



# Dyslexia Scotland

## Working with Parents



# SUPPORTING PUPILS WITH DYSLEXIA AT PRIMARY SCHOOL

## **WORKING WITH PARENTS**

**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.

Thanks also go to M & A Thomson Litho Ltd, East Kilbride, Scotland who printed the titles at below cost – [www.thomsonlitho.com](http://www.thomsonlitho.com) and Paula O'Connell for copy-editing all titles.

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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  
[www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk](http://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk)

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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 importance and benefits of direct and open communication with parents of children with dyslexia. It is part of a series of eight titles and it is recommended that this book is read in conjunction with:

- The appropriate core title covering early, middle or upper primary
- Identification of Dyslexia at Primary School
- 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 AND WORKING WITH PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH DYSLEXIA AT PRIMARY SCHOOL**

### **A PARTNERSHIP FROM THE START**

Chapter 6 of the 2005 *Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice* states:

***"Parents must also have the opportunity to be involved fully in discussions and decisions about their child's learning. Most parents want what is best for their children and have unique knowledge and experience to contribute to understanding their child's additional support needs. They, therefore, have a key role to play in their child's education and account should be taken of their wishes and the perspective they bring."***

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, as amended, serves to strengthen the involvement of parents in working with schools and authorities to reach decisions which are best for their children's learning. Education professionals need to involve parents and take account of their views on their child's development and education.

**Partnership with parents is central to ensuring that children who experience additional support needs benefit fully from school education.**

From the very first contact parents have with a school, the school should do everything within its power to develop an ethos of mutual support, respect and understanding. Parents of children with dyslexia have the same concerns about their children's progress as all parents have, and the same desire to play an active part in their education. They may, however, need a higher level of support and understanding and they will certainly wish for a school for their children that is well placed to provide a full and rounded education for all pupils with dyslexia.



Many primary schools go beyond their legal obligations in this area as can be seen in policy statements found in many school handbooks.

For example: **Our Policy on Dyslexia**

Our staff are happy and able to inform parents and pupils (as 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 children with dyslexia
- All school staff have undertaken continuing professional development about dyslexia - new staff are given access on this training as soon as they join us. This training is 'topped up' every two years
- We have effective links with our nursery class who identify children 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 children with dyslexia have access to literacy support, curricular support and social/emotional support within the classroom according to individual need, at any given time
- Our Support for Learning Staff have the training, 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 by literacy skills alone and all children are given full opportunity to progress unhampered by unnecessary dependence on written text.
- We support our partnership with parents by holding regular review meetings for children with dyslexia and keeping differing levels of planning documents as appropriate
- We ask all parents on enrolment of the child 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 learners and as such find any suggestions and comments from parents of children with dyslexia helpful for our ongoing evaluation process
- We have a Happy Homework policy in place at all stages

We encourage parental 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 impact of dyslexic difficulties on organisation and short term memory and would want to develop strategies with families to minimise the impact of these.

.....

A primary school where a policy statement of this nature is a dynamic document and all the staff 'talked the talk' and 'walked the walk' would be 'a dream come true' for the parent of every child with dyslexia.

It is not difficult to achieve this ideal. There is no mystique. It can be seen in many primary schools across the country and many more schools are very close to this good practice model. The *Dyslexia-Friendly* schools initiative incorporates many of these strategies. (See photocopiable appendices)

An audit of a school's current position in supporting dyslexic pupils would quickly identify any areas that needed to be developed as next steps. A timescale could be set for the completion of tasks and the implementation of objectives. Any monitoring and evaluating procedures put in place should include clear success criteria.

Individual schools where good practice is recognised and staff are identified as having reached a certain level of expertise might be encouraged by their authorities to support and help other schools who are interested in following their example. Much more networking, sharing and celebrating of the many areas of good/innovatory practice were identified in the report on research commissioned by the Scottish Executive Education Department on a Scotland-Wide Audit of Education Authority Early Years Policies and Provision regarding Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) and Dyslexia.<sup>2</sup>

## **INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS**

Teachers may believe that dyslexia affects a person only in relation to education or is specific to reading and writing and that the child with dyslexia who causes all sorts of problems in the classroom goes home to a normal life with the family. This is not so. A dyslexic person has to cope with the effects the disability has on functioning twenty four hours a day. The organisational inefficiencies in handling information occur all the time and the fatigue, frustration and low self-esteem arising from these therefore also happen all the time. The pervasive nature of dyslexia absorbs family life and involves continual parental energy.

The added difficulties parents of children with dyslexia may experience from time to time include:

- Confusion about the nature of dyslexia
- Guilt about the possible inherited nature of dyslexia
- Distress over what the future may hold
- Anger – often irrational – at the school, the child, self and partner
- Frustration at feelings of helplessness

2 Report by Gavin Reid, Louise Davidson-Petch, Pamela Deponio (Part 5)  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/03/20872/54820>

- Anxiety about the child's confusion, guilt, distress and anger
- Over-protectiveness born of living with a child with dyslexia and watching the daily struggle
- Stress because the whole family can be affected by something as simple as inappropriate homework
- Exasperation because it is sometimes difficult to convince some education professionals that parents really do know their children best
- Despair caused by some or all of the above

It may be helpful to introduce the parent of a child with dyslexia to outside agencies and support groups such as the local branch of Dyslexia Scotland or Enquire. Some schools have formed their own support groups where the parents of their own 10% of dyslexic pupils meet to chat over coffee and biscuits. Teachers, who attend these groups, are often surprised to learn that the impact of a child's dyslexia is as great on the quality of family life as it can be in the classroom.

## **HOMEWORK**

Homework can be an upsetting, frustrating and often a traumatic experience for children with dyslexia and their families. Whilst some children may be able to cope with allocated homework the pressure on others and their families can be severe. Homework should come with a health warning – see Happy Homework Policy in photocopyable appendices.

Parents **MUST** be encouraged to discuss homework issues with the class teacher. If the homework is too hard, the teacher must be informed. If the homework is taking too long, the teacher must be informed.

### **Setting homework**

Making a note of homework tasks is often difficult for the dyslexic pupil who may be unable keep up with teacher's dictation rate or who may need extra time to copy from the board. Issuing homework should not be done in a rush at the end of the day. A printed handout, free of ambiguity, for the child with dyslexia eliminates any stress, doubt or worry – and helps all children (and parents) to ensure that the required activities are carried out at home.

Extra homework to 'catch up' is **NEVER** a good idea for the child with dyslexia who can become very depressed and discouraged when faced with large amounts of work.

### **Time concerns**

A school's homework policy will usually state how much time children at each stage will be expected to spend on homework. However, teachers and parents need to take account of the extra effort that may be required during the school day by many children with dyslexia and consider how exhausted they may be after school. Children with dyslexia often need to exercise and eat before they are ready to cope with the stress of homework.

A beat the clock approach with homework broken down into 5 minutes blocks using a timer can be helpful, especially for the child with dyslexia who is:

- slow to complete work
- prone to stare into space
- a 'master' of subject change

### **Supporting homework**

Varying degrees of support with routine and organisation will involve liaison between parent and teacher at the start of each school year or indeed, for reinforcement, at the start of each school term. This kind of mutual support may be time consuming but often pays huge dividends in establishing a well organised, workable, daily homework routine in a quiet, cleared, supervised place.

The purpose of homework is to practise known skills and to 'show off' newly learned abilities. This being the case no child should ever say to a parent "I can't do this".

If a child with dyslexia is likely to need help to complete the homework set, parents should be told what this is and given guidance on how to provide it. How much simpler – and happier – life would be if parents were asked – eg to read a text passage to their child and to write down their responses to set questions – instead of assuming that the child is expected to be able to read and write at the same level as their non-dyslexic peers.

Once a child's support needs have been identified in school, it is not enough to provide support in the classroom – parents need to be asked to provide similar support for homework – some schools have set up homework clubs where this kind of support is provided.

### **ICT at home**

Encouragement to continue the use of the computer and the use of software that are being taught and used in school is to be recommended. Many primary schools may start children with dyslexia learning keyboarding skills from primary 1, so by primary 3, they could be asked to use ICT to complete homework – or to practice keyboarding instead of handwriting.

There are 'home' versions of some excellent software written specifically for children with dyslexia and some schools offer parents tuition in using these programs so that they can support their children's use of the software. There are 'home' versions, with parents' user manuals available for some software – so homework may be set for eg Earobics, Word Shark, Number Shark. Nesy Tales consist of animated Children's Stories on CD that provide a fun new way to improve children's reading, vocabulary and listening skills at home. Writing support software such as Kidspiration, Clicker, Co Writer, Write Out Loud could also be used at home but it is important that parents check with the school what software is being used before investing in expensive programs to help their children with dyslexia.

## SUGGESTED READING

**Augur, J** *Dyslexia: Early Help, Better Future* (1998, British Dyslexia Association)

**Crompton, S:** *A-Minute-A-Day – A set of 27 Precision Teaching Games for Parents and Teachers* (Precise Educational)

**Given, B & Reid, G** *Learning Styles: A Guide for Teachers and Parents* (1998, Red Rose Publications)

**Jordan, I** *Visual Dyslexia A Guide for Parents and Teachers* (2000, Desktop Publications)

**Lannen, C; Lannen, S & Reid, G** *Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia) – A Resource Book for Parents and Teachers* (Red Rose Publications)

**Ostler C** *Study Skills: A Pupils' Survival Guide* (2000, Ammonite Books)

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

**Ripley, K** *Dyspraxia – A Guide for Teachers and Parents* (David Fulton Publishers)

**Stansfield, J** *Communicating in Writing* (1998, BDA)

**Tipper, A** *Plees Help* (1996, Desktop Publications)

**Whurr, AJ** *This Book Doesn't Make Sense* (1995, BDA)

### **Teachers:**

**Chivers, M** *Practical Strategies for Dealing with Dyslexia* (Jessica Kingsley Publishers)

**Crivelli, V** *Write to Read with ICT* (2001, SEN Marketing)

**Dyslexia Scotland:** *DYSLEXIA A Guide for Teachers* from <http://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk/>

**Dyslexia Scotland:** *Assessing Dyslexia online toolkit:* <http://www.frameworkforinclusion.org/AssessingDyslexia/>

**Henderson, A** *Maths for the Dyslexic – A Practical Guide* (1998, David Fulton)

**Mellers, C** *Identifying and Supporting the Dyslexic Child* (2000, Desktop Publications)

### **Parents:**

**Dyslexia Scotland** *DYSLEXIA A Brief Guide for Parents* from <http://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk/>

**Geere, B** *Seven Ways to Help Your Child with Reading* (BDA)

**Geere, B** *Seven Ways to Help Your Child with Maths* (BDA)

**Heaton, P** *Dyslexia – Parents in Need* (Wiley)

**McCosh, A** *A Dyslexic Child in the Family?* (1999, Desktop Publications)

**Ostler, C** *Dyslexia: A Parent's Survival Guide* (1999, Ammonite Books)

**Reid, G** *With a Little Help from My Friends – Dyslexia: An Introductory Guide For Parents* (2002, University of Edinburgh)

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

**Van der Stoep, S (Ed)** *Parents on Dyslexia, Multilingual Matters* (Clevedon)

**Various Leaflets available from Dyslexia Scotland**

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Web: <http://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk/>

**PHOTOCOPIABLE**

**DYSLEXIA – PARENT'S CHECKLIST**

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.

Children with dyslexia are sometimes penalised at home because their families do not fully understand that dyslexia impacts all aspects of life, not just education.

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

Please indicate any of the following that you suspect your child may be currently 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 effort
- seems to have few friends (may be linked to isolation or identity problems)
- humiliation as 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 your child

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

If you wish to share this information with your child's teacher, please call to arrange an appointment.

Contact: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## PHOTOCOPIABLE

### ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES

Parents are always interested in good ways of helping their children with dyslexia but there is a need to treat any new ideas with caution. Some 'new' programmes include well-established good practice and multi-sensory methods that are already used by specialist teachers working with children with dyslexia. Look for evidence of success for new programmes that has been carefully evaluated before undertaking expenditure on these.

Since dyslexia is not a disease, there is no 'cure'. It is a permanent condition just as left-handedness is. All dyslexic learners are different – the dyslexia affects each differently in different ways and there is no single method that will suit them all. But all can develop strategies to compensate for their dyslexic difficulties. Dyslexia is more than just an isolated difficulty in reading and spelling. It often includes problems with number, memory, organisation and self-esteem.

This checklist for alternative therapies may provide a useful guide for evaluation 'new' therapies.

#### **1. A list of questions about the 'new' therapy – check:**

- The length of time that the therapy has been used, and whether it works
- The range of difficulties of those who received this therapy and the results
- A list of any research that has been done showing the effectiveness of therapy
- Whether the therapy is considered to be appropriate or unsuitable for certain groups or individuals, and details on any possible side effects
- Signs that determine whether the therapy has been successful, and arrangements for comparing behaviour before and after

#### **2. A list of questions for the therapist – ask about:**

- Details of how long the therapist has been using the therapy and the numbers and ages of people treated.
- Details of training in using the therapy and where the training was done, how long it lasted – eg Who trained you? How long did the training last? What qualifications are needed to undergo training? Can I see your certificate?
- Does anyone still monitor you to see if you are still doing the therapy correctly?
- Describe your child and the difficulties identified. How many people have you treated who have similar difficulties and what were the results?
- Can you give me the names and telephone numbers of any other parents/carers who have a child similar to my child who has received this therapy?

#### **3. The arrangements for therapy – check:**

- The number of sessions required and the **total** cost of the therapy.
- Where the therapy will take place and transport and/or accommodation arrangements - how much extra will this cost?
- When will the therapy take place? Dates, times, time span, time off school?
- Do I have to pay for the therapy in advance?
- What happens if I wish to abandon the therapy before the course of treatment is completed? How much would I have to pay?
- Will we have a written agreement about the terms and conditions?
- If my child gets worse or the condition does not change after therapy can I have my money back? Will I be entitled to compensation?



## PHOTOCOPIABLE

### DYSLEXIA - CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS

Parents may have noticed some of the factors listed below and agree that investigation of dyslexia should be carried out. A specialist teacher investigating your child for dyslexia may ask if these factors have been checked; some will be known only to parents, and details may not be required for identification of dyslexia – but it may be useful to know that some of the factors listed below may contribute to your child's dyslexia.

- 1. Birth history.** Were there any problems before during or after birth, eg a premature birth?
- 2. Family history.** Are others in the family dyslexic? There is usually a genetic factor in developmental dyslexia, though other family members may have varying characteristics and severity.
- 3. Educational history.** Has school experience been difficult? What intervention has there been? How has this helped?
- 4. General health.** Have there been any long illnesses, involving school absence? Could there be any undiagnosed conditions, eg mild epilepsy or petit mal, which may look like inattention and gaps in continuity? A physical injury or a stroke may indicate acquired dyslexia.
- 5. Vision.** School medicals are not enough. Has vision been checked by an optometrist? Has visual convergence been checked? Is there a possibility of visual stress or binocular instability? Does the child lose his place when reading? Is the child light sensitive, does the print blur or appear to move?
- 6. Hearing.** Has hearing been checked? Did the child have 'glue ear' when younger? This may have hindered auditory perception of sounds in words.
- 7. Speech and language.** Have there been delays or deficits in speech and language development? This includes pronunciation of words, vocabulary development, complexity of spoken language and understanding of language heard. Would a referral to a speech and language therapist be advisable? Is English the first language of the child and in the home? This could have implications for test results, even for visual/spatial aspects of cognitive ability for which oral instructions are given.
- 8. Co-ordination.** Is the child clumsy or accident-prone? Does this affect gross and fine motor movements? Is the child aware of his/her own body in space in relation to people and objects? How about anticipation of the movements of others, eg in team games? Dyspraxia might be a possibility if verbal ability is considerably higher than visual-spatial skills in ability tests. Would a referral to an occupational therapist be advisable? Left-handedness is not significantly higher in dyslexics but life is harder for all left-handers. Cross-laterality is not significant either but late development of hand dominance or non-dominance of hand, eye, foot, seems to happen more often in dyslexics.

**9. Attention and Emotional Behavioural aspects.** If these are present, are they primary factors or an outcome of frustration at difficulty in learning? Some behavioural difficulties appear to be controllable and are intended to disrupt or annoy. Other conditions, like Attention Deficit Disorder, with or without Hyperactivity, are involuntary, and disruptive behaviour appears purposeless and puzzling to all concerned. Lack of ability to concentrate is typical of ADD and ADHD, so weaknesses in – eg - reading may be a result of this.

**10. Communication/relationship aspects.** This is different from speech and language disorders. Pupils may have difficulty making eye-contact, communicating and making relationships and showing appropriate behaviour? Is there a tendency towards some aspect of autism?

**11. Self-esteem.** Literacy is deemed very important in our culture. It is not surprising that those who find it difficult are very frustrated, depressed and have low self-esteem. People complain about giving labels, but most dyslexics are very pleased to know that there is a reason for their difference.

**12. Intelligence.** It is as wrong to expect too much of someone with below average intelligence as it is to expect too little of someone with high intelligence. People of high intelligence who can grasp some things quickly may be very frustrated by their slowness in literacy skills. People with lower cognitive abilities, sometimes known as global learning difficulties, may have some dyslexic characteristics but their lower ability is the primary factor. Dyslexics usually show a varied pattern of abilities.

**13. Diet supplements and drugs.** There is no pill that makes learning to read easy. However, nutritional vulnerability or deficiencies may affect concentration and behaviour so affect learning indirectly. Research suggests that some dyslexics lack a natural production of some essential nutritional ingredients. Some people are allergic to food additives. Some drugs control behaviour, but their long term effects are not known. They should only be given on medical advice.

**14. Individual styles for learning, working and living.** Any assessment of dyslexia should reveal strengths as well as weaknesses. Some dyslexics develop strategies for their own ways of doing things and this should be encouraged.

## PHOTOCOPIABLE

### **Dyslexia Indicators at the Nursery Stage** (May Indicate Early Manifestations of Dyslexia)

Nursery teachers and nursery nurses are well placed to identify these general indicators. If several of the indicators listed are present the team will wish to discuss if the severity merits referral for further investigation and support. Possible colleagues to contact would be an Educational Psychologist, Occupational Therapist, Speech Therapist or Support for Learning Teacher.

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

- Poor language and pronunciation
- Poor rhyming
- Immature speech pattern and communication
- Poor phonological awareness
- Poor concept of time
- Poor organisation
- Poor listening skills
- Poor memory for rhymes, stories, events, instructions
- Cannot clap a rhythm or keep a musical beat
- Is clumsy, wiggly and accident prone
- Is hard to engage, shows little interest in activities
- Can be easily distracted
- Has poor posture
- Poor fine motor skills, including drawing, copying and letter formation
- Poor eye tracking and inability to converge from far to near
- Poor spatial concepts
- Poor body image
- Has not established hand dominance
- Has poor ball skills
- Has poor balance and co-ordination
- Poor letter knowledge
- Social skills are very limited or unsuccessful
- Other – please give details

Teacher/Nursery Nurse: \_\_\_\_\_

Action requested:

- investigation and advice re support
- profile of additional needs
- advice re assessment arrangements
- any further referrals recommended

## 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 re 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 re support
- dyslexia assessment
- profile of additional needs

## **'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 must be high expectations of dyslexic pupils 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 learning environment, any failure of pupils to learn is recognised as a failure of teaching methodology, poor materials or anything, rather than the fault of the children. 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 must have a teacher who is trained in dyslexia and all school policies must 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 must be 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** – eg 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)



## PHOTOCOPIABLE

### HAPPY HOMEWORK POLICY FOR CHILDREN WITH DYSLLEXIA

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 – eg 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 eg 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 eg 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 made clear which activities should have priority so that the child is not burdened with more homework than the other children - more is not better when you are dyslexic! Children with dyslexia experience a greater level of fatigue than others over the course of the school day, so will have less energy and poorer concentration levels to begin with – and 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 demanding 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. They 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 difficulty and time required
- Set an agreed timeframe for homework tasks appropriate to each 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 re 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

## PHOTOCOPIABLE

### MEETING THE TEACHER – A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

A child's first awareness of the impact of dyslexia may be the experience of failure at school. There is a lack of understanding of why he cannot learn like his classmates. He often feels that he is to blame for this – he does not know how to get help and he cannot explain his inability to overcome barriers to his learning. The longer his dyslexia goes unrecognised, the greater the problem becomes. Many children, especially boys, become frustrated and may develop disruptive behavioural difficulties – he may throw his reading book at the teacher because he does not understand why he is still unable to read effectively. Girls with dyslexia often cope better with unexplained difficulties, often assuming that they are just not good at the activity concerned. Sometimes they compensate by talking to (and copying work from) their friends but some dyslexic girls may become withdrawn and isolated. Both boys and girls with dyslexia may be unwilling to go to school, and they may complain of headaches or feeling sick on days when they know they will have to become involved in an activity that they find stressful.

Parents will have to deal with the impact of dyslexia at home – often well before it is identified and assessed by the school. As soon as parents become concerned about their child's progress, they should make an appointment to see their child's teacher to discuss their concerns. **A child's failure to make progress can result in a very emotional meeting, so parents (and teachers) should prepare in advance of the appointment.** A suggested framework might be:

1. List the points to be addressed at the meeting.
2. Be certain of what you want to have in place by the end of the meeting.
3. Take someone for moral support – many parents feel intimidated by teachers – especially if their own experience of school was an unhappy one - and concerned parents may feel that teachers are talking down to them.
4. Be positive, firm, calm and confident. This is your child and his education – comparisons with other children will not be appropriate.
5. Take notes at the meeting (or ask your support person to do this) – what you are told may be new and confusing, especially when educational 'jargon' is used. You may need to refer to your notes later.
6. Do not agree to anything at a first meeting unless you are absolutely sure. Sometimes you need to reflect on what you have been told, or seek further advice.
7. If any action is agreed, set a reasonable time limit for this to be taken.
8. After you have had time to reflect, put in a letter (or email) what you understood was discussed and agreed at the meeting and ask the school to confirm that they agree.

9. Before leaving the meeting, arrange for a follow up meeting – shortly after the time limit set – with the understanding that the school will contact you immediately if there are any problems.
10. If telephone contact follows a meeting, take notes of every conversation. Make sure you note the date and ask for the name and position of the person on the phone – asking how to spell these should inform the person that you are making notes.

A firm non-aggressive approach should lead to the development of a good parent/ teacher relationship – so be patient and persevering while insisting on an investigation of your child's difficulties.

The 2004 Education (Scotland) Act and its subsequent amended version (2009) requires education authorities to carry out an assessment (if requested in writing) - though you probably do not want a full assessment to begin with. Many parents merely want teachers to find out if dyslexia is at the root of their child's failure to make progress and want an investigation by a suitably qualified teacher. Parents:

- have a right to insist that an initial investigation is completed and request a written report of the results in good time (within 12 weeks)
- may make themselves known to any new teacher and make sure that details of their child's dyslexia have been passed on (but they should be diplomatic if a new teacher does not have relevant information to hand - it may take time to connect written data to an individual in a class)
- should try to remain positive despite their own feelings – showing anger and bitterness can have an adverse effect on the child

## 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](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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