

# **Barnsley Educational Child and Community Psychology Service**

## **Dyslexia Practice Guidelines**

**These guidelines will be reviewed in line with developments in research evidence  
Version 2: October 2020**

## Overview

**The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the shared rationale for dyslexia within Barnsley Education Inclusion Services.**

### Defining dyslexia

Children learn to read and write at widely differing rates. Within this spectrum there are children with persistent and ongoing difficulties. Children and young people (C/YP) who are failing to make reasonable progress in reading and or spelling over time may have a specific learning difficulty in relation to literacy, which may also be described as dyslexia. Specific learning difficulties (SpLD), is a term that encompasses a range of learning difficulties that are specific to particular areas of learning. The terms dyslexia and specific learning difficulties in relation to literacy are interchangeable and within this document have the same meaning.

Barnsley Educational Child and Community Psychology Service (ECCPS) understanding of dyslexia is informed by two widely recognised descriptions of dyslexia within the British Psychological Society report (2005) and the Sir Jim Rose report (2009) and is outlined below.

**Dyslexia is evident when accurate and fluent word reading and/or spelling develops very incompletely or with great difficulty. This focuses on literacy at the word level and implies that the problem is severe and persistent despite appropriate learning opportunities. A good indication of the severity and persistence of dyslexic difficulties can be gained by examining how the individual responds or has responded to well-founded intervention.**

**Dyslexia is best thought of as a continuum that occurs across a range of cognitive abilities. Co-occurring difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organisation, but these are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia.**

This description clarifies that dyslexia is a difficulty with reading and/or spelling and that other difficulties, for example motor control, visual difficulties, organisational difficulties are not in themselves indicators of dyslexia.

The description emphasises the need for appropriate teaching, and the interaction between teaching and learning. A key aspect of this definition is that it recognises that dyslexia does not occur in a vacuum and that learning opportunities have a key role to play in acquiring reading and spelling skills. Historically dyslexia was associated with a discrepancy between cognitive ability (IQ) and attainment in reading and spelling. This has now been refuted (British Psychological Society, 2005). Competence in reading and spelling has been found to be independent of general cognitive ability (IQ). The validity of identifying dyslexia based on unexpected discrepancies between actual and expected literacy attainment derived from the predictions of IQ scores, does not have a supportive evidence base (BPS, 2005).

### **Developing reading and spelling skills**

Reading and spelling are complex skills that do not necessarily develop naturally. They need to be taught and children need to learn and practise the skills involved. Parents/carers, and schools play a vital role in helping children to master the skills involved in reading and spelling. All learning difficulties, including dyslexia, are complex and interactive in their nature and so can only be fully understood with reference to the contexts in which they occur.

As dyslexia is best thought of as a continuum, not all individuals with dyslexia will present in exactly the same way. They may experience strengths and difficulties in a number of different domains to a greater or lesser extent, which will also be affected by the child's age, developmental stage and the educational input they have accessed. It is important to note that the difficulties experienced by individuals with dyslexia are often balanced with particular strengths such as:

- Effective oral presentations
- Good conceptual abilities
- Good problem-solving abilities
- Imaginative, creative thinking
- Analytic thinking
- Inquiring mind

In a dyslexia-friendly school all teachers are empowered, through training, policy and ethos, to identify literacy difficulties and take front line action. This is the policy of early intervention being translated into classroom practice.

Literacy difficulties can arise from a whole range of factors, which should be taken into consideration as part of the assessment process.

**These may include:**

- **Gaps in education**
- **Developmental stage impacting on readiness to access literacy teaching**
- **Being settled and ready to learn**
- **Difficulties engaging in directed learning**
- **Limited exposure to print and limited shared reading experiences**
- **Visual impairments**
- **Visual stress, sometimes remedied by use of coloured overlays or tinted lenses**
- **Hearing impairments including glue ear**
- **Speech and language difficulties**
- **English as an additional language**

## **Assessment and Intervention**

Ongoing assessment through teaching is the model best regarded for identifying dyslexia. Assessment is an integral part of the teaching/learning process that informs identification of strategies/interventions to promote development of literacy skills. Assessment tools and processes used in schools can provide the information needed to identify children/young people (C/YP) with specific learning difficulties in relation to literacy/dyslexia. There is no single test for checking whether a C/YP has specific learning difficulties in relation to literacy/dyslexia.

The staged intervention approach to identification, assessment and intervention is rooted in sound educational practice where teachers plan teaching approaches based on assessment, implement those approaches and review the outcomes in terms of progress made by the child/young person. Within the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) code of practice, this is known as the

graduated 'Assess Plan Do Review' response, where provision is revisited refined and revised with growing understanding of the pupil's needs. The C/YP's response to such support can help identify their particular needs. The majority of literacy difficulties can be met by mainstream teachers through quality first teaching and differentiated approaches. As soon as a C/YP is seen to be struggling with literacy their difficulties can be assessed and identified by mainstream teaching staff in schools, and an appropriate response developed with parents/carers and the C/YP. The SENCO offers an additional layer of expertise in school to support teachers in their assess plan do review process. Consideration should always be given to the impact that difficulties acquiring literacy skills may have on the C/YP's perception of themselves as a learner. To be effective, intervention also needs to build C/YP's confidence supporting the development of positive attitudes to reading and/or spelling.

Children with dyslexia should not require teaching from a specialist teacher. If a child's literacy progress continues to cause concern despite good quality first teaching, then a more targeted intervention informed by assessment information should be planned and implemented. There is no 'one size fits all' in relation to interventions, but interventions should be evidence based and meet the literacy needs of the child identified through assessment. Schools can refer to the document by Greg Brooks in considering appropriate literacy interventions to meet the needs of children in their school.

[Link to Greg Brooks review of literacy intervention schemes](#)

The impact of any intervention needs to be carefully and regularly monitored and evaluated. Adjustments to the intervention need to be made based on evaluation findings made by the teacher through their process of 'assess plan do review'. If a C/YP has persistent ongoing difficulties acquiring reading and/or spelling skills, despite access to appropriate teaching, then they can be identified as having dyslexia. The C/YP does not need to undergo a one-off assessment by an external professional to ascertain if their literacy difficulties are a result of a specific learning difficulty in relation to literacy/dyslexia.

### **Educational Psychologist's role**

If a C/YP fails to make progress despite the school setting appropriate targets and implementing a focused programme of support over time, schools may request the assistance of professionals from outside the school to inform the cycle of assessment, planning, intervention and review. In the case of severe and persistent literacy difficulties, involvement with an educational psychologist could be discussed with school and parents as part of the graduated approach. Barnsley Educational Child and Community Psychology (ECCP) Service can provide training to schools to review and develop dyslexia friendly approaches and advise on approaches to meet the needs of children with literacy

difficulties. Barnsley ECCP Service can work with schools, the C/YP and their parent/carer to further understand how a C/YP learns and factors that may be helping or hindering a C/YP's progress in relation to literacy to inform teaching approaches and interventions.

The purpose of assessment is to inform intervention. Early identification of difficulties ensures early implementation of teaching approaches to address those difficulties. Effective interventions for C/YP struggling with reading and/or spelling should include systematic and highly structured phonics teaching and whole word reading within a broader range of literacy activities. The following list identifies features of literacy interventions evidenced to be effective in teaching reading and/or spelling to C/YP with literacy difficulties.

### **Features of effective literacy interventions**

- **Explicitly teach letter-sound correspondence alongside blending and segmenting skills**
- **Regular supported and shared reading opportunities**
- **Whole word recognition**
- **Highly structured and sequential**
- **Delivered using a multi-sensory approach**
- **Cumulative and progressive with overlearning built in to maximise consolidation and mastery of skills before moving on**
- **Delivered little and often with regular and frequent reinforcement practice between sessions**
- **Evidence based with proven success in accelerating progress for children with literacy difficulties**
- **Teaching is adapted to meet individual needs of the C/YP with consideration to emotional needs**
- **Incorporate purposeful and engaging activities**
- **Delivered positively, builds rapport with the C/YP and recognises and builds on achievement**
- **Develops C/YPs awareness of their own learning strategies**
- **Carefully monitored and reviewed in relation to delivery and child's progress and engagement**

Where progress is not being made following an intervention then teachers along with the SENCo will need to consider the following:

- Does the intervention match need?
- Are co-occurring difficulties a barrier?
- The extent to which targeted teaching in small groups is reinforced in whole class teaching
- Intensity/regularity and timescale of intervention
- Quality of intervention delivery and skills of adult delivering intervention
- Appropriateness of intervention in teaching the gaps identified
- Opportunity for reinforcement and application of skills being taught
- Pupils views and understanding and perceptions of their difficulty and the intervention

Ongoing assessment of a C/YP's progress in relation to reading and spelling and impact of teaching on that progress is essential to informing planning and implementation of targeted teaching. If a C/YP is not learning and progressing in reading and/or spelling, then robust ongoing individual assessment information is required to review and plan teaching that is informed by evidence-based practice.

## **References**

British Psychological Society (2005) Dyslexia, Literacy and Psychological Assessment: Report by the Working Party of the Division of Educational and Child Psychology of the British Psychological Society, BPS, Leicester

Elliott, J. G., & Grigorenko, E. L. (2014). The end of dyslexia? *The Psychologist*, 8(27)576-580

Rose, J (2006) Independent review of the teaching of early reading

Rose, J (2009) Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties. An independent report from Sir Jim Rose to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families

[Link to Rose report](#)

Special educational needs and disability (SEND) code of practice: 0 to 25 years. Statutory guidance for organisations who work with and support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, January 2015

## **Useful Resources**

British Dyslexia Association (BDA):

[Link to BDA](#)

Brooks, Greg (fifth edition, 2016) What works for children and young people with literacy difficulties. The effectiveness of intervention schemes

[Link to Greg Brooks literacy interventions](#)

DfES, Primary National Strategy (2005) Learning and Teaching for Dyslexic Children

[Link to strategy](#)

Inclusion Development Programme (IDP) Teaching and supporting pupils with dyslexia

[Link to IDP](#)

Parent Champions – Empowering parents and carers

[Link to parent champions](#)

The Dyslexia SpLD trust

[Link to SpLD trust](#)

## **Acknowledgements**

Aberdeen City Council Dyslexia Practice Guidelines, Specific Learning Difficulties and Dyslexia in context September 2011

Devon County Council, 2011, Dyslexia, Guidance on Identification Assessment and Intervention

Herefordshire Psychology Service. Herefordshire Council Policy Statement on Developmental Literacy Difficulties January 2016

Highland Council Psychological Service, Dyslexia – Guidance on Identification, Assessment and Intervention