



# Dyslexia Scotland

## **The Middle Primary**



No **2** in the series of  
**Supporting Pupils with Dyslexia at Primary School**

# SUPPORTING PUPILS WITH DYSLEXIA AT PRIMARY SCHOOL

## **THE MIDDLE PRIMARY**

**Adapted by Dyslexia Scotland, South East from  
Dyslexia: Primary Handbook by Meg Houston**

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## **Supporting Pupils with Dyslexia at Primary School**

Every primary school in Scotland has been supplied with a free copy of this important publication. All material in these titles is downloadable free from the Dyslexia Scotland website – [www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk](http://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk).

Dyslexia Scotland would like to thank Meg Houston and the committee members of Dyslexia Scotland South East for producing these important resources for primary teachers in Scotland.

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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 8484 – Monday to Friday from 10am-4pm.

Dyslexia Scotland, Stirling Business Centre, Wellgreen, Stirling FK8 2DZ  
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# Supporting Pupils with Dyslexia at Primary School

## Complete set comprises of 8 booklets

- 1 The Early Years
- 2 The Middle Primary
- 3 The Upper Primary
- 4 Identification of Dyslexia in Primary School
- 5 The Role of Support for Learning
- 6 The Role of School Management
- 7 Working with Parents
- 8 Resources and Assessment Instruments

**Foreword by Dr. Gavin Reid**, formerly senior lecturer in the Department of Educational Studies, Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh. An experienced teacher, educational psychologist, university lecturer, researcher and author, he has made over 600 conference and seminar presentations in more than 35 countries and has authored, co-authored and edited fifteen books for teachers and parents.

ALL information contained in the booklets can be downloaded free of charge from the Dyslexia Scotland website – **[www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk](http://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk)**

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## **Foreword** by Dr. Gavin Reid

It is a pleasure to be asked to write a foreword for this new pack of booklets on 'Supporting Pupils with Dyslexia at Primary School'. One of the striking features of the booklets is the detail and comprehensiveness which Meg Houston and her colleagues have included in this excellent pack.

They leave no stone unturned. They cover the full range of stages in the primary school from nursery to the upper primary and provide guidance for parents and school management. They also comment on the crucial area of transition between primary and secondary school. I am heartened that they have provided a working definition for dyslexia as defining dyslexia is often an area of confusion, and teachers can be uncertain as to what dyslexia actually means. Teachers need this type of guidance on dyslexia. 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.

I am impressed with the detail included in providing advice for all stages of primary school from pre-school to upper primary and also on the role of parents and particularly the issues relating to homework. It is heartening to read comments such as "it is very easy for teachers to create the optimum conditions at school that will avoid the 'homework' problem. An aware senior manager can take the lead by setting the tone and creating the ethos, developing a dyslexia friendly homework policy that will make a huge difference to many children's – and their parents' – lives". I have found from my experience that this is one issue that can cause a great deal of consternation for both students and families, and of course teachers.

The booklets also focus on the emotional aspect of dyslexia in addition to the cognitive and learning issues. This is important as students who are emotionally ready for learning, will make more progress than those who are not. Often children with dyslexia can have problems in this area because they have experienced too much failure, too often, for too long. It is important that this ceases to be an issue and this set of booklets will go a long way to making the educational experience a more comfortable and successful one for many children with dyslexia.

The booklet on the role of management states that management should have a "recognition of, and sensitivity to the range and diversity of the learning preferences and styles of all children". This is crucially important. There are also excellent sections summarizing support strategies for students with dyslexia and a section with a comprehensive annotated description of key resources that can be accessed by teachers. The booklets also indicate, quite rightly, that the key to success is effective learning and this means effective teaching. This does not cost money, does not necessarily require vast expenditure on expensive resources, but rather needs management consideration to ensure that teachers have adequate preparation time, appropriate training, opportunities to develop differentiated materials and are able to recognize individual learning styles and importantly are able to, and have the opportunity, to use this information to develop good practice in classroom teaching and student learning. The role of teacher education is also a key area: this has not gone

unnoticed and the reference to the 'Framework for Inclusion: Assessing Dyslexia – Toolkit for Teachers' will be helpful to all teachers assessing this resource.

The section on dyslexia in the early years will also be warmly welcomed by many as there is clear evidence that early identification can lead to successful intervention. But often there is uncertainty about what to look for, how to identify high risk students and how to take this further in terms of intervention. This section will provide early years teachers with the confidence, strategies and the framework to pursue the identification of children at risk of dyslexia with some confidence and with the support of management.

We are fortunate in having dedicated professionals, such as Meg Houston and Moira Thomson, available to write these booklets. It never ceases to amaze me when I travel to other countries and continents to speak about dyslexia how far advanced we are in Scotland. This is often due to relatively few dedicated and insightful professionals and parents who have achieved a great deal in terms of acquiring government support and securing government initiatives. It is very pleasing to consider the number of significant initiatives in dyslexia that have taken place in Scotland in recent years. This has without doubt made Scotland a key player on the world stage in good practice on dyslexia. Booklets such as these developed by Meg Houston and her colleagues in Dyslexia Scotland and Dyslexia South East go a long way in confirming that view and with full backing and appropriate support these booklets will make a difference – a difference to children, families, schools and to the quality of education for all in Scotland.

Gavin Reid, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada  
October 2010

## **Working Definition of Dyslexia (Scottish Government, January 2009)**

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/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 an 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 co-ordination 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.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Learning & Teaching Scotland  
<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/inclusionandequality/sharingpractice/organisations/dyslexiadefinition/index.asp>

This book examines the identification and support of children with dyslexia in middle primary. It is part of a series of eight titles and it is recommended that this book is read in conjunction with:

- Identification of Dyslexia at Primary School
- Supporting Pupils with Dyslexia at Primary School: Supporting and Working with Parents
- Supporting Pupils with Dyslexia at Primary School: Resources and Assessment Instruments

All titles in this series are free to download from Dyslexia Scotland's website – [www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk](http://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk).

It is recommended that readers also refer to the online 'Assessing Dyslexia' toolkit which can be found at the following link:  
<http://www.frameworkforinclusion.org/assessingdyslexia>

## **SUPPORTING PUPILS WITH DYSLEXIA IN MIDDLE PRIMARY**

One person in ten is thought to be dyslexic to some degree and of these one in four could be severely dyslexic.

Teachers should use the Dyslexia Indicators Checklist to confirm any suspicion of a dyslexic profile. If several indicators are ticked, referral should be made to Support for Learning (SfL) for further investigation.

## **TEACHERS' RESPONSIBILITIES REGARDING PUPILS WITH DYSLEXIA**

References: Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, as amended:  
*Scottish Government Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice 2010*

It is a teacher's responsibility to provide a suitably differentiated curriculum, accessible to all children, that provides each with the opportunity to develop and apply individual strengths. Responsibilities for meeting the additional support needs of children with dyslexia are the same as those for all children, and should include approaches that avoid unnecessary dependence on written text. In their delivery of a Curriculum for Excellence, 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 children
- Selection or design of appropriate teaching and learning programmes that match the range of all pupil abilities
- Awareness of the learning differences related to dyslexia that may cause barriers to learning within these programmes
- Understanding that dyslexia is not linked to cognitive abilities and that able children with dyslexia may persistently underachieve in relation to their academic potential
- Knowledge that many children 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 Support for Learning staff or specialist dyslexia teams
- Commitment to the need to reduce barriers to learning linked to the delivery of the curriculum
- Acknowledgement of the very severe difficulties that some children 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 children who have coped with the early stages of literacy acquisition may experience difficulties as they progress through the primary years
- Acceptance that some children with dyslexia may require additional support and that consultation with colleagues and specialists may be necessary to determine how best to provide this
- Taking account of the difficulties experienced by children with dyslexia when assessing progress so that knowledge and abilities are assessed fairly by making alternative arrangements for assessments that reflect the additional support usually provided

Many children with dyslexia constantly meet barriers to learning across the curriculum and may become discouraged very quickly due to lack of initial success in class. This can result in teachers assuming that children are inattentive or lazy, when they are actually working much harder than their classmates, but with little apparent effect. For children with dyslexia the experience of success may be rare, if not totally absent. They may:

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

Each dyslexic pupil will have a very distinctive profile and learning style, so comparisons with other known children with dyslexia **may** not be useful, although there is often some common ground. The information given by Support for Learning (SfL) staff, and the teacher's own experience in the classroom will be the best guide to what is appropriate for any individual pupil. Many of the following characteristics, but not all, may be present and each child will have his own individual combination of strengths and weaknesses. Children with dyslexia may:

- Underachieve academically
- Perform well orally but find reading difficult
- Spell phonetically or erratically
- Be considered clumsy
- Have a low tolerance of their own lack of achievement
- Appear restless, with poor concentration span
- Seem inattentive, forgetful, easily tired

Children with dyslexia can be talented in many ways - eg they may have strongly developed spatial awareness, have good problem solving skills and often present themselves well orally.

Teachers should be aware that:

- Dyslexic difficulties can range from mild to severe, according to the required activity
- Individual profiles of dyslexia can be very different, each with varied strengths and weaknesses
- Dyslexia can occur at all levels of intellectual abilities
- Children with dyslexia often experience difficulties in education, some of them hidden
- Children with dyslexia often have natural talents, creative abilities and vision

## **CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

### **GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS**

A dyslexic learner will usually experience some of these as they progress through the curriculum.

#### **Inappropriate Behaviour**

The first manifestations of a child's dyslexia are often behavioural. Dyslexia may result in a child appearing to lack interest or application. Frustration at being unable to carry out an activity as effortlessly as other children may lead to disruption. These behavioural characteristics are often attributed to children being inattentive, lazy or aggressive – without consideration of the underlying cause. Children with dyslexia may misbehave in order to:

- disguise learning difficulties
- avoid activities that expose weaknesses
- alleviate boredom
- vent frustration or anger
- combat the effects of fatigue
- gain attention from teachers
- distract from an expectation of failure
- compensate for low self esteem

#### **Check:**

- that instructions were fully understood – perhaps by asking a child to repeat them back
- that children were given time to discuss the task before starting - talk can clarify and reinforce understanding of an activity
- that the learning environment supports individual differences eg the pupil who is a kinaesthetic learner or who has motor difficulties is not expected to sit cross legged on the carpet where he has no room to move without bumping others

## **Different Learning Styles**

Preferred learning styles affect the efficiency with which we learn. Children who experience visual processing problems may rely heavily on auditory memory. Those who have auditory processing difficulties will need visual reinforcement to learn effectively.

### **Check:**

- that rules are taught directly and explicitly
- that information has been presented in all modalities, visual, auditory and kinaesthetic/tactile
- that opportunities for discussion have been given
- that kinaesthetic learners are not labelled 'naughty' because of their need to move
- that opportunities are given to practise new terminology

## **Organisational Difficulties**

Children with dyslexia may have difficulty prioritising, sequencing, looking after possessions, packing a schoolbag, responding to multiple instructions, getting from A to B, taking notes, organising homework, completing activities on time.

### **Check:**

- that there is opportunity for practice/rehearsal
- that multiple instructions to the class are broken down to single units for the dyslexic pupil
- that activities set are realistic
- that unfinished work is not automatically set as homework
- that timetables, written or visual, are given and their use reinforced regularly
- that correct use of 'aides memoire' is supported, eg colour coding, sequence lists, etc
- that parents are involved and given necessary support to help develop use of coping strategies, eg colour checklists, etc

## **Effects of Fatigue**

Children with dyslexia may start well but their work may quickly deteriorate. Some may lose concentration, become confused, become restless and disruptive, complain of minor ailments, ask to go to the toilet, or engage any of a range of avoidance techniques. Lack of automaticity may mean that huge effort is required to complete a simple activity.

### **Check:**

- that activities are short and well defined
- that activities are varied
- that activities have variable time limits
- that activities change frequently
- that there is opportunity for purposeful movement
- that children are supported in learning to pace themselves
- that children are set alternative activities rather than 'time out' as every minute counts in the education of a child with dyslexia

## **Poor Self Image**

This often comes about due to feelings of failure and can lead to various behavioural responses such as aggression, withdrawal, hypersensitivity, overreaction, clowning or depression. Sometimes the frustration and sense of failure is much greater in more able children with dyslexia.

## **Check**

- that adult response to these behaviours is appropriate and aware
- that encouragement and appreciation of efforts are employed rather than inappropriate use of praise
- that oral contributions are encouraged
- that strengths are acknowledged and appropriately rewarded
- that activities are matched to the learners i.e. appropriate in content and level, neither too easy nor excessively demanding
- that a sensitive whole school marking policy, such as the 'nearly right' marking system is in place
- that negative attitudes from others are dealt with appropriately
- that the child is helped to stay positive
- that other dyslexic people such as Jamie Oliver, Keira Knightly, Sir Richard Branson and historical 'great' dyslexics like Albert Einstein and Sir Winston Churchill are discussed

## **READING AND WRITING**

### **Reading Rate**

Pupils with dyslexia usually read at a much slower rate than their peers and extended reading diminishes the rate even more.

### **Check:**

- that parents know that they can take over and read homework aloud to the child when the rate diminishes to the point where understanding is lost
- that reading activities in class are appropriately supported or that someone is available to read to a child with dyslexia
- that sufficient reading practice is achieved incrementally, remembering that the dyslexic learner needs more reading practice than other children

### **Reading Aloud**

For some children with dyslexia there comes a point where reading aloud becomes a nightmare. Even those children who are making good progress in reading may panic when asked to read aloud in front of the class, and progress may be jeopardised by the experience.

**Check:**

- that the point where reading aloud becomes detrimental is recognised
- that reading aloud for instructional purposes takes place on a one to one basis, in private
- that only a teacher or competent reader reads key information aloud to children
- that texts are 'warmed up' through discussion using the language and illustrations of the book

**Reading for Information**

Children with dyslexia often need support when extracting information from text. Most children with dyslexia do not have difficulty with comprehension but a slow reading rate or short term memory problem may cause facts to be lost.

**Check:**

- that page and paragraph references are provided
- that a framework of 'what to look for' has been taught, is constantly reinforced and is available as a checklist
- that children can turn a question round to form the answer (eg What were the items to be found on the treasure trail? The items to be found on the treasure trail were \_ \_ \_.)
- that the children have been taught how to use different coloured highlighter pens to identify key content
- that children know how to look for key words in a text
- that teacher exposition is used when necessary
- that group discussion is employed
- that source materials are well laid out and presented
- that font or line spacing is clear and unambiguous
- that print is enlarged if necessary

**Handwriting**

Many children with dyslexia find the mechanical aspects of writing difficult. There are some children for whom writing is a physical and emotional struggle. Handwriting may be small, cramped and heavily indented if the child displays the 'white knuckle syndrome' and holds the pencil too tightly. It may be large, faint and spidery if the child holds the pencil too loosely. Writing may display reversals of letters and/or words if the child has orientation difficulties. Spacing and laterality problems may also be evident. Lack of writing fluency may be helped by practising writing patterns to music, as children can hear and feel the rhythm. This can start in with 'gross motor skills' using chubby crayons and drawing paper and progress to 'fine motor skills' using pencils and lined paper:

**Check:**

- that letters are taught as a single fluid movement with entrance and exit strokes
- that the language of movement is understood, eg up, over, around, down
- that writing is taught on lined paper, preferably that with two blue lines inside two red lines to establish the size of the letters and the height and depth of the ascenders and decenders

- that a hand-exercise corner is available to ensure that children with muscle tone (too tight or too loose) problems can exercise daily to promote strength and flexion (Graded Activities for Children with Motor Difficulties, J Russell, Cambridge)
- that the amount of writing asked of these children is not such that pain is induced. Watch for signs such as frequent breaks, hand shaking or avoidance strategies
- that small white boards and felt pens are available to practice 'lazy 8's' and writing patterns to promote fluidity and flow
- that cursive writing is permitted in order to help eliminate reversals and inversions, reinforce the learning of spelling and demarcate space between words
- that keyboarding exercises match those required for handwriting
- that similarities between computer mouse movement and cursive handwriting are discussed

### **Compositional or Response Writing**

Children with dyslexia often feel frustrated by their inability to express their feelings, creativity or understanding through writing. This makes it difficult to demonstrate their grasp of a topic to the same extent as other children.

#### **Check:**

- that visualising and verbalising strategies are taught
- that opportunities are available to respond in an alternative way, eg ICT, dictation to a scribe or recording device, drawing, drama, oral responses, etc
- that group writing, with one child recording ideas in a brainstorming session, is occasionally employed
- that mind mapping strategies are taught
- that writing frames or story skeletons are used
- that transcription of children's written work takes place to display good content
- that lots of practice is given in developing 'paragraph plans' to support the sequence of a story
- that dictation practice using controlled vocabulary is used to draw attention to appropriate spelling and punctuation

### **Copying**

For many children who have dyslexia copying may be impossible. Whether from the board or from a book, it will certainly be inaccurate and unreliable. Many children with dyslexia will seldom complete a copying task within the time given.



#### **Check:**

- that photocopies or notes printed in advance are issued when appropriate
- that homework is never to be copied down at the end of the day
- that if copying cannot be avoided, the child with dyslexia is supported and his copying is checked by the teacher
- that unsupported copying is never the only source of information

## Spelling

For most children with dyslexia spelling is the greatest challenge to be overcome. Experienced Support for Learning teachers agree that spelling is the area that presents the most difficulty.

### Check:

- that Simultaneous Oral Spelling, a multisensory procedure for teaching the spelling of irregular words is employed
- that, if the child is known to be a kinaesthetic learner, tracing, in the air, on the back, on the palm of the hand, in sand, in colours (rainbow writing) is employed
- that if the child is known to have a strong auditory channel spelling by signing or chanting is used
- that spell checkers (eg Franklin Elementary Spellmaster) are introduced when the child's spelling skills are at an appropriate level
- that mnemonics are used appropriately. Auditory mnemonics such as mispronunciation of Is-land, be-a-uti-ful, Feb-ru-ary, Wed-nes-day, etc are used for auditory learners
- that visual mnemonics such as  and  are used for visual learners when possible
- that alphabet mnemonics are used for learners who respond to quirky memory prompts such as **B**ig **E**lephants **C**an **A**dd **U**p **S**ums **E**asily
- that spelling is taught daily in an interactive, direct teaching format throughout the whole primary curriculum from P1 to P7
- that syllabification is addressed from P1 to P7 and that children practice chin wags (one chin drop on the back of the hand) to count syllables (this helps with reading as well as spelling)

## Computers

Children with dyslexia today are more fortunate than in the past, as access to ICT is now commonplace, at home as well as in school. There are many reasons why most children with dyslexia work well with computers, but a major advantage is that the work produced by word-processing tends to reflect the intellectual ability of the child more accurately. The child with dyslexia is also less likely to be de-motivated by excessive "red-pen" marking and by the need to undertake laborious re-writing to obtain a 'fair' copy. For many, but not all, children with dyslexia word processing leads to:

- less stressful composing
- better sequencing as it is easy to review what was written earlier
- faster, less laborious redrafting that does not introduce additional errors
- more easily corrected spelling and punctuation
- the motivation of well presented, legible work
- an increased concentration span
- less pressure on the short term memory as activities are divided, eg punctuation, spelling, sequencing, expression and the elimination of handwriting

**Check:**

- that suitable equipment is always available in class for producing normal class work (parents may help here)
- that children with dyslexia have priority access to limited classroom IT equipment
- that keyboard skills are specifically taught eg Type to Learn
- that portable versions of full sized keyboards eg Alphasmart Neo or I-Books are available
- that programmes such as Co:Writer, Inclusive Writer, Talking Textease, Write Outloud and Talking Pen Down are available
- that voice-activated systems are explored, eg Dragon Naturally Speaking and Keystone 2000
- that Talking Books and E-books are available
- that the use of Clicker Plus and Story Book Weaver Deluxe is investigated to support writing
- that games such as Wordshark, Number Shark, Starspell , Nussy, Catch Up, Gamz-Snap and Fix, are used to support developing literacy and numeracy
- that Kidspiration is used to support mind mapping strategies

(for details of the software mentioned, see the *Resources* booklet )

See also Books for All which has books in alternative formats:

<http://www.books4all.org.uk/Home/>

**MATHEMATICS****Number**

Some children with dyslexia have a facility with pure number work, when reading is not involved. Many children with dyslexia have difficulty with retaining number bonds and tables, number order, sequencing and place value. These difficulties are mainly due to a lack of working memory capacity which limits how much information the child can 'hold in mind' at the same time – often remembering the number means loss of capacity to perform calculations.

**Check:**

- that calculators are allowed unless the activity prohibits this
- that training in the use of calculators is given
- that tables wheels, grids and number squares are readily available
- that squared paper is used to avoid mistakes caused by spatial awareness and handwriting problems
- that a variety of approaches, including wall posters are used to develop and reinforce number facts
- computer Maths games are available in the classroom or suggested to parents for use at home



The benefits of rote learning of number bond and doubles (eg 1+1, 10+10) may be considerable. The degree of automaticity developed is well worth the time and effort this may take. However, if this activity becomes obviously threatening and distressing for the pupil it should not be pursued in the classroom. Consideration might be given to asking parents to help develop this at home.

### **Symbols and Shapes**

Children with dyslexia may have difficulty with signs such as +, -, x, =, ÷ and %. They can have problems with the identification of shapes and they may reverse numbers such as P for 9 or 53 for 35.

#### **Check:**

- that the dyslexic pupil has sign cards that display the vocabulary of the sign around it and that he is constantly encouraged to use these
- that templates, shapes and tracing boards are available to reinforce the properties of shapes
- that there is ample opportunity for revision and practice
- that strategies are in place to combat reversals such as verbalising 'five, three, five-ty three, fifty three'

### **Time**

Children with dyslexia often have difficulty with time. Telling the time is a particular problem with both analogue and digital timepieces. The temporal experience, the feeling of time passing may also be absent, impaired or delayed.

#### **Check:**

- that over teaching in this area takes place
- that adequate practice is ensured
- that timed activities are used throughout the school to give supported reinforcement

Teachers may find it useful to use a model analogue clock – or even draw one on the board to show where the hands will be at the end of the time allocated for an activity. Children with dyslexia may develop some sense of time passing as they see how the hands on the 'real' clock move towards the set time on the model.

## **THE MIDDLE PRIMARY YEARS – THE MEERKATS**

The middle primary years are the years when the highest number of parents come forward expressing concerns regarding their child's progress in literacy acquisition. Some are able to ask if this is because their child is dyslexic, some are not.

**In the middle primary years children with dyslexia, like meerkats, pop up all over the place.**

The middle primary years are the years when class teachers will need to call upon knowledge and expertise to deal effectively with children identified as dyslexic as the impact on their learning may be mild, moderate or severe according to the activities set and the child's coping strategies.

**Class teachers should be able to recognise dyslexia indicators in children and the need to refer them to the appropriate team for assessment.**

This is a crucial point in the life of a child with dyslexia and indeed in the life of their parents. The school experience at this point can set the tone for the years to come. A confident, supportive, knowledgeable adult is needed to support fragile self esteem and a faltering self image.

No matter what the school experience has been so far, the P3 teacher can put the seal on it. The love school/hate school choices are usually finalised in P3. Seven year olds begin to have mental rather than motor reactions, and they develop real opinions. This is the point where a child will really begin to engage with the idea of school or will begin to drift into the no mans land of disengagement from which few ever return.

### **USING ICT TO SUPPORT DYSLEXIA IN MIDDLE PRIMARY**

It is said that new hard and software has a six month shelf life. Such is the rate of progress in this industry. It is important for schools to try to keep up to date. Most authorities have a small group of experts or advisers who can help.

Pupils have been using computers from nursery and by P3 it is time to increase the input for children with dyslexia. The use of ICT can increase independence and improve self-esteem. It can re-motivate learners, boost their self-confidence and encourage them to develop strategies to compensate for their difficulties. Initially attention should be concentrated on developing keyboarding skills through the daily use of programmes such as Kaz or Type to Learn, alongside the use of programmes such as Clicker 5 or Co-writer with Write Out Loud to help develop independent writing. Kidspiration is a programme to develop mind mapping and story planning. In middle primary these would be used alongside a good cursive handwriting programme.

In order to prepare for digital exams that will be available to them at secondary, authorities should begin to invest now, in the hardware, software and staff training for primary schools so that they can prepare all children, not just children with dyslexia, for the developments in ICT that are surely coming. Children with dyslexia moving to Higher Education will be expected to produce all work using ICT. We must ensure they are automatic with the skills - which would mean starting in early to middle primary and using ICT for all normal class work as a matter of course.

## **STAGED APPROACH TO SUPPORT**

Using a staged approach to supporting children with dyslexia has long been a sensible and thorough method of good practice in many authorities. A good example of this is well illustrated in the 2010 *Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice*. The stages are progressed through at different rates- sometimes as quickly as four to six weeks into a stage, sometimes nearer a year in, whether the stage is right or the child needs to be moved on to the next stage.

### Stage 1

This is Support in Class with appropriate adjustment and differentiation of the curriculum. This in-school support meets the needs of most children with dyslexia provided the class teacher is aware, well trained, and well resourced and has the support of the Support for Learning teacher when required.

### Stage 2

This is Support for Learning intervention either in-class, by extraction, providing programmes for one-to-one Learning Assistant input and all at varying levels and degrees. Very many children with dyslexia flourish at this stage.

### Stage 3

Some authorities have a Dyslexia Service made up of a few highly specialised dyslexia teachers who can offer advice or input when a pupil has had a high level of support over time and has failed to respond.

When the school's Support for Learning teacher comes up against a particularly severe or entrenched dyslexic pupil or a pupil who appears to be truly stuck, despite appropriate, long term, additional support, advice and support may be requested from this specialist team. This team may also offer the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for the authority on dyslexia and because of ongoing staff changes, may provide a running programme at introductory, intermediate, advanced and maintenance levels. These teachers are usually very well known and highly regarded in the authority, with a proven track record and a very high "street credibility" factor.

Other authorities place Psychological Services in charge of organising assessment of dyslexia and of providing the training and resources needed by class and Support for Learning teachers to meet an individual's additional needs in school.

### Stage 4

This could be a special class run centrally within the authority for the small number of children with dyslexia who are thought to be able to benefit from such a provision. These classes are often restricted to upper primary as it needs a certain maturity to cope with split-campus education and a degree of physical robustness to deal with travelling. There is usually some form of gate-keeping at authority level.

## **Working Together**

The middle primary years still give many opportunities for inter-agency co-operation to change the life of a child with dyslexia. It is not too late for therapists and specialists to affect change and referrals to speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, optometrists and audiologists may still be the way forward for children whose difficulties were not picked up in nursery.

If a child is not responding to appropriate teaching, someone within the school - the PE teacher, the music teacher, a learning assistant, the dinner lady or the Support for Learning teacher - if not the class teacher herself, may spot a hint or a clue that the reason may be due to a complex language deficit, an organisational or motor impairment, a visual problem or an auditory difficulty.

Working together with a dyslexia specialist, Support for Learning teacher, therapist or other medical specialist allows a class teacher to create the most effective programme of work for a child and helps her to further develop an understanding of children's individual needs.

## **Fun and Games**

It is important to remember that children with dyslexia often need over-teaching in order to master certain concepts. They also need their fair share of the classroom fun and games. Timetabling must take account of this. It is all too easy to slot in extra work for the dyslexic pupil while the rest of the class is having fun. The temptation to do this must be rejected at all costs – eg keeping a child with dyslexia in class over a break to 'finish written work' or 'do spelling corrections' will not only enrage parents but will also create a resentful, hostile and disengaged pupil. Sensible trade offs in timetabling take time and discussion, but it is time and effort well spent.

## READING LIST

Assessing Dyslexia toolkit link (2010)

<http://www.frameworkforinclusion.org/AssessingDyslexia/>

**Backhouse G & Morris K (eds)** *Dyslexia? Assessing and Reporting* (2005, Hodder-Murray in association with PATOSS)

**Henderson, A** *Maths for the Dyslexic: A Practical Guide* (ISBN 9781853465345)

**MacKay, N** *Removing Dyslexia as a Barrier to Achievement* (SEN Marketing Dyslexia Friendly Schools Toolkit, 2005, ISBN 9781903842058)

**Packiam Alloway, T** *Improving Working Memory, Supporting Students' Learning* (2011, Sage, ISBN 9781849207485)

**Plummer, D M,** *Helping Children to Build Self-Esteem* (2nd Edition, ISBN 9781843104889)

**Reid, G** *Dyslexia: A Complete Guide for Parents* (2004, Wiley)

**Reid, G** *Dyslexia: A Practitioner's Handbook* (4th Edition, 2009, Wiley-Blackwell)

**Reid, G** *Learning Styles and Inclusion* (ISBN 97814112910644)

**Reid, G & Green S,** *100 Ideas for Supporting Pupils with Dyslexia* (ISBN 9780826493989)

**Riddick, B** *Living with Dyslexia* (David Fulton publishers, ISBN 9780415477581)

**Ryden, M** *Dyslexia How Would I Cope?* (ISBN 9781853023859)

**Saunders, Dr K & White, A** *How Dyslexics Learn –Grasping the Nettle* (ISBN 9780953931514)

**Wilkins, A** *Reading Through Colour* (ISBN 9780470851166)

**Winter, M** *Asperger Syndrome, What Teachers Need to Know* (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, ISBN 978843101437)

## PHOTOCOPIABLE

### Dyslexia Indicators at the Lower Primary Stage (Pupils ages 5 – 8)

Dyslexia is not only a problem with reading and spelling. The problem may be perceptual, auditory receptive, memory based or a processing deficit. Class 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 class please tick the relevant boxes, enter details and any additional information and pass to Support for Learning and Management for further investigation.

Pupil Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- Find it hard to learn letter/sound relationships
- Confuse letters or words with similar shapes or sounds
- Find it hard to sound out simple words
- Reverse, insert or omit words, letters and numbers
- Have difficulty with spelling very simple regular words
- Muddle the order of letters and words
- Keep losing the place when reading
- Read and do written work very slowly
- Have difficulty pronouncing longer common words
- Have difficulty hearing rhymes and sounds within words
- Have poorly spaced, poorly formed, large faint or small heavily indented writing
- Have difficulty memorising (especially in number work) despite adequate supported in-school practice
- Be slow to learn to tell the time
- Be slow to learn to tie shoe laces
- Confuse left/right and up/down
- Have difficulty learning the alphabet, months and days in order
- Have delayed or idiosyncratic speech and language development
- Have difficulty carrying out an oral instruction or, more commonly, multiple oral instructions
- Have poor organising ability – losing and forgetting things
- Have poor coordination and depth perception – tripping and bumping into things
- Have word finding difficulties
- Behaviour difficulties, frustration, poor self image.
- Easily distracted – either hyperactive or daydreaming
- Other – please give details

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Action requested:

- investigation and advice regarding support
- dyslexia assessment
- profile of additional needs

## PHOTOCOPIABLE

### Dyslexia Indicators at the Upper Primary Stage (Pupils ages 8 – 12)

Dyslexia is not only a problem with reading and spelling. The problem may be perceptual, auditory receptive, memory based or a processing deficit. Class 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 class please tick the relevant boxes, enter details and any additional information and pass to Support for Learning and Management for further investigation.

Pupil Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- Still have difficulty with reading
- Read adequately but slowly, making careless errors, and tiring in extended reading situations
- Have considerable spelling difficulties
- Have difficulty copying accurately from the blackboard or a book
- Have failed to accumulate a core of common key words
- Still confuse b/d or was/saw in reading and writing
- Still have difficulty pronouncing longer common words
- Do written work very slowly
- Miss out sounds or syllables in words, spoken and/or written
- Have difficulty memorising number bonds and tables
- Reverse numbers, eg 36 or 63
- Still confuse left/right and up/down
- Still have difficulty with the sequence of days, months and the alphabet
- Have poorly formed, poorly spaced immature handwriting
- Have difficulty remembering oral instructions
- Frequently appear confused and process only parts of the lesson
- Have word finding difficulties
- Good orally but written work disappointing
- Poor organisation and presentation; forgets books and homework
- Behaviour difficulties, frustration, poor self-image
- Easily distracted – either hyperactive or daydreaming
- Clumsy, unpopular in team games, dislikes P.E.
- Other – please give details

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Action requested:

- investigation and advice regarding support
- dyslexia assessment
- profile of additional needs

**PHOTOCOPIABLE**

**DYSLEXIA - SELF-ESTEEM ISSUES**

The child 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.

Dyslexic pupils, unless demonstrating a particular talent, may go through the school system never knowing the experience of success.

Pupil: \_\_\_\_\_ 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 level of alertness and forward planning needed to sustain intricate coping strategies
- Please note any other difficulties you have observed in this pupil

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_



**Supporting Pupils with Dyslexia at Primary School** is a series of titles 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](http://www.supportingdyslexicpupils.org) and downloaded free of charge from [www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk](http://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'***

Dr Gavin Reid

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