Dyslexia in the Secondary Curriculum

by Moira Thomson

Complete set comprises 20 booklets

Foreword by Dr. Gavin Reid,

a consultant to the Centre for Child Evaluation and Teaching (CCET) based in Kuwait. He is also educational psychologist to REACH Learning Center in North Vancouver, Canada and a director and consultant to the Red Rose School for children with specific learning difficulties in St. Annes on Sea, Lancashire. He was a senior lecturer in the Department of Educational Studies, Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh from 1991-2007. Dr Reid has made over 600 conference and seminar presentations in more than 45 countries and has authored, co-authored and edited 21 books for teachers and parents.

1.0 Dyslexia: Secondary Teachers' Guides

- 1.1. Identification and Assessment of Dyslexia at Secondary School
- 1.2. Dyslexia and the Underpinning Skills for the Secondary Curriculum
- 1.3. Classroom Management of Dyslexia at Secondary School
- 1.4. Information for the Secondary Support for Learning Team
- 1.5. Supporting Parents of Secondary School Pupils with Dyslexia
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Booklets may be viewed online at www.supportingdyslexicpupils.org.uk/

Members of Dyslexia Scotland may download all booklets free of charge from the Dyslexia Scotland website. For details contact Dyslexia Scotland, 2nd floor - East Suite, Wallace House, 17-21 Maxwell Place, Stirling, FK8 1JU or www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk

Email: info@supportingdyslexicpupils.org.uk

To off *my pupils with dyslexia, who taught me what dyslexia really is*

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Dyslexia Scotland is the voluntary organisation representing the needs and interests of dyslexic people in Scotland.

Mission Statement

To encourage and enable dyslexic people, regardless of their age and abilities, to reach their potential in education, employment and life.

Dyslexia Helpline: 0844 800 84 84 - Monday to Friday from 10am until 4pm.

Email: helpline@dyslexiascotland.org.uk

Dyslexia Scotland, 2nd floor - East Suite, Wallace House, 17-21 Maxwell Place
Stirling, FK8 1JU
www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk

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FOREWORD

It is a privilege to be asked to write a foreword for this series of guides on dyslexia in the secondary school. Moira Thomson is to be congratulated in putting together these informative and up to date guides that will both heighten the awareness of dyslexia in secondary schools and develop the knowledge and skills of teachers through the implementation of the suggestions made in the guides. Too often books and materials on dyslexia are cornered by a few, usually those who have a prior interest in the subject. Many feel it is not their concern, or they do not have the specialised experience to intervene. These guides will challenge and change that assumption. The guides are for all teachers - they contain information that will be directly relevant and directly impact on the practice of every teacher in every secondary school in the country. Not only that, the guides are up to date containing advice stemming from the most recent legislation (Education (Scotland) Acts 2004 & 2009: Additional Support for Learning). This makes the guides an essential resource in every school in the country.

Above all the guides provide a positive message. Dyslexia is couched in terminology that expresses what learners with dyslexia **can** do not what they 'can't do'. Any difficulties experienced by learners with dyslexia are seen as 'barriers to learning' which means that the onus is on supporting learners overcome these barriers and this places the responsibility firmly on the professionals working in schools. This reiterates the view that dealing with dyslexia is a whole school responsibility.

The breadth of coverage in these guides is colossal. It is highly commendable that Moira Thomson has met this immense task with true professionalism in providing clearly written and relevant guides incorporating the breadth of the curriculum. As well as including all secondary school subjects the guides also provide information on the crucial aspects of supporting students preparing for examinations, the use of information and communication technology, information for parents, details of the assessment process and the skills that underpin learning. It is important to consider the view that learners with dyslexia are first and foremost learners and therefore it is important that their learning skills are developed fully. It is too easy to place the emphasis on developing literacy skills at the expense other important aspects of learning. The guides will reinforce this crucial point that the learning skills of all students with dyslexia can be developed to a high level. I am particularly impressed with the inclusion of a section on classroom management and a whole booklet covering behavioural issues. This again reinforces the point that managing dyslexia is a classroom concern and a learning and curriculum-focused perspective needs to be adopted. A focus on curriculum planning and acknowledging learning styles is essential if learners are to reach their potential in secondary schools.

The guides do more than provide information on dyslexia; rather they are a staff development resource and one that can enlighten and educate all teachers in secondary schools. I feel certain they will be warmly appreciated and used for that purpose. The guides will benefit school management as well as teachers and parents, but the real winners will be the **students** with dyslexia. It is they who will ultimately benefit and the guides will help them fulfil their potential and make learning a positive and successful school experience for all.

Dr. Gavin Reid,
Vancouver July
2011

Working Definition of Dyslexia (Scottish Government, January 2009)

www.scotland.gov.uk/Aopics/Education/Schools/welfare/ASL/dyslexia

The following working definition of dyslexia has been developed by the Scottish Government, Dyslexia Scotland and the Cross Party Group on Dyslexia in the Scottish Parliament. This is one of many definitions available. The aim of this particular working definition is to provide a description of the range of indicators and characteristics of dyslexia as helpful guidance for educational practitioners, pupils, parents/carers and others. This definition does not have any statutory basis.

Dyslexia can be described as a continuum of difficulties in learning to read, write and/or spell, which persist despite the provision of appropriate learning opportunities. These difficulties often do not reflect on individual's cognitive abilities and may not be typical of performance in other areas.'

The impact of dyslexia as a barrier to learning varies in degree according to the learning and teaching environment, as there are often associated difficulties such as:

- *auditory and /or visual processing of language-based information*
- *phonological awareness*
- *oral language skills and reading fluency*
- *short-term and working memory*
- *sequencing and directionality*
- *number skills*
- *organisational ability*

Motor skills and coordination may also be affected.

Dyslexia exists in all cultures and across the range of abilities and socio-economic backgrounds. It is a hereditary, life-long, neuro-developmental condition. Unidentified, dyslexia is likely to result in low self esteem, high stress, atypical behaviour, and low achievement.

Learners with dyslexia will benefit from early identification, appropriate intervention and targeted effective teaching, enabling them to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

¹ Education Scotland

www.educationscotland.gov.uk/supportinglearners/additionalneeds/dyslexia/index.asp

Dyslexia may result in difficulties with processing language-based information -either auditory or visual processing difficulties, or both.

These processing difficulties often manifest as behavioural issues, especially in teenagers.

At least one person in ten is thought to be dyslexic to some degree and the learning of 4% could be severely affected by their dyslexia. Some people think that there are more males than females with dyslexia, but it is probable that many girls are not identified as dyslexic at school because they can compensate better than boys of the same age due to differences in the way they process language. It is also claimed that young girls exhibit less attention-seeking behaviour than boys so any dyslexia is less likely to be identified in school.

It is important that secondary teachers consider dyslexia in the context of the subject curriculum. In all subject classes there will be a need for teachers to make provision to meet a wide variety of strengths and additional support needs, not all of which will be linked to dyslexia. However, teaching and learning strategies that are appropriate for pupils with dyslexia can be effective for all learners.

TEACHERS' RESPONSIBILITIES RE PUPILS WITH DYSLLEXIA

References: Education [Scotland] Acts 2004 & 2009; Supporting Children's Learning: Code of Practice 2010; Equality Act 2010; Education Scotland: Dyslexia
www.educationscotland.gov.uk/supportinglearners/additionalsupportneeds/dyslexia/index.asp

It is the secondary teacher's responsibility to provide a suitably differentiated subject curriculum, accessible to all pupils, that provides each with the opportunity to develop and apply individual strengths. Responsibilities for meeting the additional needs of pupils with dyslexia are the same as those for all pupils, and should include approaches that avoid unnecessary dependence on written text. Subject teachers may be expected to use teaching and learning strategies that include:

- Recognition of and sensitivity to the range and diversity of the learning preferences and styles of all pupils
- Selection or design of appropriate teaching and learning programmes that match the range of all pupil abilities, within the curricular framework of the school
- Awareness of the learning differences related to dyslexia that may cause difficulties within these programmes, and the capacity to make reasonable adjustments to meet individual needs
- Understanding that, while dyslexia is not linked to ability, able pupils with dyslexia may persistently underachieve
- Knowledge that many pupils with dyslexia use strategies such as misbehaviour or illness for coping with difficulties they do not necessarily understand themselves
- willingness to ask for advice and support from the Support for Learning team about reasonable adjustments

- Commitment to the need to make reasonable adjustments to reduce barriers to learning linked to the delivery of the curriculum
- Acknowledgement of the very severe difficulties that some pupils with dyslexia might experience due to failure to master the early stages of literacy and numeracy
- Understanding that dyslexia is developmental in nature and that some pupils who have coped with the early stages of literacy acquisition may have difficulties with higher order skills, which do not appear until upper primary or secondary
- Acceptance that some pupils with dyslexia may require additional support within the context of their subject and to consult with colleagues and specialists to determine how best to provide this
- Taking account of the difficulties experienced by pupils with dyslexia when assessing progress so that subject knowledge and ability are assessed fairly through the provision of reasonable adjustments to arrangements for assessments that reflect the additional support usually provided

TRANSITION PRIMARY- SECONDARY

Reference: Dyslexia at Transition www.dyslexiatransition.org/

All Guidance and many Behaviour Support teachers are closely involved in transition arrangements from primary to secondary school in order to anticipate circumstances that might trigger social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Special or enhanced transition arrangements are often put in place for children identified (by primary staff and other professionals) as those who might find changing schools particularly challenging. It is common practice for children identified as dyslexic to be offered enhanced transition support by the secondary Support for Learning (SfL) team, while the wider Pupil (or Behaviour) Support team makes provision for the support of those who may present challenging or withdrawn behaviour when they move from a familiar primary school to a larger, busier secondary school.

Secondary Pupil Support teachers often attend review meetings held in the later stages of primary and work closely with primary staff to identify possible barriers to learning and explore the nature of any support that will be needed for pupils with dyslexia to access the secondary curriculum at an appropriate level. This information is used to inform subject teachers of any strengths and possible difficulties that pupils with dyslexia may experience in their subject curriculum and to suggest strategies that should be adopted to minimise difficulties and ensure access to curricular materials and activities.

While many Support for Learning teachers are concerned with learners' access to the curriculum - Behaviour Support teachers are more likely to consider the possible impact of transition on individual children emotionally and socially and look for ways of minimising any negative aspects of this.

Some 'behavioural' characteristics of dyslexia

Learners with dyslexia constantly meet barriers to learning across the curriculum and may become discouraged very quickly due to lack of initial success in subject classes. This can result in subject teachers assuming that pupils are inattentive or lazy, when they are actually working much harder than their classmates, but producing very little. For pupils with dyslexia the experience of success may be rare, if not totally absent. In addition to struggling with literacy, they may:

- Lack self-confidence
- Have a poor self image
- Fear new situations
- Confuse written and verbal instructions
- Appear to avoid set work
- Be very disorganised
- Lack stamina

For example, pupil with dyslexia may fully understand the subject teacher's spoken introduction to a topic but be unable to follow the written instructions to complete class activities.

IDENTIFICATION OF DYSLEXIA AT SECONDARY

Reference: Addressing Dyslexia / www.addressingdyslexia.org

Many secondary teachers assume that any dyslexia will have been identified and assessed at primary school, and that relevant information will be passed to them as part of transition arrangements. But there are some aspects of dyslexia that do not become apparent until students begin to experience difficulties within the secondary curriculum -perhaps having reached a stage where they are no longer able to use their strengths to compensate for dyslexic difficulties. In some cases, this may not be until students are about to sit timed examinations.

Dyslexia may not be identified until after pupils transfer to secondary school for a number of reasons:

- Differences between the primary classroom and the busy secondary school timetable, cause dyslexic problems to emerge
- The move to secondary school has eliminated many of the support strategies that pupils with 'hidden' dyslexia developed at primary school to mask that they were having problems
- Some higher order dyslexic difficulties may not appear until the demands of the secondary subject curriculum cause a pupil's coping strategies to collapse
- The time aspect of the secondary timetable often creates problems for pupils with dyslexia accustomed to having all the time they need to complete set tasks in the primary classroom
- A mismatch between a pupil's apparent ability and the quality (and quantity) of written work emerges in some subjects

Young people presenting a great challenge to teachers, who find it difficult to cope with their classroom behaviour, are often identified as having social, emotional or behavioural problems. But these learners may be able individuals with dyslexia whose teachers - and other people around them - do not sufficiently understand or accept behaviours that are actually manifestations of unidentified dyslexia.

It will not be possible for Pupil Support teachers to predict if/when pupils will 'suddenly' reveal dyslexic difficulties through their behaviour- but it is very important that they have an expectation that this is likely, and to ensure that subject teachers are also aware of this. Use of the Dyslexia Indicators Checklist at the end of this booklet when pupils exhibit behavioural difficulties, might help identify a possible dyslexic profile. **It is important for teachers to understand that strategies employed for dealing with behavioural issues may not be effective unless any underlying dyslexia is also addressed.**

Characteristics of dyslexia

Each pupil with dyslexia will have a very distinctive profile of strengths, difficulties and learning style/preference, so comparisons with other known pupils with dyslexia **may** not be useful, although there is often some common ground. Many of the following characteristics, but not all, may be present - learners will have their own individual combination of strengths and weaknesses.

Pupils with dyslexia may:

- Underachieve academically
- Perform well orally or in practical activities but find reading/writing difficult
- Be considered clumsy and disorganised
- Appear restless, with poor concentration span
- Seem inattentive, forgetful, easily tired
- Have a low tolerance of their own lack of achievement
- Have low self esteem

Teachers should be aware that:

- Dyslexic difficulties can range from mild to severe and individual profiles will show both strengths and, sometimes, unexpected weaknesses
- Dyslexia can occur at any level of intellectual ability
- Learners with dyslexia often have natural talents, creative abilities and vision
- Learners with dyslexia often display differences and experience difficulties in education, some of them hidden

Hidden dyslexia

Dyslexia is often hidden, masked by a student's high ability or by distracting behaviour. even deliberately concealed by teenagers who are desperate not to be 'different' from their peers. Some pupils' true levels of ability may be masked by dyslexia - when they perform at the expected level but are actually being limited by underpinning dyslexic difficulties, resulting in unidentified underachievement and, perhaps, a curriculum that lacks challenge and fails to stimulate them.

Many learners with dyslexia become discouraged by constantly meeting barriers to learning, perhaps resulting in an assumption that they are inattentive or lazy, when they are actually making much more effort than their classmates. Because their dyslexia has not been recognised - or has been discounted by teachers who assume that they have somehow 'grown out of it'¹ - some students believe that they really are lazy or incapable of concentrating as required. The resulting low self-esteem can lead to mental health issues, sometimes requiring therapeutic input by educational psychologists and/or medical professionals.

Dyslexia and underachievement

The characteristics of underachievers with dyslexia often reflect the difficulties they encounter - e.g. those from disadvantaged backgrounds may have low self-esteem and poorly developed study skills, resulting in failure to persevere at tasks and hostility to school and formal learning. Some pupils with dyslexia may be very able orally and mature in conversation but unable to write at length, with poor spelling and handwriting, leading teachers to underestimate their effort, ability and interest level. Patterns of underachievement by learners with dyslexia often include:

- High cognitive ability but low self esteem
- Poor work habits and unfinished tasks
- An apparent inability to concentrate
- Lack of effort in some subjects but often an intense interest/skill in another
- A skill deficit in one area or subject
- A negative attitude towards self and age-peers
- Manifestations of emotional frustration
- Failure to respond to appropriate stimulation

Because of persistent failure in some aspects of the curriculum, underachieving learners with dyslexia may manifest either aggressive or withdrawn behaviour alongside some characteristics of high ability and dyslexia.

Features of the aggressive behaviour are:

- Rejection of set tasks
- Lack of co-operation
- Disruption and alienation of others

Some pupils with dyslexia deliberately seek confrontation with their teachers in order to avoid set work or to be removed from the class.

Withdrawn behaviour includes:

- Lack of communication, a preference for working alone
- Daydreaming, little set work undertaken
- Apparent lack of concern about attitude or behaviour

Underachievers with dyslexia can be hard to identify because they may be both experienced and skilled at hiding their dyslexia, which often results in their actual ability being unrecognised. They may not have been identified as having either abilities and learning needs that are in any way different from those of most of their age-peers - and teachers may have neither the time nor the inclination to search for hidden abilities in uncooperative learners.

Learning characteristics of underachievers with dyslexia; they may:

- Disguise their level of ability to conceal dyslexia and gain peer acceptance
- Prefer to be accused of lack of effort and concentration to admitting dyslexic difficulties
- Reject set tasks and fail to respond to teachers' instructions
- Fear public failure, inhibiting attempts in new areas
- Be frustrated with inactivity, and lack of challenge
- Have low self-esteem and a negative attitude towards self and peers
- Develop a cynical attitude to hide emotional frustration
- Be stifled by an emphasis on reading and writing and the lack of creative opportunities
- Dominate discussion, with apparently poor listening and turn taking skills
- Be socially isolated and rejected by others - though outwardly self-sufficient
- Be vulnerable to criticism, responding negatively to participation in activities that might reveal their dyslexia
- Often feel frustrated, angry, depressed, inadequate
- Use humour inappropriately or to attack others
- Truant from some subject classes, become disaffected

Aggressive behaviour characteristics:

- Refusal to obey classroom rules and displays of confrontational, rebellious or manipulative behaviours
- Attention seeking, ignoring the needs of others
- Preventing others from engaging with learning, disruptive
- Alienation of classmates due to aggression and negative attitude
- Appearing bored, frustrated, stubborn and uncooperative
- Tactless and impatient with slower thinkers and other learners with dyslexia

- Tendency to challenge and question indiscreetly
- Masking feelings, sometimes appearing insensitive

Withdrawn behaviour characteristics:

- Lacking communication with classmates/teachers
- Appearance of time wasting or being preoccupied
- Taking a long time to process speech, resulting in slow responses
- Preference for working alone at a pace appropriate to the impact of dyslexia
- Rarely completing set work in the time allowed
- Regarding dyslexia as stupidity, resulting in low self esteem

Some young people may be confused by the difficulties caused by their dyslexia - even thinking these are due to mental health issues. Some may attempt to conceal their difficulties - even from themselves - by avoiding circumstances where they are likely to fail and by adopting diversionary behaviour. Some young people with dyslexia experience embarrassment, humiliation, anxiety and guilt on a daily basis. When their dyslexia remains unrecognised and unsupported, they lose confidence in themselves as learners, feeling stupid, frustrated and angry.

Teachers might use the Checklists at the back of this booklet to help them decide if unacceptable classroom behaviour might conceal underachievement and/or low self-esteem linked to dyslexia.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT ISSUES LINKED TO DYSLEXIA

In addition to struggling with literacy issues in class, students with dyslexia may appear:

- To avoid set work
- Restless and unable to concentrate
- Easily tired, inattentive and uncooperative

It is common for learning differences related to dyslexia that cause unexpected difficulties within the subject curriculum to be mistaken for behavioural issues - students may:

- Appear disaffected
- Persistently underachieve
- Conceal difficulties and will not ask for (or may even reject) help

As a result, teachers often attribute poor progress to lack of interest or effort, or to misbehaviour. Students with dyslexia often lack stamina and have low self-esteem -which may have a powerful impact on their ability to cope with the demands of the subject curriculum.

Learners with dyslexia may be slow to respond to a teacher's spoken instructions and find that the rest of the class is getting on with a piece of work while they have no idea where to begin. They may persistently ask for a page number immediately after the

teacher has given it. Their inability to remember spoken instructions or process written directions may be interpreted as lack of attention or indiscipline when they ask classmates what to do next.

Many students with dyslexia appear to do everything the long way - concentration is easily lost and they are unable to pick up from where they left off, having to start all over again, leading them to become restless or disruptive to draw attention away from their difficulties. They may start a task well but there is often a rapid deterioration of the quality of work, especially when writing is required. The level of concentration and effort needed for 'normal' class activities may cause fatigue so teachers might vary activities or build-in mini-breaks to allow them to rest briefly.

It is common for pupils with dyslexia to be disorganised or forgetful of equipment and homework - even turning up in class at the wrong time. Poor organisational skills may be exacerbated by an inability to remember sequences of instructions and a tendency to forget books or to complete tasks on time. Students with dyslexia tend to lose themselves (and their possessions) regularly and they may be unable to retrace their steps because they have no memory of how they arrived at a place.

Classroom management strategies

Pupils with dyslexia are often identified as having behavioural problems when they experience:

- Short term (working) memory difficulties
- Problems with auditory and/or visual processing
- Directional confusion
- Weak organisational skills
- Poor physical co-ordination

Teachers reporting pupils' inappropriate classroom behaviour should try to identify the activity that 'triggered' each incident. If 'triggers' can be related to dyslexic difficulties subject teachers might be advised to take account of these when preparing lessons.

Additional support strategies:

- Additional Time should be made available to permit pupils with dyslexia to process lesson content- they first have to process the words used, then process the meaning of these
- Pupils with dyslexia should not be routinely set unfinished class work as homework - they take much longer to complete homework than other pupils so there may be a danger of setting too much
- Accept homework that has been typed or scribed by a parent without question or fuss - though it would be useful to agree this with parents in advance
- Teachers should check that all tasks are written down correctly and that pupils with dyslexia understand what is required

- Arrange for text material to be read aloud or to be converted to digital format in advance so that pupils with dyslexia can access this
- Consider accepting answers in key words or in note form to enable pupils with dyslexia to get ideas written down - though this skill may have to be taught first
- Subject teachers should always limit the number of instructions given at one time and try to repeat a sequence of instructions at appropriate points during practical activities and provide a written version of these
- Place pupils with dyslexia near the teacher in order to give individual attention and to encourage them to ask for help when they need it
- Ensure that any additional support required is in place and avoid making comparisons with the rest of the class
- Mark pupils' work on content and not spelling/presentation and try to add positive comments - these are rarely experienced by pupils with dyslexia.

Teachers might give some consideration to their method of lesson delivery, which should be multi-sensory and include a variety of activities whenever possible. Secondary subject teachers may be advised to anticipate the possible additional support needs of dyslexic (and other) pupils when planning lessons and preparing materials.

Dealing with inappropriate classroom behaviour

When class work that involves a lot of reading and writing is set, pupils with dyslexia may initially appear to ignore the teacher's instructions. This may be due to an inability to remember spoken instructions or process written directions and not actually linked to inattentiveness or laziness. Pupils may be checking with classmates what is required, not being deliberately disruptive of the class activity. Teachers might anticipate the impact of set work on pupils with dyslexia before taking action on any perceived indiscipline.

Pupils with dyslexia may:

- Talk to their classmates instead of setting down to work
- Seem to make little attempt to settle to the task
- Be disorganised or forgetful e.g. of equipment, lessons, homework, appointments
- Be in the wrong place at the wrong time
- Become excessively tired, due to the level of concentration and effort needed for 'normal' class activities

Additional support strategies:

- Check that pupils are not just seeking clarification of page number or instructions
- Encourage pupils to work together and discuss the nature of tasks before starting individual work
- Check that all instructions are clear and fully understood - ask pupils to repeat them
- Provide checklists and timetables with schedules and deadlines clearly shown
- Vary activities so that pupils become less fatigued

Bear in mind that most people are more willing to consult the person next to them than to ask the teacher when they are unsure of something. The pupils being consulted, far from being distracted, often benefit from the opportunity to talk about the work in question, and their own understanding may be clarified and their attention focussed by having the chance to explain something to another pupil.

Managing poor organising ability

It will take longer or require more effort for pupils with dyslexia to achieve the same results as classmates. Teenagers are acutely aware of the gap between their performance and their classmates' apparent ease in some activities. They may not actually realise that this difference is due to dyslexia, especially when this has not been identified, or has been mistaken for behavioural problems.

Pupils with dyslexia may:

- Forget books, work to be handed in, deadlines for assignments etc and shrug this off, giving the impression that they don't care
- Struggle to understand new concepts and be unable to remember sequences of instructions resulting in accusations that they were not paying attention
- Have difficulty taking notes or copying in class - their refusal to admit difficulties with this often results in them being reprimanded for lack of effort
- Find it difficult to complete tasks on time leading to them being identified as lazy and not trying
- Have difficulty with organisation of homework, so they may refuse to hand it in, preferring to be punished for not doing it rather than admit to problems

Additional support strategies -teachers might:

- Provide frequent opportunities for all pupils to rehearse/practice activities
- Provide copies of class notes so that pupils with dyslexia may listen instead of struggling to keep up with writing
- Set tasks that are appropriate to the ability of pupils with dyslexia but take account of possible barriers to accessing texts or producing written work
- Monitor the correct use of the homework diary, put homework tasks online or set them well in advance and involve parents in this
- Structure tasks for pupils with dyslexia, perhaps using flow charts or check lists, **and** help them to prioritise

The Impact of fatigue

The huge effort required by many learners with dyslexia to complete an ordinary task that others can tackle automatically may cause unanticipated fatigue and result in their dyslexic difficulties being attributed to poor attitude or lack of interest. Sometimes pupils' apparent exhaustion is considered to be due to lack of sleep - and many teenagers will accept this conclusion rather than admit to their daily struggle to keep up in class.

Pupils with dyslexia may:

- Start well but the quality of work quickly deteriorates
- Lose concentration easily and become restless or disruptive
- Complain of minor ailments or request permission to leave the room
- Spend so much time on initial tasks that they do not fully participate in the rest of the lesson
- Lack automaticity in ordinary activities
- Have to start all over again if interrupted when working
- Fall behind the work of the class
- Fail to take an accurate note of homework

Additional support strategies:

- Set short, well-defined tasks with clearly identified outcomes
- Vary the types of tasks set and set time limits for their duration
- Change activities during the lesson, allowing mini-breaks
- Create the opportunity for purposeful movement within the classroom
- Teach pupils how to pace themselves
- Give out homework well before the end of the lesson and make sure it is written down correctly

Self esteem

Pupils with dyslexia often consider themselves to be failures. Some may overreact to remarks made by teachers and peers, taking everything personally. They may be so conscious of the impact of their dyslexic problems that they are oversensitive to casual comments, and respond apparently inappropriately. The stress that is endured by young people with dyslexia in the classroom impacts on their motivation, emotional well-being and even their behavioural stability. Many are working constantly at the limits of their endurance and may rarely - or never - experience success in the classroom.

Pupils with dyslexia may:

- Expect to fail at set tasks, so are reluctant to try anything new
- Lack self-confidence
- Have a poor self image
- Fear new situations
- Be disappointed at a poor return for their efforts
- Be humiliated if their difficulties are exposed in class

Learners with dyslexia may experience despair and exhaustion and be unable to keep up the level of alertness and forward planning needed to sustain intricate coping strategies. When coping strategies fail, dyslexia may be expressed by inappropriate diversionary behaviour.

Additional support strategies:

- Remain aware of pupils' learning profiles and of the nature of individual strengths and weaknesses
- Offer encouragement and support for all activities
- Praise effort as well as work well done
- Encourage and praise oral contributions
- Do not ask pupils with dyslexia to undertake tasks that might expose them to public failure and humiliation e.g. reading aloud
- Mark on **content** not presentation of work

It is important that subject teachers remain alert for difficult situations and defuse any possibly embarrassing circumstances that could result in aggressive or withdrawn behaviours and referral for behaviour support input.

BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT ISSUES

An apparently capable pupil who appears to be depressed, unmotivated, failing in school and functioning poorly in the family and who may also present violent, disruptive outbursts, will most probably be referred for assessment to the school's behaviour support team (or to the family GP). It is unlikely that any consideration is given to whether dyslexia may be present. By the time an educational psychologist is consulted, any dyslexia indicators may have been ignored or misunderstood and the young person labeled as stubborn, self-centred, unsociable, disruptive or withdrawn and only social/emotional /behavioural strategies are proposed.

While GPs and other health care professionals may not be expected to know a lot about the behavioural, emotional and learning characteristics of learners with dyslexia, it is assumed (often incorrectly) that all teachers and educational psychologists have this knowledge. While some education professionals are fully conversant with the characteristics and intellectual diversity of learners with dyslexia and their typical social, emotional, and behavioural characteristics and needs, classroom teachers are not necessarily aware of these. This lack of information and training of education (and health-care) professionals is the largest single reason for failure to identify or misdiagnosis of dyslexia as a different issue.

Even the physiology of learners with dyslexia may differ from their age-peers - they may have more allergies, sleep problems and uneven rates of development; they may suffer from 'existential depression' -when they feel that they do not fit in the family or the classroom - even wondering whether they are 'mad'.

Dyslexia in able teenagers is often misidentified as a behavioural disorder. The diagnostic process used may be inappropriate - psychological testing, for example, may be carried out in isolation from the context of other sources of information. In order to produce a comprehensive profile of a pupil, consideration of some of the subtle environmental

factors that affect behaviour is essential - including an analysis of the behavioural 'triggers' - e.g. for a refusal to cooperate in the classroom - could quickly indicate the possibility that dyslexic difficulties might be present.

Misidentification of dyslexia as an emotional or behavioural disorder may happen because time constraints lead to snap decisions being made and individuals labelled and treated without adequate understanding of the circumstances that lead to manifestations of the 'problem' behaviour. Behaviour Support teachers need to have time to identify a pupil's needs fully before developing plans for support provision. One model is illustrated below.

Identifying triggers

Behavioural difficulties in school could be due to a range of factors including:

- Learning
- Social/emotional
- Medical/health
- Learning environment
- Level of ability
- Attendance
- Bilingualism

Gathering information

The Behaviour Support teacher develops a picture of the pupil based on:

- Observations and assessments from school staff (including screening for possible dyslexia)²
- Information from parents/pupil
- Review of the learning environment
- Educational records
- Referrals made within school and to other agencies

Action to remove barriers to learning

Once a pupil profile has been developed and triggers for behavioural incidents identified, the behaviour support teacher - in consultation with the pupil, parents and other professionals - produces a plan designed to resolve difficulties, including:

- Changing the learning environment to be more dyslexia 'friendly'
- Strategies agreed to deal with specific/dyslexic difficulties e.g.
 - Individual/small group teaching
 - Peer support/buddying/paired reading
 - Directed in-class support from - SfL teacher, learning assistant

² Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit www.addressingdyslexia.org/

- Monitoring of attendance at 'problem' subject classes
- Setting appropriate targets that take account of any dyslexia
- Staff development on the behavioural manifestations of dyslexia

Anxiety is a common emotion along with fear, anger, sadness, and happiness, and it has a very important function in relation to the self-esteem of the learner with dyslexia in the classroom. Both voluntary and involuntary behaviours - aggressive or withdrawn - may be directed at escaping or avoiding the source of anxiety - which could be the curriculum, the learning environment or even the subject teacher.

FURTHER READING

Dyslexia Scotland

Guide for Teachers'

www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk/sites/default/files/page_content/downloads/guide_teachers.pdf

Ideas for Dyslexia-friendly formats

[www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk/sites/default/files/page_content/Dyslexia Friendly Fonts.pdf](http://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk/sites/default/files/page_content/Dyslexia%20Friendly%20Fonts.pdf)

Dyslexia: Information for teachers

www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk/sites/default/files/page_content/3%20Info%20for%20Teachers%20-%20PDF_0.pdf

Fawcett, A (ed) (2001): Dyslexia, Theory and Good Practice London, Whurr **chapter 9**

Peer, L (2001): Dyslexia and its Manifestations in the Secondary School presentation at the BDA International conference, York 2001

www.gavinreid.co.uk/index.php?action=ShowArticle&id=50

Peer, L & Reid, G (eds) (2000): Multilingualism, Literacy and Dyslexia -A Challenge for Educators London, David Fulton **chapters 1, 5 & 17**

Peer, L & Reid, G (2001): Dyslexia - Successful; Inclusion in the Secondary School London David Fulton Publishers, **chapters 1, 26 & 30**

Reid, G (2009): Dyslexia: A Practitioner's Handbook fourth edition Chichester Wiley-Blackwell **chapters 14-16**

Reid, G & Fawcett, A (eds) (2004): Dyslexia in Context - Research, Policy and Practice London Whurr **chapters 7, 12 & 19**

Thomson, M (2008): Supporting Students with Dyslexia at Secondary School: every class teacher's guide to removing barriers and raising attainment Abingdon Routledge -**chapter 1**

Continuing Professional Development Opportunity

CPD Bytes - Hidden Dyslexia - on-line training for educators

www.cpdbytes.com

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DYSLEXIA INDICATORS AT THE SECONDARY STAGE

Dyslexia is more than an isolated defect in reading or spelling. The problem may be perceptual, auditory receptive, memory-based or a processing deficit.

Subject teachers are not expected to be able to diagnose these difficulties as such, but some general indications are listed below. If several of these are observed frequently in the classroom, please tick the relevant boxes and enter details- of the pupil concerned and pass to the Support for Learning team for further investigation.

Pupil Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

- ☐ Quality of written work does not adequately reflect the known ability of the pupil in the subject
- ☐ Good orally but very little written work is produced - many incomplete assignments
- ☐ Disappointing performance in timed tests and other assessments
- ☐ Poor presentation of work - e.g. illegibility, mixed upper and lower case, unequal spacing, copying errors, misaligned columns (especially in Maths)
- ☐ Poor organisational skills - pupil is unable to organise self or work efficiently; carries either all books or wrong ones; frequently forgets to hand in work
- ☐ Sequencing poor - pupil appears to jump from one theme to another, apparently for no reason
- ☐ Inability to memorise (especially in Maths and Modern Languages) even after repeated practice
- ☐ Inability to hold numbers in short-term memory while performing calculations
- ☐ Symbol and shape confusion (especially in Maths)
- ☐ Complains of headaches when reading; sometimes see patterns in printed text; says that words move around the page or that text is glaring at them
- ☐ Complains of headaches when reading; sometimes see patterns in printed text; says that words move around the page or that text is glaring at them
- ☐ Unable to carry out operations one day which were previously done adequately
- ☐ Unable to take in and carry out more than one instruction at a time
- ☐ Poor depth perception - e.g. clumsy and uncoordinated, bumps into things, difficulty judging distance, catching balls, etc. Poor self-image - lacking in confidence, fear of new situations - may erase large quantities of written work, which is acceptable to the teacher
- ☐ Tires quickly and work seems to be a disproportionate return for the effort involved in producing it
- ☐ Easily distracted - either hyperactive or daydreaming

☐ Others - please give details

Teacher: _____ Subject: _____

Action requested:

- ☐ details of known additional needs
- ☐ investigation of problem and advice re support
- ☐ dyslexia assessment
- ☐ profile of additional needs
- ☐ suggest strategies for meeting additional needs
- ☐ advice re assessment arrangements

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CHECKLIST OF UNDERACHIEVING BEHAVIOUR

Subject dept: _____

Pupil details: _____

Learning characteristics

- ☐ Is orally good but written work is poor - gap between expected and actual performance - may be reluctant to write at length because s/he cannot write as fast as s/he thinks
- ☐ Is apparently bored, appears to be absorbed in a private world
- ☐ Often abandons set work before finishing, having mastered content/process
- ☐ Can follow complex instructions easily, but prefers to do things differently
- ☐ Works independently, but finds many reference sources superficial
- ☐ Good problem finding skills, but reluctant to solve these once identified
- ☐ Inventive in response to open ended questions, able to form but not test hypotheses
- ☐ At ease in dealing with abstract ideas
- ☐ Shows a vivid imagination with unusual ideas
- ☐ Is very observant, sometimes argumentative, able to ask provocative questions

Behavioural characteristics

- ☐ Has a poor concentration span but is creative and persevering when motivated
- ☐ Seems emotionally unstable - may have feelings of inferiority but is outwardly self-sufficient
- ☐ Often restless and inattentive, lacks task commitment
- ☐ Prefers to work alone, rarely co-operates in group work
- ☐ Shows originality and creativity but is quickly bored with repetitive tasks
- ☐ Has a narrow range of interests and hobbies with extraordinary knowledge of obscure facts
- ☐ Appears to have little in common with classmates, being tactless and impatient with slower minds
- ☐ Has a quirky, sometimes adult, sense of humour

DYSLEXIA - SELF-ESTEEM ISSUES

The pupil with dyslexia needs a great deal of support and encouragement to help face up to, talk about and analyse those confusing and conflicting emotions and behaviours that can result from what is often called the 'hidden disability'

Learners with dyslexia, unless gifted and talented in a specific area, may go through the school system never knowing the experience of success.

Pupil Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Please indicate any of the following that you suspect this pupil may be experiencing:

- ☐ lack of self-confidence
- ☐ poor self image
- ☐ a fear of new situations
- ☐ fatigue from the huge effort needed to complete an ordinary task that others can tackle automatically
- ☐ disappointment at the disproportionate return for their effort
- ☐ confusion regarding their place in the 'pecking order' of the class, which often leads to isolation or identity problems
- ☐ humiliation as their difficulties lead to embarrassing situations
- ☐ despair and exhaustion from the effort to maintain the alertness and forward planning needed to sustain intricate coping strategies

Please note any other issues you have observed re this pupil and return to: _____

Signed: _____

Also available

Published in 2011 by Dyslexia Scotland and issued free of charge to every primary school in Scotland.

Supporting Pupils with Dyslexia at Primary School is a series of booklets for primary school teachers throughout Scotland. They are intended to inform parents and teachers about how dyslexia might affect a child in order to enable them to remove the barriers to learning that they often experience.

The pack of 8 titles:

- Is an authoritative resource to help teachers when making provision to meet the additional needs of pupils with dyslexia as described in the Scottish Government's Supporting Children's Learning: Code of Practice 2010 (chapter 2)
- Provides class teachers with practical information and helpful tips on how to support pupils with dyslexia achieve academic success in the Curriculum for Excellence (literacy and numeracy)
- Offers specific guidance for Support for Learning teachers and school managers on their roles in supporting pupils with dyslexia
- Explores the need for direct and open communication with parents of children with dyslexia
- Includes handy photocopiable material in each of the eight titles
- Can be viewed online at www.supportingdyslexicpupils.org and downloaded by members of Dyslexia Scotland free of charge from www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk

Supporting Pupils with Dyslexia at Primary School is an adaptation by the committee members of Dyslexia Scotland South East of an original work by Meg Houston

'There are many aspects relating to dyslexia that can be misunderstood unless a clear set of materials, such as this pack, are available. These booklets are therefore timely and essential' Or Gavin Reid, Vancouver, 20) 1

Supporting Dyslexic Pupils in the Secondary Curriculum is a series of booklets for secondary school teachers throughout Scotland. They are intended to help them remove the barriers to learning that are often experienced by dyslexic pupils.

The pack of 20 booklets:

- Is an authoritative resource to help teachers meet the additional needs of pupils with dyslexia as described in the Scottish Executive's *Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice 2010 (chapter 2)*
- Provides subject teachers with advice and suggests strategies to enable them to minimise barriers to learning that dyslexic pupils might experience in the secondary curriculum and provide appropriate support
- Offers guidance for Support for Learning staff on the identification and support of dyslexia in the secondary curriculum and on advising subject colleagues on reasonable adjustments to classroom practice and for examinations
- Addresses the continuing professional development needs of school staff arising from national local and school initiatives
- Is packed with practical information and tips for teachers on how to give pupils with dyslexia the best chance of academic success
- Can be viewed online at www.supportingdyslexicpupils.org and downloaded by members of Dyslexia Scotland free of charge from www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk

Molra Thomson was Principal Teacher of Support for Learning at Broughton High School, Edinburgh for more than 30 years. She was also Development Officer for City of Edinburgh Dept of Children & Families; in-house CPD provider for City of Edinburgh Dept of Children & Families; Associate Tutor for SNAP; Associate Assessor for HMle. Moira has been an independent adjudicator for the Additional Support for Learning dispute resolution since 2005 and is an independent educational consultant, providing CPD for education and other professionals. She has also written/ contributed to a range of professional publications and is the author of *Supporting Students with Dyslexia at Secondary School* (Routledge 2008). Her voluntary work includes being secretary of the Scottish Parliament's Cross Party Group on Dyslexia from 2005-2011; a member of several Scottish Qualifications Authority focus groups and she is a committee member of Dyslexia Scotland South East.

"I truly hope that all teachers will embrace this publication. If they can put into practice the guidance offered it will make a fundamental difference to the way dyslexic children are taught in school today. Young people in Scotland deserve this chance."

Sir Jackie Stewart OBE, President of Dyslexia Scotland-



Dyslexia Scotland, 2nd floor - East Suite, Wallace House, 17-21 Maxwell Place, Stirling, FK8 1JU
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