



Children, Families and Learning

Dyslexia Policy

April 2009

(revised)

❖ Introduction

Middlesbrough's Dyslexia Policy has been developed through a working party of senior staff within the Educational Psychology and the Learning and Language Teams within the Pupil Support Service.

The process has included liaison with the Senior Adviser for SEN & Inclusion (School Improvement Service) and consultation with Head Teachers, SENCOs and the Parent Partnership Officer.

The Policy has also been discussed with other Children, Families and Learning Education Officers, School Governor representatives, Primary Care Trust representatives and a local Parental Support Group.

The Children, Families and Learning Department supports the view that SEN is a mainstream issue. Good practice for pupils with dyslexia will promote their full and independent inclusion in mainstream classes. Effective provision for pupils with dyslexia requires a whole school approach, reflected in policies, classroom practice and support available to individual pupils.

There is a commitment within Middlesbrough to raising the achievements of all pupils. Literacy skills are central to a pupil's ability to access the full curriculum and are considered by pupils, parents and teachers to be a measure of academic success. Some pupils at all ability levels find reading easy while others struggle in the initial or later stages and it is recognised that a variety of approaches and resources is required to support pupils with a range of aptitudes and abilities. There is a responsibility to tailor provision to optimise performance. The Children, Families and Learning Department considers that supporting all pupils in the development of literacy skills is an issue for school improvement and acknowledges that for some pupils more support will be needed.

We recognise the particular links there can be between dyslexia, low self-esteem and the development of emotional and behavioural difficulties in some pupils. Consequently early identification and effective support is vital in overcoming the barriers to achievement presented by dyslexia.

❖ Definition

Historically, definitions of dyslexia have relied heavily on the notion of a discrepancy between a pupil's cognitive or 'thinking' abilities and progress with literacy skills. However, research indicates that dyslexia affects a large percentage of pupils, at all ability levels, and more than can easily be accommodated within a 'discrepancy' model. Difficulties with dyslexia occur on a continuum, from mild to severe, and estimates suggest that between 4 and 15% of all pupils are affected.

In Middlesbrough we have adopted the following definition:

**Dyslexia is evident when accurate and fluent word reading and/or spelling develops very incompletely or with great difficulty, despite appropriate learning opportunities - that is, learning opportunities which are effective for the majority of children.
(British Psychological Society, 1999)**

There are several definitions, including one from the British Dyslexia Association which states that:


Dyslexia is a combination of abilities and difficulties that affect the learning process in one or more of reading, spelling, writing and sometimes numeracy. It is a persistent condition. Accompanying weaknesses may be identified in areas of speed of processing, working memory, organisation, sequencing, spoken language and motor skills. There may be difficulties with auditory and/or visual perception. It is particularly related to mastering and using written language, which may include alphabetic, numeric, and musical notation.

Dyslexia can occur despite normal intellectual ability and teaching. It is constitutional in origin, part of one's make-up, and independent of socio-economic or language background.

Some learners have very well developed creative skills and interpersonal skills, others have strong oral skills. Some have no outstanding talents. All have strengths.

(The Dyslexia Handbook 2005 Published by the BDA)

However, some pupils who have dyslexia can frequently display marked differences between their abilities, and may have overlapping needs in a number of areas (communication and interaction, cognition and learning, behaviour, emotional and social development, sensory and/or physical). For these pupils, it will be important to identify strengths as well as weaknesses, in order to make the most effective provision. As an example, competence in oral ability can be utilised to great effect in differentiating the curriculum, to ensure that pupils who are unable to read and spell with accuracy can nevertheless demonstrate their knowledge.



Research into dyslexia has indicated that difficulties in processing the sounds in speech and linking them to written letters, as well as in short-term memory and processing skills – known as ‘phonological processing difficulties’ – are fundamental in explaining failure to progress with literacy. As well as problems with literacy, there may also be associated difficulties with the development of numeracy skills. It is our belief that problems sometimes associated with dyslexia, e.g. behavioural difficulties, low self-esteem, can be avoided through early intervention. Initially, this intervention is likely to focus on methods to promote literacy. However, there will also need to be parallel strategies to enable pupils to access the curriculum, without heavy reliance on literacy skills. Pupils who are unable to demonstrate their learning may show frustration, and motivation as well as self-esteem can be affected.

Learning difficulties, including dyslexia, are usually complex and sometimes both persistent and severe. A recent court ruling (October 2003) concluded that dyslexia cannot be diagnosed in isolation from the context in which it is displayed and emphasised the interactive nature of teaching and learning for dyslexic pupils. Dyslexia can only be fully understood with reference to the range of contexts in which it occurs and cannot be diagnosed as a one-off event. It will follow on from a cumulative assessment over time, involving communication with school staff, parents and pupils over the nature of difficulties and interventions provided. Other professionals may need to be consulted as part of this process.

❖ Aims and principles

Broad Aim

Our broad aim for pupils with dyslexia is for them to:

make optimal progress with literacy, while continuing to access learning, demonstrate new skills and knowledge and participate fully through differentiated approaches which do not depend heavily on reading and spelling.

Main Principles

As with other special educational needs, we adhere to the principles encapsulated within the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001), as follows:


- special educational needs should normally be met in mainstream settings
- there should be early intervention
- the views and involvement of pupils and young people is fundamental
- there should be access to a broad and balanced curriculum
- there should be close liaison with parents

Specific Aims and Principles

In addition, we have adopted the following more specific aims and principles, to develop expertise in all our schools and promote progress for all pupils.

To enable all teachers and teaching assistants to identify those pupils who have problems at an early stage they should have access to training which could include The Inclusion and Development Plan (2008), INSET from Support Teams and other agencies.

- Additional expertise, in relation to teaching methods, should be developed, in the SENCO role or within other roles in school.
- All schools should access specialist advice from teachers who have had accredited specialist training in dyslexia.
- Pupils should be able to access appropriate 'catch-up' provision as soon as their difficulties are apparent eg. The National Strategy's ELS provision (Early Literacy Support).



Effective literacy provision at primary level has been described in terms of three 'Waves' of intervention. (DfES 2003)

'Wave 3' strategies should be additional, highly personalised interventions adapted for the pupil where evidence indicates that insufficient progress is being made, ensuring that:

- there is a balance when planning interventions, so that that pupils with dyslexia continue to have access to areas of the curriculum where they can achieve success, and that they are not unduly fatigued by over-exposure to learning which is very difficult for them
- parents/carers are provided with a clear understanding of their child's difficulties, and how they are being provided for
- parents/carers are enabled to support their children in the home setting
- pupils are fully involved in target-setting and the review process, so that they can see a progression in their work, identify the next step and know how to access help
- interventions are evaluated by professionals within schools, to establish how effective they are
- interventions are structured, cumulative, regular and consistent, and draw upon multi-sensory teaching methods
- the focus will be on curriculum access, using alternative means, so that reading and spelling difficulties do not affect progress in other areas of the curriculum
- there will be a progression in terms of support provided, once the original difficulties with 'word-level' work have been addressed; there will need to be a shift towards developing aspects such as fluency, speed, comprehension and generalisation to different contexts
- for the majority of pupils, support is accessed within the local mainstream school, and without the need for a Statement of Special Educational Needs.

❖ **Intervention and Support**

The SEN Code of Practice, DfES, 2001, sets out guidelines for a graduated response to supporting pupils with special educational needs.

“In order to help children who have special educational needs, schools should adopt a graduated response that encompasses an array of strategies.

This approach recognises that there is a continuum of special educational needs and where necessary brings increasing specialist expertise to bear on the difficulties that a child may be experiencing. However the school should, other than in exceptional cases, make full use of all available classroom and school resources before expecting to call upon outside resources”.

5:20

Provision should be made at both Primary and Secondary levels to ensure a continuum of support.

Primary Support

Investment by Primary schools in skilled, high quality Wave 3 intervention to complement effective provision at Wave 1 and 2 will provide positive outcomes for pupils.

- **Wave 1**

The effective inclusion of all pupils in a daily and high quality literacy lesson.


Wave 1 whole class support is the entitlement of every pupil in our Primary schools. This includes the delivery of a ‘quality literacy lesson’ with effective planning and management. It is recommended that schools follow the principles and practice of a high quality Phonics programme, such as Letters and Sounds. To maximise the effectiveness, schools need to be ‘dyslexia friendly’ creating a positive literacy environment.

At this level teachers carry out regular assessments of progress in literacy through the curriculum, including National Curriculum Assessments. Some schools use additional screening measures to identify pupils with learning difficulties. It is expected that there will be ‘in class’ support from a teaching assistant for some literacy activities on a regular basis and schools will also enlist the support of parents.

- **Wave 2**

Additional small-group intervention for pupils who can be expected to catch up with their peers as a result of the intervention.

For some pupils who are ‘at risk’ of underachievement, the DfES has provided a range of structured small group interventions, designed to boost achievement in literacy. These include ELS in Year 1, Additional Literacy Support (ALS) in Year 3 and Further Literacy Support (FLS) in Year 5.



Booster classes and summer schools (for pupils in Year 6) have also been provided to maximise progress in key year groups.

Pupils identified for Wave 2 support do not generally have special educational needs although their attainments in reading and writing are below average. It is expected that with support many of these pupils will 'catch up' with their peers.

- **Wave 3**

Specific targeted approaches for pupils identified as requiring SEN support (School Action, School Action Plus or with a Statement of Special Educational Needs). See References Section - DfES 2002.

Wave 3 interventions are chosen:

- to match the needs of particular pupils
- so that they can be implemented at an early stage rather than waiting until the pupil has experienced persistent failure
- on the basis of evidence of what has been successful in the past
- so that the progress of individual pupils can be closely monitored
- so that support can be adjusted in the light of evaluation.

The DfES guidance on Wave 3 support includes a list of interventions which are backed by research evidence. (DfES 2007 – G. Brooks)

Further information is available on the Middlesbrough Portal www.mgrid.org.uk "Literacy Support and Interventions at Waves 2 & 3" (2005)

Secondary Support

At Secondary level, schools have a variety of approaches when supporting their dyslexic pupils. For those pupils working at the National Curriculum Level 3 or below, most schools continue to teach the National Secondary Strategy Progress Units. Generally, pupils receive the majority of their support within the mainstream classroom, from teaching assistants and subject teachers.

Depending on the level of difficulty, some pupils continue to receive small group literacy support from the school's SEN Department, and/or specialist teaching and advice from the Learning and Language Team.

As pupils progress through secondary education their literacy difficulties may become less obvious, however they may continue to have difficulties with processing, memory and organisational skills. Therefore, it is important that they are taught appropriate strategies and study skills, and have access to ICT support. This will provide the opportunity for them to reach their potential, access further education and achieve economic well-being.



- **School Action**

If pupils are unable to successfully access Wave 1 or 2 at Primary level, then school should consider placing them on the SEN Register at School Action. Other forms of assessment at both Primary and Secondary levels, such as National Curriculum levels, P levels for pupils working below NC Level 1 and PIVATS (Performance Indicators for Value Added Target Setting) from Lancashire County Council, may also indicate through reference to the Code of Practice criteria, that a pupil needs intervention at School Action.

Teaching staff would carry out more detailed diagnostic assessments and set up an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Group Education Plan (GEP). Support at this level would include additional differentiated learning experiences, including specific interventions. ICT and other specialised resources should be used to support pupils at School Action.

Support for literacy within the classroom and some structured small group work should be provided on a regular basis.

- **School Action Plus**

Pupils who are at School Action Plus would require more in depth assessment in the areas of reading and spelling, including careful analysis of errors and learning styles. The advice from specialist teachers could be sought in establishing a measure of progress and in assessing and monitoring that progress through the pupil's IEP.

Pupils at School Action Plus are expected to regularly receive small group and/or individual support. At Primary level, structured intervention programmes such as Direct Phonics or the Fischer Family Trust Wave 3 programme may be appropriate. Multi-sensory programmes and specialist advice eg. from the Learning and Language Support Team or from an Educational Psychologist, along with small group and/or access to some individual support, could provide appropriate intervention strategies for all Key Stages.

- **Pupils with Statements of SEN**

Pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs will already have had a detailed assessment specifying appropriate provision. A focus on the strategies and approaches outlined in the SEN Code of Practice will support pupils in making further progress.

❖ The school's responsibility

In view of the number of pupils who are affected by dyslexia schools should have access to The IDP (2008). The aim of the IDP is to raise staff confidence levels in identifying dyslexic tendencies in their own pupils and enable them to provide appropriate support.

These pupils may then be referred to specialists for more in-depth assessment and recommendations for appropriate interventions and support but they remain the responsibility of the school.

All schools should be able to identify pupils who are experiencing difficulties in phonological processing, reading and /or spelling. They should be able to provide regular group 'catch-up programmes' for pupils so identified.

For pupils whose difficulties persist, additional support should involve:

- utilising structured reading and spelling programmes which incorporate multi-sensory teaching strategies
- capitalising on the potential of innovative teaching methods appropriate to pupils' different learning styles, as these are often of particular benefit to dyslexic pupils - for example, strategies for visual learners such as mind mapping
- securing access for the pupil to appropriate information technology, for example word processing facilities and spell checkers
- planned strategies and appropriate differentiated tasks to ensure the pupils' literacy difficulties do not hinder access to the curriculum.
(See page 59 of "The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy - Including all children in the literacy hour and daily mathematics lesson – Management Guide" DfES 2002 and the British Dyslexia Association's "Achieving Dyslexia Friendly Schools")
- ensuring that the pupil, and all who work with him/her, are aware of the pupil's strengths and difficulties
- access to pastoral, personal and social support so as to provide opportunities to discuss anxieties and frustrations and to improve self esteem
- parents so they are informed about what is being done to help their child at school and how they can support them at home.

Provision should recognise the strengths and talents of the pupil in all areas across the curriculum.

In overcoming areas of weakness the pupil should have access to multi-sensory and flexible approaches to classroom learning, complemented by some small group and/or individual provision, provided by teacher or trained Teaching Assistant. Schools should be able to record and document progress over time.

❖ The Children, Families and Learning Department's responsibility

The Children, Families & Learning Department has a role in making training, information, advice and support available to schools through their services.

It should:

- provide specialist support on a 'buy back' basis from the Learning and Language Team
- provide access to the Educational Psychology Service
- ensure school staff can access accredited training on Supporting Dyslexic Pupils in School.
- support the British Dyslexia Association's Dyslexia Friendly Schools and IDP (2008) initiatives on whole school approaches to raise the achievement of pupils with dyslexia.
- provide regular information to schools on new developments and approaches.
- provide a supportive framework for parents/carers through the Children, Families & Learning Parent Partnership Officer.

Specialist Learning and Language Support.

This could include:

- advice on programme planning and modelling of appropriate teaching approaches
- advice on appropriate resources and technology
- advice on the implementation of the IDP(2008)
- advice on the BDA's Dyslexia Friendly Schools initiative
- an information leaflet that briefly explains the assessment tools used during an assessment
- provision of information for parents/carers to help them support their child's learning
- provision of 'parent workshops' if requested at their child's school
- guidance on the procedures for assessments and possible identification of a pupil's dyslexia
- contact with parents / carers to discuss assessments, reports and recommendations
- advice in relation to emotional or behavioural difficulties which may arise as a consequence of dyslexia

- direct teaching support from specialist teachers of Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia)
- access to a Primary Intensive Literacy Group based at present within one of our Middlesbrough schools
- specialist assessment.

All schools have funding to meet the needs of pupils experiencing literacy difficulties. Some schools choose to purchase services from Middlesbrough's Learning and Language Team, while others use their funds to enhance in-school support facilities.

The Role of Educational Psychologists

Psychological Consultation.


The Psychological Team uses consultation as its method of service delivery. Educational Psychologists work with schools in connection with concerns relating to individual children, to groups of children and to whole school issues. They work in partnership with teachers, parents or carers, and others, to achieve beneficial change for children.

As dyslexia affects a high percentage of all children (between 4 and 15%), Middlesbrough's Children, Families and Learning Department believes that the skills necessary to identify dyslexic pupils should be readily available within schools. The department also considers it unnecessary to rely solely on 'diagnosis' by a small number of experts and specialists. Educational Psychologists will not, therefore, necessarily work with a child who has, or may have, dyslexia. They may do so if a child is identified as making inadequate progress as a result of school based action. They may also become involved if there are additional or associated difficulties needing clarification, for example, if dyslexia occurs in conjunction with other conditions such as ADHD.

The primary reason for involving an Educational Psychologist will be to assist in the design of intervention programmes, rather than arrive at a diagnosis. It is quite likely that a child at the School Action Plus Stage of the Code of Practice may already meet the definition of dyslexia adopted in this policy.

All schools receive regular visits from their link Educational Psychologist. School SENCOs arrange the agenda for these visits, so that the time available is used effectively. There may be several children requiring the involvement of the Educational Psychologist, so schools are asked to prioritise.

Educational Psychologists are also available for informal telephone discussion with parents/carers and professionals, though the most profitable work takes place in schools in consultation meetings with all those involved, including parents.



Professionals can also make a referral to an Educational Psychologist, who will undertake to discuss the child in school. The Educational Psychologist will base any decision about the need for future action on this discussion.

If the involvement of an Educational Psychologist is required, the initial work will be undertaken via a consultation meeting held at the school.

The Consultation Meeting.

The aim of the Consultation Meeting is to develop a plan which builds on successes already achieved. The meeting will spend some time considering the identified concerns, but most of the time is directed towards developing strategies and approaches.

Some time is reserved at the end of the meeting to record the plan. The plan will incorporate targets for the pupil, and will detail the strategies which will help to ensure progress. The plan will also consider the child's involvement in developing and monitoring the intervention.

All participants in a Consultation Meeting receive a copy of the plan. This copy is not intended to replace the schools' own record of the meeting. If the child's parents or carers are not able to be present, schools are asked to share the plan with them.

Direct Work With Children and Young People.

Educational Psychologists can work directly with individual children, when a Consultation Meeting agrees that such work will be helpful to support the development of a plan. The purpose and nature of the individual work and the expected outcomes are all agreed in the Consultation Meeting. Individual work may involve observation, discussion with the child or young person, individual assessment, counselling or other intervention.

The conclusion of the Educational Psychologist's involvement is determined in a further Consultation Meeting, which will review the effectiveness of the plan. For some pupils with complex difficulties, additional meetings may be necessary.

❖ Parental responsibility

Parents are asked to maintain contact with schools as appropriate and provide support for any interventions recommended, as far as possible. In particular, schools will enlist the support of parents in reinforcing any suggested activities discussed and recorded during IEP reviews.

❖ Frequently asked questions

Is every child who has literacy difficulties dyslexic?

There are many reasons why some pupils have difficulties with acquiring literacy skills.

For example, they may have missed a lot of school, or attended several primary schools, and therefore missed many reading and spelling lessons. Once these pupils receive the teaching they need, they usually begin to make progress. Their problems will not persist.

However, pupils with dyslexia also make progress, but it is slow, and takes a lot of effort. Their difficulties can be described as persistent.

What causes dyslexia?

The exact cause is not known but dyslexia is recognised as a developmental and often hereditary condition but can be acquired through illness or injury.

Literacy problems do appear to run in some families although environment issues are also recognised as affecting literacy progress.

How does dyslexia show itself?

Most dyslexic people have phonological processing difficulties, that is, they find it difficult to sort out the sounds within words. This leads to problems with reading, writing and spelling.

Most dyslexic pupils have difficulty with language, memory and sequencing processes e.g in maths when asked to learn tables.

Does a child have to have at least average intelligence to have dyslexia?

In the past the popular notion of dyslexia was of intelligent pupils with reading and spelling difficulties.

Today however we acknowledge that dyslexia can occur at all levels of intelligence, and in all social classes and ethnic groups.

Are girls and boys affected equally?

Recent research indicates that boys and girls are equally affected.

Can dyslexia be cured?

Dyslexic difficulties can range from mild to severe.

Dyslexia may be alleviated by:

- Specialist teaching and guidance.
- Specialist advice for classroom support staff .
- Multi-sensory teaching.

I think my child may be dyslexic. What do I do?

The first place to start is in school. Initially talk to your child's class teacher and the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator. They will clarify how the school's policy works for the provision for pupils with literacy difficulties.

Do I need an assessment from an Educational Psychologist to get my child's dyslexia recognised?


This is no longer necessary. The Code of Practice encourages a graduated response which is based on intervention and pupil progress. This can be done by good practice in schools, alongside a specialist teaching assessment and advice/guidance from a specialist teacher in dyslexia.

Do all schools have specialist teachers?

Some schools have their own qualified dyslexia teacher, others use some of their delegated SEN budget to buy in specialists from the Middlesbrough Learning & Language Team.

These teachers can provide:

- assessment, reports and recommendations
- direct teaching support from teachers with specific training in the most effective approaches
- advice and guidance for classroom support
- parental consultation and parental workshops advising parents on how to help their child at home.



Is my child entitled to external examination concessions, because he has been identified as having some indications of Dyslexia?

There is no entitlement for concessions for all dyslexics. The specialist teacher will review your child and the Examinations Officer can submit an application to the examination boards who will then decide if the difficulties are severe enough to warrant concessions.

All pupils with severe literacy difficulties may be considered for concessions, not only identified dyslexics.

My child has been identified as having some indications of dyslexia. Is he therefore entitled to additional support?

The allocation of support to any pupil is dependent on the severity of the pupil's difficulties. The level of support will be indicated on the Individual Education Plan.

Are Teaching Assistants properly qualified to support my dyslexic child?

All schools are expected to provide training for their teaching assistants (T.A.s) which could include the IDP. TA's are encouraged to obtain the OCNNEP qualification in Supporting Dyslexic Pupils in School delivered by the Learning and Language Team (see Training Section). Some Teaching Assistants have received training via Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) and in-house training on Wave 3 strategies.

❖ Training

The school is responsible for ensuring they have access to an appropriately qualified teacher.

- **Basic level Training (free of charge) delivered by; Middlesbrough Adult Education – Family Learning Programme and is available to Staff and parents to raise awareness.**

- Inclusion Development Plan (IDP) Dyslexia, can be downloaded from www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk.

Middlesbrough *actively encourage school staff to access further training which can include*

- **OCNNER Certificates (Open College Network North East Region) (level 3 credit value 1)**

The Learning and Language Team deliver this course for school staff.

- **Degree level qualification for teachers.** There are a wide range of courses available nationally for teachers to gain a specialist qualification, such as the PGC yearlong course run by Durham LEA and accredited by Northumbria University.

All teachers in the Learning and Language Team hold this qualification. The Children, Families and Learning Department recommends each school accesses a specialist dyslexia teacher with the Post Graduate Certificate in Teaching Dyslexic Pupils.

❖ Policy updates and reviews

The policy will be reviewed and updated if necessary, on an annual basis by Middlesbrough's Inclusion Consultative Group. This group comprises Head Teacher and SENCo representatives as well as Pupil Support Officers from the Children, Families and Learning Department.