

Rationale

The philosophy underpinning the Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark is that changing practice to accommodate dyslexic individuals often results in good practice for everyone.

Dyslexia Friendly schools are able to identify and respond to the 'unexpected difficulties' that a dyslexic learner may encounter. Teachers are expected to identify and respond to a range of diverse learning needs in mainstream settings.

Parents are becoming more vociferous in ensuring that the learning needs of their children are being met. This is creating a developing culture of accountability.

Emphasis is placed on dyslexia being learning 'difference' rather than learning 'difficulty'. Acknowledging SpLD as a specific learning difference, one which conveys a range of strengths and weaknesses in common with all learning styles and preferences, ensures that practice is then able to focus firmly on inclusion, differentiation and learning. Teachers are empowered through training, policy and ethos, to identify learning issues and take action.

The BDA recognises that the majority of moderately dyslexic students will be taught in mainstream classrooms. Therefore it is important that as well as employing appropriate teaching methods, all environments are dyslexia friendly.

Strategies for addressing dyslexia in mainstream settings usually make teaching and learning more effective for all students, including gifted and talented. Regardless of learning need, a majority of pupils seem to make better progress, stay on task for longer and achieve better results when taught in a dyslexia friendly way. LAs are beginning to report improvements in attendance, GCSE results, pupil confidence and behaviour.

Disability discrimination and dyslexia

Dyslexia is identified as a disability as defined in the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005

The SEN and Disability Act 2001 amended the SEN framework of the Education Act 1996 and extended the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 to cover the provision of education. The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 amends the 1995 Act and places a duty on all public authorities, including maintained schools, colleges, Pupil Referral Units and Nurseries to promote equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 came into force on 1 October 2006.

Definition of Disability *A person is disabled if he/she has a mental or physical impairment which has a substantial and long- term adverse effect on their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.* Included in the definition is a wide range of impairments including sensory, **dyslexia**, autistic spectrum disorder, diabetes, speech and language, severe asthma and learning difficulties resulting from complex profiles of disability

The duties of schools under Part 4 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001) are:

- not to treat a disabled pupil or prospective pupil 'less favourably' than another for a reason related to their disability

- to make **reasonable adjustments** to ensure that disabled pupils are not at a substantial disadvantage compared to their peers
- to draw up plans to show how, over time, they will increase access to education for disabled pupils
- to comply with the Disability Equality Duty.

Reasonable adjustments

The Act requires these adjustments to be made for disabled students generally rather than for specific individuals, thus resulting in the Act having an anticipatory aspect in which most disabled students should find their needs are automatically met.

It is the responsibility of every teacher to make reasonable adjustments. If a teacher does not make reasonable adjustments, it is classed as unlawful discrimination. Teachers should also be aware of how a disability affects a student and his/her ability to learn in order to know which reasonable adjustments to make to the delivery of the curriculum.

Becoming a dyslexia Friendly School

The dyslexia friendly approach pervades all aspects of teaching and learning all of the time. The SEN Code of Practice states that all teachers are teachers of children with special educational needs. Techniques used to include dyslexic children are also effective across a spectrum of diverse needs including ADHD, Autistic Spectrum disorders, BESD, Dyspraxia, MLD and speech and language issues. The dyslexia friendly classroom also works well for EAL.

Becoming a dyslexia friendly school requires a review of the implementation of major whole school policies, especially:

- Teaching and learning.
- Monitoring and assessment.
- Differentiation and inclusion.

The issue then becomes one of how these policies are monitored, evaluated and reviewed to ensure top quality learning right across the range of ability and need

Dyslexia friendly schools are improving, ‘value added’ schools

The drive for effectiveness on behalf of all pupils stems from an inclusive and proactive approach to the identification and fulfilment of all learning needs. All staff are aware of the characteristics and indications of dyslexia and related disorders and employ recommended teaching and learning strategies. This develops the confidence of students who feel empowered to perform at ever increasing levels of confidence.

Dyslexia friendly schools are inclusive schools because they recognise that ‘there is nothing so unfair as the equal treatment of unequal people.’

(Thomas Jefferson)

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty which is neurologically based and which mainly affects the learning processes in reading, spelling, writing and sometimes numeracy.

People with dyslexia process information differently. They usually find it difficult to analyse and work with the sounds within words. There may be difficulties with auditory and / or visual perception.

People with dyslexia may also have difficulties with short-term memory, concentration, organisation, speed of processing information, coordination and ability to think or do things in the right order (sequencing).

The key to recognising dyslexia is to focus on unexpected aspects of performance in relation to ability.

Key Facts

- About 10% of the population have dyslexia. Around 4% are severely affected and a further 6% have mild to moderate problems. At least three students in every classroom will be affected.
- It is estimated that there are about 375,000 school children in the UK with dyslexia and a total of two million people who are severely affected.
- The cause of dyslexia is not yet fully understood. Current evidence suggests that dyslexic difficulties arise from inefficiencies in language-processing areas in the left hemisphere of the brain.
- Dyslexia tends to run in families and it is estimated that three to four times as many boys as girls have the condition.
- Dyslexia is not related to intelligence. It is an issue at all levels of ability.
- Dyslexia need not be a barrier to achievement with suitable teaching, resources and adaptations to ways of working and learning.
- Dyslexia varies in severity and often occurs alongside other specific learning difficulties, such as Dyspraxia or Attention Deficit Disorder with or without hyperactivity resulting in variation in the degree and nature of individuals' strengths and weaknesses.

Indications of Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a combination of abilities as well as difficulties. A pupil with dyslexia may exhibit some of the following characteristics.

General characteristics

- Good oral understanding but written work is of poor quality
- Tend to think in pictures not words
- Poor self-esteem
- Slow processing speed
- Poor memory / organisation
- Left / right confusion
- Lack of concentration
- Frustration at lack of own achievements
- General lack of confidence – may have well developed avoidance strategies
- Distractible – paying attention to everything, but often focusing on very little.

Reading

- Hesitant or laboured reading
- Words omitted, repeated or added
- Failure to recognise familiar words
- Confusion of similar words e.g. from / form
- Confusion of similar letters e.g. d/b/p/q m/n/u
- Lines missed or repeated
- Loss of place – or use of a finger or marker
- Poor comprehension
- Difficulty remembering what has just been read. Text may have to be re-read many times before the meaning becomes clear.
- Poor sense of rhyme
- Difficulty skimming / scanning

Spelling

- Poor spelling - misspelling is heavily phonetic e.g. sed / cwic
- Confusion of letter order in a word
- Reversal of letters e.g. b/d, p/q.
- Reversal of words e.g. was / saw.
- Poor syllabification e.g. rember
- Confusion of vowel sounds within a word
- Omission of vowels e.g. mteril / materia
- One word spelt several ways; correct version not recognised
- Omission of small words or endings of longer words
- Bizarre spelling.

Writing

- Quantity of writing – Rarely matches range of ideas expressed orally
- Quality of writing – Poor standard of written work rarely matches quality of ideas expressed orally. May write a great deal but 'loses the thread'.
- Poorly constructed sentences
- Quality of vocabulary - use of simple vocabulary that can be spelt
- Organisation of ideas - difficulty in planning / paragraphing
- Punctuation - non-existent or random
- Ineffective proof reading
- Sequencing of ideas – difficulty with the order of ideas / information
- Slow / inaccurate copying from board or book
- Inefficient pen grip – may shake hand, massage fingers etc
- Poor handwriting with poorly formed letters. Handwriting may be illegible. Mixture of upper and lower case letters.
- Slow handwriting
- Poor presentation -Messy written work with lots of crossing out. Poor page layout.
- Difficulty concentrating when writing.

Maths

- Sequencing -Difficulty with any task involving sequencing e.g. remembering the sequence of steps in long division.

- Remembering formulae
- Confusion of mathematical symbols such as x for +
- Reversals - Confusion of number order
- Confusion with direction
- Can think at a high level in mathematics, but needs a calculator for simple calculations.
- Misreading of questions that include words.
- Miscopying of numbers, letters and symbols.
- Loses track during mental calculations.
- Difficulty retaining basic number facts
- Difficulty understanding word problems
- Difficulty doing maths rapidly
- They may 'see' the maths in their head but can't show it
- Difficulty with any form of rote learning
- Difficulty telling the time
- Have a tendency not to notice patterns in number
- Confusion of mathematical terms – total , sum, equals

Study skills and exam techniques

- Inability to distinguish important information from unimportant details.
- Difficulty using a dictionary.
- Difficulty pin-pointing main idea in a passage.
- Lack of understanding of revision techniques.
- Difficulty organising / managing revision time.
- Misreading of exam questions and instructions.
- **Difficulty interpreting an exam question.**
- **Difficulty organising time in examinations.**

Memory / organisation

- Poor sense of time.
- Forgetful - homework / sports equipment etc.
- Difficulty remembering verbal instructions.
- Difficulty with sequencing – e.g. Alphabet, word / letter order, months, time, chronology.
- May not remember content of previous lesson.
- Inability to organise thoughts. This may make it difficult to structure written work.

Visual perception

People with dyslexia are often affected by visual stress (Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome / Irlen Syndrome) which causes visual perception difficulties. They are adversely affected by bright light, glare, high contrast colours and patterns. Symptoms include:

- Headaches
- Nausea
- Tiredness
- Difficulty reading - words become jumbled, blurred, distorted or appear to move.
- Spaces between words are more dominant than the words themselves and appear as 'rivers' running down the page.
- Difficulty reading black print on a white background.
- Difficulty copying from the board.
- Difficulty writing on white paper.

Strengths

Some people with dyslexia have strengths in certain areas such as maths, art, IT, design, mechanics, sport, drama, music and dance.

Typical Strengths

- Excellent problem solving skills
- Creative / inventive
- Investigative
- Observant
- Strong visual – spatial skills
- Artistic
- Holistic thinkers
- Lateral thinkers
- Intuitive
- Vivid imaginations
- Ability to see multi-dimensionally
- Often ‘knows’ how things work without reading instructions etc..
- Athletic
- Musical
- Mechanical ability
- Curiosity
- Ability appropriate interest in and knowledge of science, technology, current affairs.
- Able to see ‘the big picture’

Dyslexia Friendly Strategies

Strategies for addressing dyslexia usually make teaching and learning more effective for **all students**.

The following are examples of Dyslexia Friendly approaches.

Classroom environment

- Use natural light whenever possible. Switch off fluorescent lights to reduce glare.
- Sit dyslexic children near the front to reduce visual distractions and ensure they have a clear view of the board.
- Ensure resources are organised and labelled.
- The use of desk top aids should be encouraged. Examples might include: Spell checkers / alphabet strips / writing frames / key words / coloured overlays / highlighters / calculators / number lines / times tables squares / rulers etc.
- Key words to support current topics should be clearly and strategically displayed on non-white paper.

Reading

- Allow extra time for reading. A dyslexic learner may need to read a text several times to gain meaning.
- If possible read the text to the student e.g. maths questions, instructions.
- Students with dyslexia should not be asked to read aloud in class unless they want to or they have had an opportunity to pre-read the text.

- Encourage students to break longer words into chunks when reading.
- Allocate student a reading buddy to help access texts during lessons.
- A dyslexic student may need to use a coloured overlay / ruler / or finger as a marker.
- Check readability levels of texts. A student needs to be able to read 8/10 words to be operating independently. Once accuracy drops below 80% most mental energy will be used on decoding rather than meaning.

Worksheets

- Worksheets should be typed and well spaced.
- Use of cream paper to reduce glare.
- Use of clear rounded fonts – e.g. Comic sans, Arial, Verdana - size 12/14.
- Text should be left aligned with ragged right edge. Right-justified text creates ‘rivers of white’ of the extra spaces.
- Enlarge ‘busy’ worksheets to make them easier to read.

Whiteboard

- **It is extremely difficult for a dyslexic learner to copy from a vertical plane to a horizontal plane.**
- Looking at a white board for any length of time can cause visual stress due to glare and high contrast colours.
- Copying large amounts of text from a distance requires good tracking skills which dyslexic learners very often do not have.

When dyslexic learners look away from the board while copying, they often have to return to the beginning to search for their place. They often cannot remember chunks of information or the order of letters in a word so will copy letter by letter. As a result they often do not read what they are copying and cannot read their own writing. Copying from the board can therefore become a pointless exercise for some students.

- **Please provide a handout or worksheet as an alternative to copying from the board.**

If using board –

- Use blue board markers - avoid black marker on white background.
- Use a pale coloured background, preferably cream or blue, on interactive boards and for Power Points.
- To enable students to find their place more easily use coloured symbols or numbers at each end of lines.
- Allow sufficient time for copying – leave work on the board and ensure students have finished copying without time pressure.
- Work on the board should be printed clearly in lower case. Cursive writing can be extremely difficult to read.
- Ensure a dyslexic student is seated directly in front of the board.
- Check board for glare – close blinds if necessary or switch off fluorescent lights.
- Split board into sections rather than writing across the whole width.

It is difficult for a person with dyslexia to multi-task. They may not be able to listen to instructions / process information at the same time as copying.

Instructions

Speed of processing affects a dyslexic learner's ability to 'take in' instructions.

- Ensure instructions are short, clear and concise.
- Give one instruction at a time.
- Ask students to repeat / paraphrase instructions.
- Repeat instructions several times maybe in a different way.
- Don't overload with instructions.
- Consider whether a student needs an instruction given to them verbally, in writing or as a visual representation.
- Provide a list of instructions / activities for the learner to tick off as completed.

A dyslexic learner may not respond immediately to an instruction if they have slow auditory processing skills. This may be mistakenly interpreted as poor behaviour.

Memory

- Repeat instructions / explanations
- Try to connect facts as much as possible e.g. with previous lesson / other subject areas.
- Present material sequentially.
- Present information in small chunks. Don't overload with information.
- Use lots of repetition / over learning.
- Use colour and graphics to aid memory
- Encourage visualisation / verbalisation
- Allow additional time for students to process information

Rote learning (e.g. multiplication tables) is extremely difficult for a dyslexic student.

Organisation

Memory difficulties will often affect organisation – of time, equipment, thoughts, written work etc.

- Help the student with personal organisation skills.
- Ensure homework is recorded correctly or record it for them / provide on a separate sheet to stick into planner.
- Write down any specific materials that are needed for a particular lesson.
- Help student with organisational strategies for learning e.g. Mind maps / flow charts / highlighters / post-its.
- Help students with organisational strategies for revision.
- Allow use of computers for written work – it is helpful if dyslexic students can 'cut and paste' to help organise their work.
- Allow use of different colour pens to help students organise their work.
- Allow students time to formulate answers orally

Don't punish a dyslexic student for being forgetful – homework, PE kit etc.

Spelling

- Ensure lists of subject words are displayed - on non-white paper.
- Provide picture clues to accompany difficult subject words. Dyslexic learners tend to think in pictures.

Dyslexia Friendly Approaches Protocol SWS

- Encourage learning of spellings in a multi-sensory way – e.g. Look, say, cover, write, check.
- Help students to spell subject words by breaking them into syllables and to remember that each syllable must contain a vowel.
- Help student to invent mnemonics to help with difficult words e.g. said - silly ants in dustbins.

Writing

Ask the learner to address 3 key questions:

1. What have I got to do? (Eg: Explain the question / title to teacher/buddy in own words)
 2. What do I know already? (List)
 3. How can I organise it? (Colour code for paragraph content / cut list into strips and re-order)
- Offer paragraph starters to get the writing going.
 - Ensure students make a structured plan before they begin written work. Allow time for this.
 - Allow dyslexic students to word process written work – this will help with organisational skills (cut and paste) as well as spelling and presentation.
 - Allow alternative means of recording /presentation e.g. typed or illustrated answers/diagrams/bullet points/flow chart/mind map/story board etc.
 - Allow students to write on coloured paper with coloured ink.
 - Encourage use of a spell-checker
 - Use writing frames
 - Give key words
 - Encourage verbalisation / visualisation before writing
 - Present information on strips of paper to be re-ordered and then copied/stuck into book
 - Help students establish a structured proofreading system.
 - Encourage joined writing – it helps students to remember spellings (motor memory).

Don't expect the same volume of work as from other students

Marking

- Assess for content and meaning – poor spelling is not an indication of low intelligence but of a learning difficulty with visual memory.
- Poor handwriting / presentation is often a symptom of Dyspraxia or Dysgraphia which often accompany dyslexia.

Assessments /exams

Students with dyslexia may not be able to demonstrate their knowledge through writing.

- Allow use of a word processor or scribe for assessments.

Students may be entitled to access arrangements for external exams. Access arrangements include - reader, scribe, word processor, modified language paper, read aloud, coloured paper, extra time (usually up to 25%), prompt or transcript. Access arrangements are only approved if there is evidence of a history of need and this is the student's normal way of working.

General

- Limit amount of copying from textbooks and board. Some students will have great difficulty copying from textbooks printed on white paper.
- Use multi-sensory teaching and learning methods. There is more chance of learning being retained if as many senses as possible are utilised simultaneously.
- Use ICT to support learning whenever possible. Text-to-speech programmes are particularly helpful.
- Ask the student how s/he learns best. Often, dyslexic students can explain strategies and techniques that help them learn. These are usually easy to incorporate.
- Students with dyslexia generally prefer a visual hands-on approach.
- Avoid putting a dyslexic learner under 'time pressure' especially when copying.
- Find and use strengths.
- Use colour and visual graphics.

Emotional effects of dyslexia

Symptoms of dyslexia may make a person feel frustrated, angry, depressed or defensive.

Dyslexic adolescents often feel inadequate and embarrassed about their lack of skills. They often have very little confidence and self esteem.

Students with dyslexia often suffer from stress and anxiety on a daily basis. **Stress is often caused through fear.** This can include fear of:

- reading aloud
- tests – especially spelling and multiplication
- being shouted at
- being laughed at
- failure
- being 'put on the spot'
- the teacher's disapproval / lack of understanding
- not being able to keep up
- information overload
- not being able to get started with written work
- not understanding what to do
- spelling – especially when expected to use a dictionary

Minimising stress / fear as a barrier to learning

- Communicate with dyslexic learners – assure them that we are aware of and understand their difficulties / learning style preferences.
- Demonstrate our understanding through consistent use of effective strategies. Build trust.
- Reassure them that we will never ask them to read aloud without asking them first.
- Do not read out class test results or ask students to mark each other's work.
- Mark for success
- Set achievable targets for test scores

Help to build self-esteem at every opportunity.

- Use their strengths and learning styles.
- Set achievable targets to boost confidence

- Allow students to present work in own preferred style
- Give immediate positive feedback
- Praise effort and achievement
- Ensure student is not 'singled out'

Help to raise awareness of dyslexia

- Raise awareness of dyslexia amongst peers.
- Promote dyslexia as a positive attribute – refer to strengths / talents often shown by dyslexic people.
- Refer to famous dyslexic people / relate to subject area where possible.

Famous dyslexics include: –

Richard Branson, Bill Gates, Alan Sugar, Theo Paphitis
Picasso, Leonardo Da Vinci, Andy Warhol, Willard Wigan
Jamie Oliver, Marco Pierre White
Tom Cruise, Orlando Bloom, Keira Knightley, Will Smith, Harrison Ford
Rio Ferdinand, Darcey Bussell, Johnny Herbert, Muhammad Ali
Roald Dahl, W.B. Yeats, John Irving, Benjamin Zephaniah
Einstein, Michael Faraday, Isaac Newton, Thomas Edison
Mozart, Beethoven, Robbie Williams, Mika, Noel Gallagher, John Lennon
George Bush, Prince Charles, Prince Harry, Churchill
Steven Spielberg, Walt Disney
Tommy Hilfiger.

And finally, please be aware that...

- Students with dyslexia may have to work up to five times harder to achieve the same results as non-dyslexic peers.
- They may be excessively tired due to the amount of concentration and effort required.
- Being dyslexic is often compared to driving in a foreign country – you know how to drive, but it requires more effort and concentration.
- A dyslexic person may suffer 'sensory overload' and just 'switch off'.
- They may have developed coping strategies which can disguise the condition.

Useful websites include:-

British Dyslexia Association www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

Dyslexia Action www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk

The Dyslexia Friendly Schools Toolkit – *Removing Dyslexia as a Barrier to Achievement*
by Neil Mackay

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