



Dyslexia Scotland

The Role of School Management



No 6 in the series of
Supporting Pupils with Dyslexia at Primary School

SUPPORTING PUPILS WITH DYSLEXIA AT PRIMARY SCHOOL

THE ROLE OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

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.

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

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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.¹

¹ 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 primary school with particular emphasis on the role of management. 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 and Working with Parents
- Resources and Assessment Instruments
- The Role of Support for Learning

All titles in this series are free to download from Dyslexia Scotland's website – 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>

TEACHERS' RESPONSIBILITIES REGARDING CHILDREN WITH DYSLEXIA

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

The national framework for supporting learners describes children's entitlements to support from universal support for all children to targeted supported to help particular children who face barriers to learning. The national framework is underpinned by legislation and policy.

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/supportinglearners/>

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. 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 abilities, within the curricular framework of the school
- Awareness of the learning differences related to dyslexia that may cause difficulties within these programmes
- Understanding that, while 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 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 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 have difficulties which do not appear until later primary years
- Acceptance that some children with dyslexia may require additional support and that consultation with colleagues and specialists to determine how best to provide this is necessary
- Taking account of the difficulties experienced by children with dyslexia when assessing progress, so that knowledge and abilities are assessed fairly by making arrangements for assessments that reflect the additional support provided

THE ROLE OF MANAGEMENT IN SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH DYSLEXIA

The duties for all teachers apply to the head teacher and the senior management team, but they also have additional duties of leadership.

The head teacher is responsible for:

- developing school policy in line with education authority guidance and government initiatives
- the implementation of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) 2004 (as amended) and disability & equality legislation
- monitoring and reviewing of all teaching and learning within the inclusive Curriculum for Excellence
- making arrangements for the continuing professional development of all staff
- working in partnership with parents in the best interests of their children
- implementing the education authority's accessibility policies – access to the building, to the curriculum, and to the school community

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Reference: Framework for Inclusion: Assessing Dyslexia – Toolkit for Teachers

<http://www.frameworkforinclusion.org/AssessingDyslexia/index.php?category=14&sub=3&point=7>

The seven Scottish universities providing initial teacher education have agreed a Framework for Inclusion and embedded dyslexia training for new teachers in initial teacher education (The National Framework for Inclusion Scottish Teacher Education Committee 2009 <http://www.gtcs.org.uk/web/FILES/ExternalPublications/STEC-National-Framework-Report.pdf>).

The Framework for Inclusion² identifies the values and beliefs, professional knowledge and understanding and the skills and abilities, in terms of inclusive education, to be

² Scottish Teacher Education Committee (STEC) National Framework for Inclusion

<http://www.gtcs.org.uk/web/FILES/ExternalPublications/STEC-National-Framework-Poster.pdf>

expected of student teachers, of qualified teachers and of teachers pursuing advanced professional studies. The Framework also puts forward advice on design principles for programmes of teacher education and advanced professional studies with regard to inclusion. All teachers should have access to CPD programmes on dyslexia within this Framework

From 2010 all new teachers having completed one year or four years teacher training will have had access to the Resource Bank, including advice and guidance on dyslexia.

Teachers trained before this may have had little access to training and advice in dyslexia at all, unless they chose or volunteered to do some form of CPD. Informal research into in-house courses offered by education authorities and attendance at conferences and courses run by the voluntary sector suggests that the uptake of courses on dyslexia is largely by teachers who already have some knowledge or interest in the subject. Many people who deliver these courses confirm this, observing that their audiences are so in tune with them that they feel they are 'preaching to the converted'.

Head teachers would be expected to introduce the Framework for Inclusion document in Planned Activity Time in schools – perhaps as reflection on current practice. In addition to this reflection, the recommendations of HMIE in their 2008 report *Education for Learners with Dyslexia* may require schools and authorities to provide appropriate CPD on dyslexia for all staff.

Teachers, themselves, have responsibility for reflecting on their professional skills and how these can be improved and they should expect head teachers to support and encourage them to undertake CPD. While courses and conferences are important sources of CPD there is a range of ways now through which teachers can improve their skills including self-directed study, on-line learning, coaching and mentoring. Teachers and head teachers can obtain advice about CPD from CPD Scotland (<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/cpdscotland/index.asp>) and CPD Find (<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/cpdscotland/cpdfind/index.asp>) provides a database of CPD opportunities for teachers, including CPD available on dyslexia.

The GTCS Framework for Professional Recognition provides teachers with an opportunity to gain recognition for particular expertise they may have and display in their professional practice. In particular, the Framework sets out the knowledge, understanding and skills required of teachers who have particular expertise in meeting the additional support needs of children with dyslexia (http://www.gtcs.org.uk/ProfessionalDevelopment/ProfessionalRecognition/competencies_dyslexia.aspx). Head teachers should encourage staff, whom they feel may be eligible, to apply for professional recognition in this particular area of work.

The Implementation of the Education (Scotland) Act (2004) and Equality Act 2010

The duties and responsibilities of education authorities – and schools – are explained clearly in the Code of Practice that has been issued to support the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, as amended.³

In addition, the Equality Act (2010) replaces the existing anti-discrimination laws with a single Act and this includes legislation relating to disability. The provisions in this Act will come into force at different times. However, local authorities and schools are already aware that a learner may have a disability resulting from his/her dyslexia. The Equality Act 2010 states that:

'A person (P) has a disability if-
(a) P has a physical or mental impairment, and
(b) the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on P's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.'

Education authorities and schools need to comply with the legislation regarding disabled pupils, including those disabled by their dyslexia. Advice on the legislation is available from the Equality and Human Rights Commission.⁴ The head teacher should ensure that pupils are not treated less favourably because of their dyslexia and that steps are taken to ensure that they are not placed at a substantial disadvantage because of their dyslexia.⁵ For example, the head teacher should ensure that the school's homework policy does not disadvantage those with dyslexia (see below).

Head teachers should ensure that robust monitoring and reviewing procedures are in place. The ethos of a school, how supportive it is towards its pupils and parents, how effective it is in meeting the needs of the learners are all strongly impacted by the empathy and awareness of the head teacher and these are aspects evaluated by HMIE in school inspections.

The importance of a head teacher who is knowledgeable about dyslexia, who has supported the appointment a well trained Support for Learning teacher and who supports the vital work on early identification and intervention carried out in nursery and P1 cannot be overstated.

Teacher expectations have a powerful impact on children but these must be tempered by a supportive, nurturing learning environment created by the teacher.

3 Scottish Government (2010) *Supporting Children's Learning : Code of Practice*.

4 <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/scotland/>

5 Equality & Human Rights Commission Guidance for Education Providers

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/guidance-for-education-providers-schools/>

Co-occurrence

Senior managers may need to remind staff often that dyslexia may occur alongside other conditions. The child with cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, ADHD, dyspraxia, Tourette's syndrome, autism, Asperger's syndrome or behavioural difficulties may also be dyslexic. Teachers must constantly ask themselves, and the pupil and parents, '*What is the primary presenting problem?*' and '*What factor is the cause of this learning behaviour?*'

Very often the adults involved with the child may be concentrating on a medical condition when at that point in time, it is the co-occurring dyslexia that is causing the pupil the most difficulty. It is the dyslexia that the pupil would most like some help with. The masking effects of other conditions may not be taken in to account by teachers which have – rightly – led to concerns being expressed about the dangers of 'labelling' children according to their condition. However, there is an equal danger that not identifying dyslexia may lead to a lack of understanding of why some children fail to make progress in the curriculum and a failure to make appropriate provision to meet their needs.

Homework

Head teachers who have ensured the introduction of a whole school homework policy (see example *Happy Homework Policy* on page 8) may have already resolved or avoided many difficulties caused by dyslexia in the home. Many teachers will never know the catastrophic effect of the homework they have set on the home environment. Parents of a child with dyslexia often have to deal with refusal to do homework, tantrums and tears and their child's expectation of failure. Some children with dyslexia who are unable to complete homework that their classmates appear to manage easily develop low self esteem and assume that they are 'stupid' and will never succeed in school. Whatever the child's reaction, it can be very hard for the parents - and siblings - to deal with.

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 families' lives.

Technology

Head teachers have a responsibility to organise their budgets to meet the needs of all pupils, and within this they must accommodate the need to support children with dyslexia with the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) - though some authorities provide this as a matter of course.

Common technological aids for children with dyslexia are:

- spell checkers
- word processors
- text readers

- predictive software
- text to speech software
- speech recognition software
- voice recording devices
- e-books for ipods
- mind mapping programmes to organise writing
- phonic games
- word building games
- spelling games
- number games
- keyboarding programmes etc.

(See Resources booklet)

All staff should be made aware of the benefits of technology in supporting a learner with dyslexia. Ongoing professional development courses should be constantly updated. The use of laptop computers in the classroom should be encouraged for extended writing and also for normal class work, where appropriate. Access to the classroom computer(s) should not be used as a 'reward' for finishing work first, or an 'extra' activity for the most able pupils – a system that ensures that the most needy children, who could benefit most from computer use are permanently denied access to this form of support. Children with dyslexia need to be prioritised as computer users.

The *Books for All* website which has books in alternative formats:

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

Working with Parents

Head teachers can do much to set the tone for their staff by their example when interacting with parents. As in all professions, some staff may need a good example to follow – a role model – when adult interpersonal relationships are required. Parents of children with dyslexia can be extremely vulnerable though they may appear to be angry and hostile. Less experienced teachers may not understand the extent of the home life issues being experienced by parents of children with dyslexia. Dyslexia does not just affect an individual's schoolwork; it affects life and living. It affects families.

Head teachers can ensure that the school provides a high level of support to the parents of children with dyslexia and that all communication is clear, positive and constructive. Above all, managers should ensure that parents' concerns are listened to sympathetically and that any promised action is taken and parents informed of the outcome.

Head teachers should also ensure that members of their staff can deliver, within a set structure and stated time scale, appropriate diagnostic assessments and well-planned programmes based on individual profiles. Parents who have faith in the ability of a school to educate their child and who themselves feel comfortable and supported by the school will do their best to deliver a calm, positive, cooperative, active learner to the school each morning. When a true school-parent partnership is formed, all will benefit.

The purpose of the Curriculum for Excellence is encapsulated in the four capacities - to enable each child or young person to be a **successful learner**, a **confident individual**, a **responsible citizen** and an **effective contributor**. In order to ensure that children with dyslexia are given an equal opportunity to achieve these capacities, head teachers must ensure that measures are in place to identify their learning needs as early as possible and that support and interventions are put in provided so that they may access this curriculum at an appropriate level.

Further reading

Calder, I *Including Pupils with Dyslexia: How can Classroom Assistants Help?* (Paper for BDA Conference, University of Warwick, March 2004) www.bdainternationalconference.org/2004/presentations/mon_s6_b_5.shtml

DFES/British Dyslexia Association *Achieving Dyslexia Friendly Schools Information Pack* (2005) www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/dfs.html

Deponio, P *Dyslexia at Transition* (2007) <http://www.dyslexiatransition.org/>

Dyslexia Scotland *Teachers' Guide* (2005)
www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk/documents/Guide%20for%20Teachers%20A4.pdf

Dyslexia Scotland *Assessing Dyslexia toolkit* (2010)
<http://www.frameworkforinclusion.org/AssessingDyslexia/>

HMIE *Education for Learners with Dyslexia* (2008, HM Inspectorate of Education)
<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/eflwd.pdf>

Mckay, N *Removing Dyslexia as a Barrier to Achievement* (2005, SEN Marketing)

Peer, L & Reid, G *Introduction to Dyslexia* (2003, BDA/Fulton)

Reid, G & Green, S *100 Ideas for Supporting Pupils with Dyslexia* (2007, Continuum International)

Reid, G, Davidson-Petch, L & Deponio, P *Scotland-Wide Audit of Education Authority Early Years Policies and Provision regarding Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) and Dyslexia: A report on a research study commissioned by the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED, 2004)* <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/03/20872/54820>

Scottish Government *Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice* (2010)
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/321392/0103307.pdf>

'Happy Homework Policy' for Children with Dyslexia

No matter what the school policy is for homework, homework is likely to cause problems for children with dyslexia – they may experience difficulties with:

- 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

An inclusive school's homework policy will anticipate a range of possible problems associated with homework and suggest strategies for resolving these – e.g. setting up homework clubs to provide adult support where this may not be readily available at home. Policy should reflect awareness that children with dyslexia often have dyslexic parents and that homework issues may have a negative impact on family life – and suggest strategies to help e.g. volunteer homework 'helpers' in the local community.

Most children with dyslexia will be provided with appropriate support within the mainstream classroom – and this level of support should also be provided for any homework set. Parents will already be aware of the provision made in school to support their children with dyslexia and they should be involved in ensuring that this is also available at home for homework activities – especially ICT support.

Although homework tasks will reflect children's activities within the curriculum, some children with dyslexia may be expected to undertake additional tasks e.g. to help with reading difficulties. **This should never be done without the full cooperation – and, if necessary, training - of the parents.** In such cases, it must be clear which activities should have priority so that the child is not burdened with more homework than others - more is not better when you are dyslexic! Children with dyslexia experience a greater level of fatigue than others over the school day, so will have less energy and poorer concentration levels –setting additional homework tasks is likely to result in diminishing returns for effort, as well as frustration and even tantrums. Parents should be advised on how to pace the child's homework activities and of the advantages of several short sessions rather than one huge effort.

Teachers in a 21st century school might post homework tasks on the school website or email them directly to parents, but children with dyslexia need to know before arriving home what their homework activities will be – and how long they should spend on these. The need reassurance from the teacher that they can ask for appropriate support – they will have a much more positive attitude if they can tell parents that – *'the teacher said you can read this to me'* – than if they have to experience failure before parents step in to provide support.

PHOTOCOPIABLE

HAPPY HOMEWORK

A 'happy homework' policy leads to:

Happy teachers, who:

- Ensure a shared understanding with parents that the purpose of homework is to practice what has already been taught
- Discuss homework issues with parents in advance and set aside time to deal with any additional queries
- Help and encourage parental telephone and email networks to combat lost homework notes, instruction sheets or newsletters
- Encourage parents to monitor homework for level of difficulty and time spent
- Set an agreed timeframe for homework tasks appropriate to each primary stage
- Establish the importance of discussing any homework a child is unable to complete
- Understand that some homework activities may not be viable options for a dyslexic learner
- Know that copying down homework can be a problem for some children with dyslexia and are prepared to give out a printed copy when required
- Base homework tasks on the activities within the curriculum and never give it out hastily at the end of the day
- Never set uncompleted class work for homework
- Never expect a parent to become a teacher and introduce new learning as homework

Happy parents, who:

- Know exactly what their role is regarding homework
- Understand the reason for homework being issued
- Are able to set time limits for completion of homework
- Have clear strategies in place to follow if a child cannot do the homework set
- Are happy and comfortable talking to the teacher about homework issues

Happy children, who:

- Know that the purpose of homework is to practice what they have already learned
- Know that homework allows them to show their parents what they have learned
- Have the time and opportunity to clarify anything when the homework is issued
- Know that there is an amicable agreement about homework between their parents and the teacher
- Know that they can ask their parents for the same level of support that they are given in the classroom
- Know the upper time limit placed on doing homework

'Dyslexia Friendly' Schools

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. 2009 Definition of Dyslexia <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/welfare/ASL/dyslexia>

Being an effective school and being dyslexia friendly are two sides of the same coin. Effective schools enjoy strong leadership, value staff development and pay close attention to the quality of instruction and learning. These are schools in which all children are important, regardless of ability or difficulty.

Failure to be like this risks alienating a significant percentage of the school population and their parents - and the issue is wider than the 10 per cent or so who are dyslexic, as these measures will benefit other pupils whose literacy and/or numeracy skills are not appropriate to their age. Crucially, more children are successful when taught using dyslexia friendly teaching methods - and while dyslexia friendly techniques can be applied to children who are not dyslexic, this does not work the other way around.

So having accepted the principle, the key issue is how to get there, given little time, money and increasing pressure to deliver more and more with less and less. Becoming 'Dyslexia Friendly' requires significant commitment from a school, requiring participation from all teachers and other school staff, parents and pupils, involving evaluation and review of the implementation of school policies. The starting point may be self-evaluation of school policies and their impact on improving children's learning within the Curriculum for Excellence resulting in becoming a dyslexia friendly school being a target in the improvement plan.

Once the school leadership is committed to becoming dyslexia friendly, a whole school approach is necessary to translate written policy into tangible action. This means overcoming initial scepticism, offering comprehensive training, formulating a common approach, setting targets and putting in place monitoring and evaluation systems. Effective dyslexia friendly schools will encourage maximum participation by parents, based on trust, mutual respect and honesty. At the outset, head teachers need to make certain that school policies are written in everyday language, without the use of unnecessary jargon or abbreviations that those outside the teaching profession are unlikely to understand.

Head teachers need to ensure that being dyslexia friendly underpins the philosophy of the school to the extent that, for instance, it is used as a factor in the selection of new staff at interview. There should be high expectations of pupils with dyslexia and others who are underachieving with a zero tolerance of failure. The clearly understood message from the head teacher should be that everyone is expected to achieve and is empowered to do so.

In a dyslexia friendly environment, any failure of pupils to learn should not automatically be considered the fault of the children. The teaching methodology, materials and learning support should be reconsidered.

This means that the dyslexia friendly head teacher needs to foster an approach whereby the onus is on teachers to change their way of teaching these children, if it is not working. In other words, rather than saying 'they can't learn', the teacher says 'I can do it another way'.

Each *Dyslexia Friendly* school should have a teacher who is trained in dyslexia and all school policies should reflect good practice in relation to dyslexia. A training day spent on demystifying dyslexia and setting up whole school approaches, either run by the school's specialist dyslexia teacher or a visiting 'expert', will reassure teachers and empower them to work in a different way. This should focus on developing a common approach to dealing with common problems.

All staff should make themselves aware of strategies and resources that support pupils with dyslexia and use these in curriculum delivery so that the pupils are not disadvantaged in any way – they should:

- recognise that the negative effect of stress on pupils with dyslexia will impact on their learning and their emotional well-being
- value the individual, praise effort and achievement and promote strengths
- seek opportunities for continuing professional development on dyslexia

Additional school policies may have to be developed such as:

- **Marking and assessment** - implicit within the empowering ethos of the dyslexia friendly school, are assessment techniques which work - in other words, they overcome basic skill barriers and enable pupils to demonstrate what they know and can do. Marking should be consistent across the school and reflect the nature of the task set.
- **Homework Policy** – e.g. Happy Homework. Parents and teachers need to come to an agreement about how homework instructions will be recorded and how long should be spent on a particular topic.
- **Additional support** – the needs of about 4% of children may not be met in the classroom by the class teacher working alone - one child in every class is likely to need some form of specialist teaching. Diagnostic assessment by a specialist dyslexia teacher or educational psychologist will enable extra help to be focused on his individual needs.

'Dyslexia friendly schools are able to identify and respond to the "unexpected difficulties" that a dyslexic learner may encounter. . . . A particular feature of such schools is the awareness among all teachers of what each pupil should be able to achieve, together with a range of response strategies when targets are not met. . . . Dyslexia friendly schools are proactive schools because they believe in the importance of "rigorous scrutiny followed by immediate intervention".' (BDA, 2008)

Example – School Policy on Dyslexia

Our staff are happy and able to inform parents and pupils (where appropriate) about the nature of dyslexia and the provision available in our school.

- We have a proactive, whole-school approach to identifying and meeting the needs of pupils with dyslexia
- We have effective links with our nursery class who identify pupils displaying behaviours that suggest they may have dyslexia
- We have effective links with our local secondary school and provide early information regarding dyslexia to facilitate appropriate support on transfer and promote sensitive placement in classes
- We ensure that dyslexic pupils have access to literacy support, curricular support and social/emotional support within the classroom according to individual need
- Our Support for Learning Staff have the tools and expertise necessary to carry out in-depth assessment, identify dyslexic profiles, create individual programmes and support all staff in the delivery of the programmes
- We do not judge knowledge and understanding only by literacy skills and pupils are given full opportunity to progress without unnecessary dependence on written text.
- We support our partnership with parents by holding regular review meetings for pupils with dyslexia and keeping appropriate levels of planning documents
- We ask all parents on enrolment of the pupil if there is any family history of dyslexia or literacy difficulties
- We are happy for parents to bring a friend, relative or supporter to any in-school meeting or review
- We are committed to improving our effectiveness in meeting the needs of our dyslexic pupils and as such find any suggestions and comments from parents of dyslexic pupils helpful for our ongoing evaluation process
- We have a 'Happy Homework' policy
- We encourage parent e-mail and telephone networking in anticipation of occasional difficulties and stress arising from lost or misinterpreted newsletters, notes home, verbal messages or homework.
- We acknowledge that these problems can be escalated by the dyslexic difficulties with organisation and short term memory and would want to develop strategies with families to minimise the impact of these

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)

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 and downloaded 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'

Dr Gavin Reid

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