

Dyslexia Guidance

Cardiff Inclusion Service

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1. LEGISLATION

The relevant legislation is the Education Act 2001 (Chapter 33, Part 2, Sections 18 and 19) as well as the 2018 Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act.

2. INTRODUCTION

This document has been developed by Cardiff Educational Psychology Service (EPS) in consultation with the Learning Support Team (LST). It sets out the guidance of Cardiff Inclusion Service on the identification, assessment, intervention and monitoring in respect of children and young people experiencing Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia). It aims to provide guidance to professionals and parents on the most current approaches to support the attainment and inclusion of children and young people experiencing Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia).

3. GUIDANCE OBJECTIVES

- To raise awareness and understanding of Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia) in all schools across Cardiff.
- To ensure that schools, professionals and parents/carers receive consistent messages from the Inclusion Service.
- To ensure that parent/carer concerns about Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia) are acknowledged and addressed.
- To improve assessment and intervention practice so that a pupil's learning differences are noticed, and teaching is adjusted appropriately, as early as possible in the pupil's school career, and continually throughout all Key Stages.
- To outline the evidence base which informs the policy.





- 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.

Cardiff Educational Psychology Service adopts the following definition:

Dyslexia is evident when accurate and fluent word reading and/or spelling develops very incompletely or with great difficulty. This focuses on literacy learning at the ‘word level’ and implies that the problem is severe and persistent despite appropriate learning opportunities. It provides the basis for a staged process of assessment through teaching.

British Psychological Society (BPS), 1999

Although this definition was first written in 1999, in Cardiff we continue to use it because;

- It is supported by persuasive research evidence;
- It focuses on observed and observable difficulties;
- It makes no assumptions about causation;
- It is based on the research evidence that no particular test or test profile is necessary or sufficient for the identification of dyslexia;
- It is based on research evidence that confirms the view that dyslexia can occur in children and young people of all abilities;
- It does not rely on identifying a discrepancy between a child/young person’s abilities in one area and his/her abilities in another;
- It alerts the adults working with a child/young person to the possibility of a pupil being a compensating dyslexic, where s/he has learned to read and spell, but has done so with great difficulty.

At Cardiff Inclusion Service, we do not use the term specific learning difficulty, but instead, we adopt the term Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia). This reflects our belief that meeting the criteria for dyslexia does not require a young person to have a particular cognitive profile or to have a discrepancy between their literacy skills and other areas of their development.

4. DEFINITION OF DYSLEXIA

Dyslexia can be referred to as a specific learning difficulty, although research has shown that it is not necessarily ‘specific’ to a certain area of cognition or learning (Kaufman, 1994; Turner, 1997; Elliot, 1998). Dyslexia can occur across a range of ability levels (Stanovich, 1994) and, in addition, a child/young person may have a variety of learning difficulties and also have dyslexia.

The Welsh Assembly describes dyslexia as a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling (Welsh Assembly Government 2015).

Other definitions, such as that found in the Rose Report (Rose, 2009), focus on common features of dyslexia and also support our understanding:

- Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory, and verbal processing speed.
- Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities. There isn’t one specific profile of strengths and difficulties that needs to be identified in order to classify a child as having dyslexia.
- It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points.
- Co-occurring difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor coordination, mental calculation, concentration, and personal organisation, but these are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia.

5. A COMMON MISCONCEPTION ABOUT DYSLEXIA

Children/young people experiencing dyslexia may have one, none or a combination of these problems.

- Sequencing
- Dressing
- Recalling instructions
- Being organised and tidy
- Forming letters
- Concentrating and listening
- Sitting still
- Seeing letters/words printed the correct way round on the page
- Knowing their left from their right

There are some publications and websites that contain 'checklists' which highlight difficulties similar to those listed above and it can be suggested that teachers and parents/carers refer to such checklists to identify dyslexia. However, such an approach needs to be treated with great caution. It is important to be aware that some children/young people with one or a combination of these problems learn to read and spell without any difficulty. It is possible that some dyslexic children/young people will have one or all of these problems, but some dyslexic children/young people have none of them. Children without dyslexia may also have one, none or a combination of these difficulties. These problems are not, on their own or in any combination, indicative of dyslexia. Children/young people experiencing dyslexia are first identified as they fail to acquire word reading and/or spelling skills despite appropriate intervention.

6. COMPENSATING DYSLEXICS

When a child/young person learns to read and spell, but with great difficulty and as a result of much additional effort, s/he can be said to be 'compensating' for his/her difficulties. Skills learned in this way, even if age-appropriate when measured on a standardised test, often retain a residual lack of fluency. Compensating dyslexics can be difficult to spot because age-appropriate reading and spelling scores sometimes mask this underlying lack of fluency. Any underlying lack of fluency can create

difficulties for the pupil in later Key Stages, as the demands of the curriculum increase. Understanding the origins and nature of the difficulties can help the pupil and teachers to decide the types of support that may help the pupil at his/her current level.

A pupil who has had initial difficulties in establishing his/her early literacy skills, but who has been able to compensate for his/her early difficulties, should have this information noted on his/her school record. This information may help the pupil, his/her parents/carers, and the teachers to understand the nature of any future difficulties with learning that occur at higher Key Stages when, because the reading and spelling skills may be age appropriate, the underlying Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia) are hidden.

7. CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE WITH ENGLISH/WELSH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

Some of our children/young people in schools have varying abilities in the English/Welsh language in addition to their home language/s. When it comes to accessing and enjoying literature, some of these children/young people might be proficient or learning to read successfully in languages other than English or Welsh. This should always be encouraged and valued. Teachers should enquire about reading and spelling experience and ability as part of their record-keeping process and procedures for identifying additional educational needs. Progress across the curriculum needs to be tracked carefully in case there are difficulties that are not just associated with English/Welsh language learning. Children/young people's emotional adjustment and what is known about their life experiences should be taken into account in their educational assessment. Children/young people with very little experience of English do not have additional educational needs on account of their need to learn English. However, they need and will benefit from additional support in phonics, whole word practice and text level work. First-hand practical experiences encouraging access to language, along with structured and visually supported 'teacher-talk' and stimulating literature being made accessible, will support their reading and spelling progress.

8. PREVALENCE

The Welsh Government (2012) recommends that dyslexia is 'best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points'. Thus, in order to diagnose the difficulty, a 'cutoff must be set on a continuous variable'. (Elliott 2020, citing Peterson & Pennington, 2015, p. 285).

In research, reported prevalence varies according to the criteria and definition used. Figures vary from between 4 – 8 % (Rose, 2009), and 15 – 20% (The Dyslexia-SpLD Trust, 2009). Snowling (2013) refers to a rate of between 3 and 10%.

Levels of prevalence can vary according to language, and children often experience milder difficulties learning to read more consistent languages (Caravolas 2005). For example, research indicates that reading acquisition may be easier and quicker in Welsh than in English (Ellis & Hooper, 2001; Spencer & Hanley, 2003, 2004) and that often, children with dyslexia who learn Welsh first may show less evident literacy difficulties because the written words follow consistent pronunciation rules (a 'regular orthography'). (Hanley, J.R., et al (2004), Ellis and Hooper (2002)). However, pupils may then show more dyslexic difficulties when introduced to English in Key Stage 2.

There are clear genetic and biological bases to Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia). Studies show differences in the brain functioning of those with significant reading difficulties compared to typical readers. Studies report that many parents of children identified as experiencing Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia) also have reading difficulties.

9. OTHER EFFECTS OF LITERACY DIFFICULTIES (DYSLEXIA)

The Welsh Government (2012) acknowledges that there is a link between dyslexia and low self-esteem, citing a range of studies, such as Humphrey (2002), who found that dyslexic children in mainstream schools as well as in schools for children with specific learning difficulties reported lower levels of self-esteem than their non-dyslexic peers. This lower self-esteem can sometimes lead to emotional and behavioural difficulties for some pupils (e.g., Lopes, 2007; Place, Wilson, Martin & Hulsmeier, 2000) and puts pupils at increased risk for a number of psychosocial difficulties (Welsh Assembly Government 2012).

It may also result in problems with reading comprehension and reduced reading experience, which can hinder growth of vocabulary and background knowledge (Lyon, Shaywitz, & Shaywitz, 2003, p. 2).





10. THE NEW CURRICULUM AND THE ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS CODE FOR WALES

The new curriculum is made up of six 'Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE) of which 'Languages, literacy and communication' is one.

The New Curriculum for Wales emphasises that 'clear and effective communication through spoken and written language is an important life skill'. It states that 'learners should be given opportunities to speak and write in order to be effective as they interact, explore ideas, express viewpoints, knowledge and understanding and build relationships.'

The Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales includes the general principle that learners must be supported to participate in mainstream education and in the National Curriculum as fully as possible wherever this is feasible. If a child or young person is identified as having an Additional Learning Need (ALN) such as Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia) and is not making appropriate progress, there is an expectation that school staff will create an Individual Development Plan (IDP) for the pupil. The IDP process should be a collaboration between the school, the young person and their parent/carer. An IDP should identify a learner's strengths, areas for improvement and barriers to learning. It should contain short- and long-term objectives and should be reviewed regularly.

11. IDENTIFICATION OF LITERACY DIFFICULTIES (DYSLEXIA)

A specialist, such as an Educational Psychologist or Specialist Teacher is not required to identify Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia). Measuring and recording a child/young person's word reading and spelling progress over time (in accordance with the BPS (1999) definition), in relation to additional support programmes, is the most reliable way of telling whether a child/young person has Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia).

The point to be stressed is that in describing a child/young person's learning difficulty as Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia), many factors need to be taken into account and we need to adopt a holistic view of the child/young person. One score on a reading or screening test should not be viewed in isolation from all other factors. Consideration will need to be given as to whether the term will be helpful for the individual child/young person concerned. Some find it reassuring to have their difficulties described in this way, for others it can seem to limit achievements and motivation. Professionals as well as parents/carers should be aware of the potential danger of creating low expectations through the use of the term 'dyslexia'.

The identification of Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia) needs to be made as early as possible. The earlier a pupil's needs are recognised, the earlier appropriate support and interventions can be put into place. When Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia) are unrecognised, the pupil can lose self-esteem and motivation, and this can have an adverse effect on his/her emotional wellbeing and behaviour as described previously.

Any concerns raised by parents/carers regarding the progress of their child in any area of school life should be acknowledged and addressed promptly and constructively. If there is a difference of opinion about the child/young person's progress, it is the responsibility of the school to gather evidence about the child/young person's performance and discuss the findings with the parents/carers. School staff may wish to invite the school's Educational Psychologist to such meetings if this is felt to be appropriate.

12. WHAT SHOULD BE ASSESSED AND HOW?

The definition of dyslexia (BPS, 1999) requires three aspects to be evaluated through assessment:

- That the child/young person has learned accurate or fluent single word reading and/or spelling incompletely or with great difficulty.
- That appropriate learning opportunities have been, and are being, provided. Barriers to such learning opportunities may include social, emotional and behavioural factors, previously unidentified sensory impairments, and/or disrupted schooling.
- That progress has only been made as the result of much additional effort/instruction and that those difficulties have nevertheless persisted.

There is no single test/screener for Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia) and identification does not require a measure of any discrepancy between intelligence and reading skills. This discrepancy model has been discredited and invalidated by research because evidence shows that, regardless of general level of ability, those with marked reading and spelling difficulties perform badly on tasks

such as decoding (i.e., turning written language into spoken language), word recognition and phonological skills (Stanovich & Stanovich, 1997; Siegel, 1994; Stuebing et. al., 2002). Furthermore, measures of IQ do not predict how learners will respond to literacy intervention (Vellutino, Scanlon & Lyon, 2000) or their long-term outcomes (Shaywitz, 1994). Dyslexia occurs across all ability levels (Stanovich, 1994) and research has supported the notion that there is no particular cognitive profile that is able to reliably discriminate between dyslexic and non-dyslexic children/young people (Kaufman, 1994; Turner, 1997; Elliot, 1998).

Assessment that makes no reference to the learning context and progress over time provides an incomplete picture of a child/young person's difficulties/needs. This is particularly true when emotional difficulties prevent children/young people from learning. Emotional problems may develop as a consequence of the delay in acquiring literacy skills, which can exacerbate the learning difficulties in a complex way. Developing an understanding of the child/young person's thoughts and emotional experiences is central to a meaningful assessment.



Assessment should be conducted over time through ongoing intervention and review. Examples of schoolwork, reports, Individual Development Plans (IDPs) and school-based data should be considered. It is also highly relevant to the assessment that any other factors that could be contributing to the learning delay are considered, for example, possible hearing or visual impairment, poor attendance, disrupted schooling, or emotional or physical difficulties. To be useful, all assessments should lead to workable plans of action that promote learning.

It is important to gather as much information about the child/young person's needs as possible and this will come from a variety of sources. Direct work with the child/young person may include assessment of:

- Word reading and spelling ability using reputable, up-to-date tests
- Phonic knowledge
- Phonological awareness
- Visual memory for spellings
- Lack of fluency noted in the pupil's performance, for example:
 - For reading: slow speed of reading, inability to use expression in reading, lack of enjoyment of reading.
 - For writing: slow speed of writing, content of writing not reflecting the pupil's verbal expression.

A cognitive assessment (IQ test) is not necessary to determine whether a pupil does or does not have Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia). Such assessments are not reliable in telling us whether a child/young person has Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia) or not because they measure different skills to those, we mostly depend on to learn to read and spell (Stanovich, 1994). An Educational Psychologist may administer a cognitive assessment in order to gain further information about a child or young person's cognitive strengths and relative weaknesses but there is no requirement or necessity to undertake a psychometric assessment.

In addition to an examination of the child/young person's current attainments in literacy, there is also a need to consider emotional and motivational aspects of functioning including:

- The child/young person's confidence as a learner.
- The extent to which s/he feels able to take risks with their learning.
- How s/he responds when 'making a mistake'.
- How s/he responds to praise.

13. WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO

Many children and young people will require additional support with their learning at some point in their school career this does not necessarily mean that they have Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia). All schools should offer high quality whole class learning opportunities. When they identify that a learner requires more support, they should include them in smaller group or individual interventions.

If we notice a child/young person struggling with phonics, word reading and spelling and who seems uninterested in books, we should start by asking: What is going to help this child/young person to read and spell effectively?

If we want a child/young person who is experiencing Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia) to make progress, we need to ask:

- How much progress has been made in the last six months?
- How well has s/he responded to intervention?
- What is helping/hindering?
- What is needed in his/her programme now in order for him/her to access the curriculum in the classroom?

The impact of these interventions must be carefully monitored and where pupils do not make the anticipated levels of progress schools should request support and advice from external professionals such as Educational Psychologists or Specialist Teachers.

14. HOW CAN CARDIFF INCLUSION SERVICE HELP?

Cardiff Inclusion Service offers a range of support related to prevention, identification, assessment, intervention, and monitoring of Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia) in schools.

Whole school approaches

The Inclusion Service promotes the development of effective whole-school practice within 'dyslexia friendly' schools through advice and training. The Learning Support Team (LST) encourage schools to work towards Cardiff's 'Dyslexia Friendly Schools Awards'.

Training

- Joint training is available for Teaching assistants, Teachers and Additional Learning Needs Coordinators, on supporting children/young people experiencing Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia).
- The Learning Support Team within Cardiff deliver training on Early Literacy Skills and the 'Cardiff Literacy Intervention Programme' (CLIP) for Reading and Writing as well as training for published interventions, for example 'Sound Discovery', 'Rapid Readers' and 'Rainbow Readers'. The EPS delivers training on other interventions (e.g., Paired Reading, Precision Teaching, Cued Spelling).
- Inclusion service staff also provide sessions to raise awareness of Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia) with groups of parents/carers and/or school governors.

Individual intervention

The purpose of any assessment should be to develop appropriate intervention and support strategies, not simply to confirm whether or not a child/young person's is experiencing Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia). There are many interventions that are proven to be helpful in supporting and improving children/young people's literacy skills. The critical point is to select the intervention that is most likely to have a significant impact for the individual child/young person concerned. This judgement will be made on the basis of assessment information and

current research. The Inclusion Service can provide:

- Individual assessment
- Advice on effective interventions and strategies.
- Bespoke programmes of work.
- Psychological consultation with school staff/parents

15. WHAT IS APPROPRIATE PROGRESS?

Whole class teaching: Pupil's should be working approximately at age related expectations and make roughly at least a year's progress each year. If they are around a year behind the expected level for their chronological age, it may be appropriate for them to be supported through a small group intervention.

Small group evidenced based intervention: When accessing this type of intervention, children should make accelerated progress. This would normally mean double the expected rate of progress e.g. 6 months gain in reading at the end of a 3-month intervention. However, other individual factors should be taken into account when assessing whether the intervention has been successful, for example co-occurring needs, (e.g., Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or Global Development Delay) and consideration of whether the intervention was appropriate and delivered effectively.

Individualised programme: If a child is not making adequate progress in small group interventions, they may require a more bespoke programme of work. In primary schools the Learning Support Team can be contacted for support in this. In secondary schools there will be an identified specialist teacher for literacy within the school.

16. RESPONSE TO PRIVATE REPORTS

Parents/carers may make a request for a private EP or specialist teacher assessment/report and some GPs may tell parents to request EP/specialist teacher assessment in order to confirm Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia). It is important to note that

some private psychologists and companies outside of Cardiff Local Authority undertake cognitive assessments and utilise the discrepancy model in order to identify dyslexia. As mentioned previously, the discrepancy model has been discredited by research and a cognitive assessment is not necessary to determine whether a pupil does or does not have Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia). Cardiff Inclusion Service recognises that measuring and recording a child/young person's word reading and spelling progress over time (in accordance with the BPS [1999] definition), in relation to additional support programmes, is the most reliable way of telling whether a child/young person has Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia).

Schools should have good processes in place using the Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales for identification, assessment and action to meet children/young people's needs. Involvement of the EPS and the Learning Support Team may also be considered if a child/young person's progress is felt to be significant and persistent. When a private psychology report is produced in relation to an individual child/young person, schools should endeavour to implement the suggested recommendations as fully as possible. The school may wish to consult with the school EP for advice about recommendations that have been suggested within a private psychology report.

17. ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS

If a pupil experiencing Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia) receives support for his/her literacy difficulties in the classroom, or benefits from different access arrangements in the classroom so that s/he can access the curriculum and demonstrate his/her knowledge and understanding, then reasonable adjustments reflecting this support should be available in other assessment situations. If this is not the case, information available from these assessments will not be a true reflection of the pupil's subject knowledge because the level of his/her reading and/or writing ability will limit

what s/he is able to demonstrate in this way. Access arrangements should apply to all formal examinations where qualifying criteria for such arrangements, laid down by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), are met.

The JCQ aims to remove the barriers for a pupil with Additional Learning Needs so that they are able to access national examinations and demonstrate the level of his/her attainment in ways that are not hindered by the level of his/her reading and/or spelling skills. Arrangements such as a reader (human or text-reading software), scribe (human or voice-to-text software), and the use of a word processor with spell check enabled, are some of the options available to a pupil who meets the criteria specified by the JCQ.

The JCQ access arrangements are updated each year in September, and may be downloaded from the JCQ website, www.jcq.org.uk. It is the responsibility of the Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators and subject teachers at each secondary school to be familiar with the access arrangements to which a pupil attending their school is entitled.

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/>



18. SUMMARY

This document has set out guidance from Cardiff Inclusion Service on identifying, assessing, supporting and monitoring, the needs of children and young people experiencing Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia). The document aims to raise awareness and understanding of Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia) and ensure that schools, as well as parents/carers, receive consistent messages from the Inclusion Service regarding Literacy Difficulties (dyslexia) and that parent/carer concerns are acknowledged and addressed. This document should be viewed as guidance and staff should use their professional judgement and consider the context, policies and procedures of their school when determining any particular course of action.

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