

## **INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN DEVON**

# **Devon's Approach to Understanding Children and Young People with Literacy Difficulties (Reading and Spelling)**

**(INCLUDING GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF THE TERM DYSLEXIA)**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this guidance is to outline Devon County Council's approach to identifying and meeting the needs of children and young people with reading and spelling difficulties. It provides clarity on the use of the term 'dyslexia' and aims to support schools in:

- Early identification and assessment of literacy difficulties (reading and spelling) at the word level
- Understanding the factors affecting the development of reading and spelling skills
- Supporting children's acquisition of word reading and/or spelling
- Understanding their responsibilities in meeting the needs of these children.
- Accessing additional support and advice

This document draws on a range of current research into difficulties with word reading and/or spelling. Throughout this document we will use the term 'literacy difficulties' to refer to difficulties with reading and spelling. To be a proficient reader a child must not only be able to decode accurately, but read fluently (using their sight word vocabulary) and with understanding (Snowling and Hulme, 2011). Spelling (encoding) is the process of translating spoken word to written print. This document focuses on reading and spelling at the word level and does not discuss difficulties relating to other areas of literacy such as reading comprehension, written expression (e.g. grammar or organisation); or handwriting.

## **2.0 PERSPECTIVES ON READING AND SPELLING**

- 2.1 Reading and spelling are complex skills that do not necessarily develop naturally. They need to be taught and children and young people need to learn and to practise the skills involved.
- 2.2 Parents/carers, as well as teachers and other staff, play a vital role in helping children and young people to master the skills involved in reading and spelling.
- 2.3 If a child does not make progress with the development of reading and spelling skills in school, as a first step the teaching and support the child experiences should be reviewed and modified where appropriate.
- 2.4 Devon CC see effective support in overcoming the barriers to achievement presented by literacy difficulties as essential in securing children's social and emotional adjustment and positive approaches to learning.
- 2.5 No two people with literacy difficulties are the same. It is important to find out what specific strengths and weaknesses a child or young person has so that interventions can be targeted towards that individual.
- 2.6 Devon CC recognises that literacy is made up of a number of component skills in which children may have differing abilities. For example, a child may be a good reader but a poor speller. They may also have strong comprehension skills but find decoding of words difficult.

2.7 It is important that children and young people understand that literacy difficulties are not indicative of low cognitive ability/intelligence. If a child or young person experiences literacy difficulties then their skills and strengths in other areas should be recognised.

### 3. FACTORS AFFECTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITERACY SKILLS

There are many factors that will influence the development of literacy skills and lead to individual differences in achievement. Progress in the development of literacy skills is likely to result from a complex interaction between biological, cognitive, emotional, behavioural and environmental factors.

#### 3.1 Biological

3.1.1 Literacy difficulties do appear to run in families however it is unclear why this might be, as the interaction between genes and the environment is complex.

3.1.2 It is currently not possible to test for literacy difficulties from genetic analysis and the likelihood of a simple genetic explanation is unlikely to materialise (e.g. Elliott and Grigorenko, 2014).

3.1.3 There is no known 'part' in the brain for reading although the brain can develop the capacity to read. This process can change over time in response to environmental experiences such as teaching (e.g. Elliot and Grigorenko, 2014).

#### 3.2 Cognitive

3.2.1 Despite considerable research in this area, there remains a limited understanding of how cognitive factors underpin reading difficulties (Elliot & Grigorenko, 2014).

3.2.2 Word reading and encoding (spelling) skills have been shown to have no relationship to intelligence (e.g. Stanovich 1994). In other words, poor word reading or poor spelling skills do not imply low intelligence/low cognitive ability. Low intelligence/low cognitive ability should not be seen as a sufficient cause for word reading or encoding failure.<sup>1</sup>

3.2.3 Difficulties with short term and working memory, auditory and visual processing, attentional factors and motor processing are just a few of the factors that may influence the acquisition of literacy skills.

3.2.3 Problems with phonological awareness (the ability to work with the sounds in a spoken language) and phonemic awareness (the ability to focus on and manipulate individual sounds in spoken words) have been repeatedly shown to be associated with poor decoding and can be improved, in most cases, with targeted intervention. However, it is now recognised that problems in this area cannot account for *all* those with a reading difficulty. This means that a proportion of poor readers do not present with phonological difficulties and others with such difficulties do not encounter problems with learning to read.

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<sup>1</sup> It is acknowledged that individuals with significant learning difficulties (1<sup>st</sup> percentile or below) will likely encounter problems learning to read (Elliott and Grigorenko, 2014)

3.2.4 Rapid naming difficulties (naming known visual stimuli at speed) have also been associated with reading difficulties - this is particularly in relation to reading fluency (speed). Although this can be assessed and may help to explain difficulties with speed of working and reading fluency, there are no clear ways to improve the skill of rapid naming.

### **3.3 Emotional**

3.3.1 Children's motivation and interest in a subject plays an important role in school performance. Evidence suggests that there is a positive relationship between reading frequency, reading enjoyment and reading attainment. For example, in a review of a number of studies, Petscher (2010) found that attitudes to reading were correlated with achievement in reading.

3.3.2 Competence beliefs, such as a person's perceptions of their abilities, are likely to impact on their motivation to engage and persist in tasks. This is relevant within all areas of learning and includes literacy. For example there are studies which show that students' confidence in their writing abilities influenced their writing motivation as well as various writing outcomes in school (e.g. Pajares, 2003).

3.3.3 Carol Dweck's recently popularised work on 'growth mind-set' offers an understanding of motivation and perceptions of competence. Dweck explains that pupils with a 'growth mind-set' believe that their skills and performance can be improved through the process of learning, for example, through effort or getting help from others. This contrasts to a 'fixed mind-set' where a pupil believes that ability cannot be changed. Dweck has shown that pupils with a 'growth mind-set' are more likely to sustain interest and motivation in tasks; and this applies to learning to read and spell.

3.3.4 Classroom climate and teaching approaches can have a significant impact on emotional aspects of learning, including literacy. See 'environmental factors'.

3.3.5 It is important to note that motivational styles, beliefs and feelings about learning are not fixed and individuals can move between different approaches to learning depending on task and other environmental factors.

### **3.4 Environmental**

Studies have shown that factors in the environment at school and at home can impact upon learning outcomes.

#### **3.4.1 Home learning environment**

- It is well established that the home literacy environment is an important predictor of children's language and literacy development. The "home literacy environment" refers to activities undertaken by family members at home that relate to literacy learning as well as the literacy resources in the home and parental attitudes toward literacy (Puglisi et al 2017).
- The number of books in a child or young person's home is found to have a substantial effect on educational attainment. Evans et al (2010) concluded from their research that 500 books in the home is equivalent to 3 years extra formal education.

- The quality of home literacy interactions, such as the amount and type of conversation/talk around storybooks, have been shown to predict children's language and early literacy skills.
- General parental involvement in school life is positively associated with learning outcomes in literacy.
- Children are more likely to continue to be readers in homes where books and reading are valued (Clark and Rumbold, 2006).

#### 3.4.2. School learning environment

- There has been extensive research around the relationship between certain instructional principles and literacy achievement. The general consensus from the available evidence is that programmes that teach children to read should include systematic and direct phonic instruction.
- Teaching practice, such as distributed practice (more often for shorter periods), interleaved learning (mixing new material with older, more familiar material) and teaching to fluency has shown to improve retention in reading and spelling skills over time (e.g. Solity, 2003).
- The theory of 'optimal instruction' suggests that teaching an optimal amount of information and teaching it frequently improves the likelihood of it being retained (as it is seen as useful to the learner). Therefore teaching the most common words and the most common occurring GPCs (grapheme to phoneme correspondences / letter to sound correspondences) frequently, has been found to be most beneficial (e.g. Solity & Vousden, 2009).
- The choice of books at school has been found to affect attitudes to reading and perceptions of self as a reader. For example, Solity & Vousden (2009) suggest that structured reading schemes can be restrictive and demotivating for pupils who struggle to read when they are expected to stay too long on the scheme before moving on to books of their choice. From this perspective we consider it important that children and young people can choose from a wide range of books according to their age and personal interests, as well as using structured and progressive texts.
- Grouping at school can influence a pupil's perception of themselves as a learner and should be carefully considered when planning for pupils with literacy difficulties. Mixed attainment groups can sometimes be more helpful with regards to self-concept and subsequent achievement.

#### 3.4.3 Language development and Literacy skills

- It has been known for some time now that language development, including vocabulary knowledge is important for the development of reading comprehension skills. More recent research has also highlighted the importance of vocabulary knowledge in the development of decoding skills, e.g. Nation and Snowling (2004); Hulme and Snowling (2005). Tunmer and Chapman (2012).

- This indicates that once pupils have been taught a relatively small number of critical phonic skills their decoding is improved by developing their language skills and vocabulary knowledge.

Studies show that:

- children's knowledge of word meanings is a predictor of later word reading skills
- vocabulary knowledge is a longitudinal predictor of irregular word reading.
- Recent research on a concept known as 'set for variability' refers to pupils' ability to use their vocabulary knowledge in order to help them to decode. For example the letter combination 'ow' in the word 'blow' can be pronounced in two ways ('ow' as in 'cow' or 'ow' as in 'slow'). Children who have the word 'cow' in their vocabulary will use this knowledge to correctly decode this word (i.e. choose the correct pronunciation).
- As well as teaching phonics there needs to be a focus on developing vocabulary knowledge and language skills.

#### 4.0 DYSLEXIA

4.1 It is recognised that there are many different definitions of dyslexia. Over time the understanding of the term has become less clear.

4.2 The definition most commonly used by Educational Psychologists is that of the British Psychological Society (1999) which is as follows:

*'Dyslexia is evident when accurate and fluent 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, 1999)

4.3 Although the above definition is recognised across many local authorities, there continues to be a lack of consensus amongst professionals working in this field leading to the term dyslexia being used in various and contradictory ways. For example, dyslexia may be used to describe anyone who struggles with reading; or to indicate a subgroup of poor readers whose reading difficulties are in contrast to their academic strengths; or to indicate those with a range of difficulties of which literacy could or could not be a feature (e.g. problems with working memory, visual processing or letter reversal).

4.4 This lack of universal agreement can result in a lack of shared understanding of the child's individual needs and appropriate provision, that is, knowing a pupil has a diagnosis of dyslexia offers no reliable information relating to their specific difficulties and what will be helpful to support them.

- 4.5 There can also be a misconception that there is a need for a label of dyslexia in order to access additional resources or exam arrangements, which is not the case in primary and secondary education. Or that a diagnosis will lead to alternative, specialised teaching approaches which is also not the case. Please note that there is clear guidance from the JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications) with regards to the requirements for exam arrangements, such as extra time. These assessments relate to the pupil's specific difficulty, e.g. slow speed of processing or reading difficulties; and these can be carried out by a Specialist Assessor employed by the school.
- 4.6 Ultimately what is most important is early identification of individual difficulties and that intervention to address those difficulties is tailored to meet an individual's needs.
- 4.7 We do not discount the concept of 'Dyslexia' as a term which could be used to describe significant difficulties with reading and or spelling (in line with the BPS definition). However, we believe it is more helpful to focus on the early identification of a reading and/or spelling difficulty and find the most appropriate way to support this.
- 4.8 We acknowledge that there are individuals who experience a severe and persistent difficulty with acquiring the skills to read and/or to spell despite appropriate intervention over time. However, we believe that 'what matters most is that children's difficulties with literacy learning are identified and addressed in ways that promote progress, whether or not they are described in terms of dyslexia' (Rose review 2009).
- 4.9 Devon CC takes the view that early intervention needs to take place for children with reading or spelling difficulties. The intervention chosen should be evidence based, tailored to the child's individual's needs, and modified in response to their progress. This approach has been termed "response to intervention" and contrasts to basing provision upon the diagnosis of 'dyslexia'.
- 4.10 We are aware that there are individuals who have a diagnosis of 'dyslexia' and report that this has been a positive experience. However, the research in this area (including research relating to social and emotional aspects) reveals mixed findings and we consider it important to take this into account. The research to date shows that children and young people with a 'dyslexia' diagnosis often report improved positive self-perceptions (for example, they previously considered that others saw them as idle or unintelligent). However, other research indicates that there may be a greater risk of individuals developing negative self-perceptions of themselves as learners (Gibby-Liversuch et al, 2019).



In summary it is concluded within the Devon CC that:

- Literacy difficulties are of a complex nature. A number of factors combine to influence each child's literacy development, these include genetic, cognitive, environmental and emotional factors.
- Pupils of all abilities can experience literacy difficulties. The need for support in this area does not rely on identifying a supposed discrepancy between a child's or young person's ability in one area and his/her abilities in other areas.
- When identifying and supporting literacy difficulties we focus on individual strengths and needs rather than on possible underlying causes or diagnosis. This reflects continuing debate in the field of literacy development and dyslexia and the absence of a single agreed causal explanation.
- All children with literacy difficulties require early intervention. The intervention chosen should be evidence based, tailored to the child's individual's needs and modified in response to their progress.
- It is understood that there is a small minority of children and young people who continue to experience a severe and persistent difficulty with word reading/and or spelling (Dyslexia) despite carefully adapted and appropriate teaching over time.

## **5.0 ASSESSMENT**

5.1 Assessment leading to intervention can take place at any time in a child's school career but ideally should take place relatively early for the following reasons:

- Literacy difficulties can affect performance in other areas of the curriculum
- To reduce the risk of developing negative attitudes and anxieties about literacy (and learning in general)
- Interventions for older children with the most persistent difficulties can be less effective than early intervention (Vaughn et al. 2010)

5.2 Standardised assessment:

Assessment of reading and spelling difficulties can be carried out using standardised tests that are accessible to schools. These include

- A single word reading test (e.g. SWRT, GORT)
- A single word spelling test (e.g. SWST, HAST 2)

There are also tests of reading fluency (e.g. TOWRE) and tests of reading comprehension (e.g. YARC) which are available for qualified teachers to use.

- Pupils who score lower than 84 on a standardised test are performing below the average range for their chronological age and will require some form of support or intervention.
- Within Devon, it has been agreed that children with a reading and/or spelling standardised score of 79 (8<sup>th</sup> percentile) or less on a single word reading or spelling test can access support from the Devon SpLD (Dyslexia) Service.

### 5.3 Diagnostic assessment:

- Once a difficulty has been identified, e.g. through teacher observation and/or standardised assessment, further diagnostic assessment of the following skills will help to guide appropriate intervention for a particular individual:
  - Phonological skills (auditory blending and segmentation)
  - Grapheme/phoneme(letter/sound) correspondences
  - Applying the skill of blending to read
  - Applying the skill of segmenting to spell
  - Reading of common /sight words
  - Spelling of common/sight words

## 6.0 RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOLS

6.1 The Children and Families Act (March 2014) aimed to reform the way children and young people access Educational, Health and Care services. This laid out changes to the system of identification and support for those with Special Educational Needs, including severe and persistent literacy difficulties and related Specific Learning Difficulties.

**In relation to literacy difficulties, schools should work to promote the underpinning principles of effective Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) policy, provision and practice. These focus on:**

- the child's perception of their strengths and difficulties and strategies to help
- working in partnership with parents / carers
- early identification, intervention and ongoing monitoring
- inclusive education/ equality of opportunity (that is, enabling all children as far as possible to learn together in schools with appropriate support)
- overcoming emotional barriers to literacy difficulties
- multi-agency working
- raising attainment and
- a coherent support framework for school staff

### 6.2 There is an expectation that schools in Devon will:

- Implement a Graduated Approach as set out in the Code of Practice (2015) and use the Devon Graduated Response Tool (or similar) to identify, plan and review provision within the area of literacy difficulties.
- Implement high quality, structured and systematic teaching of early literacy skills for all pupils.
- Consider the ongoing development needs of staff in relation to knowledge in this area of difficulty so that expertise in school is current and 'championed'.
- Identify specific strengths and weaknesses of individual children or young people. Interventions should be targeted toward an individual child's or young person's particular difficulties.
- Provide a tight, structured programme of small group support or individualised support that has an evidence base for all pupils who have fallen below expected levels of progress in literacy.

- Involve support from outside professionals where difficulties persist, such as advisory teachers or Educational Psychologists to assist with assessment and targeted interventions.

6.4 Under the new SEND legislation Local Authorities are required to publish detailed information of the support available in their area. This is known as the 'Local Offer' See Appendix 2 for Devon's Local Offer page. The Cognition and Learning sections of the Devon Graduated Response Tool booklets also hold information as well as the 'Further Support' sections of the same.

6.5 There are a variety of teaching approaches and support strategies suitable for children and young people identified as having literacy difficulties. Schools should draw on a range of evidence based programmes and approaches suited to particular needs. For example, see "what works with literacy difficulties" (Greg Brooks, 2016).

6.6 In line with the Equality Act (2010) Schools have a duty to make "reasonable adjustments" to enable a child with a disability to be educated in their local mainstream school and not to treat such a child less favourably than their peers. This applies to children and young people with SEN including those with literacy difficulties of a severe and persistent nature. This places significant obligations on the Governing Body and Head teacher.

6.7 Devon policy on the development of inclusive education reflects national policy and Devon CC is committed to developing the capacity of schools by helping to improve staff skills and confidence in working with children and young people with diverse needs, including severe and persistent difficulties with literacy.

6.8 Schools are expected to implement the SEND Code of Practice (2015) when considering the needs of any child who is experiencing difficulty in accessing any part of the curriculum. This means that teachers should, working with the SENCo, carry out a clear analysis of the pupil's needs. The support and intervention provided should be selected to meet the outcomes identified for the pupil, based on reliable evidence of effectiveness, and should be provided by staff with sufficient skills and knowledge. The effectiveness of the support and intervention and their impact on the pupil's progress should be reviewed regularly.

6.9 Where schools need further advice they may request the assistance of professionals from outside the school in a cycle of planning (sometimes including consultation and/or assessment), intervention and review. Such professionals may include an Educational Psychologist or advisory teacher.

## **7.0 STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES**

7.1 Devon CC has the same statutory responsibilities to children and young people experiencing severe and persistent difficulties with literacy, as it does to all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Devon CC uses the SEND Code of Practice (2015), working, wherever possible, with children and young people, parent/carers and schools. A large proportion of the SEN budget is delegated to schools in Devon, enabling the needs of the majority of children and young people to be met by schools, using differentiated approaches to curriculum delivery through a graduated response to meeting needs.

7.2 Details of all of the above procedures are available from the SEN 0-25 Team or the Devon Information, Advice and Support for SEND (see Appendix 2). See also <https://new.devon.gov.uk/supportforschools/services-and-contacts/send>

7.3 Where a child has an Educational, Health and Care Plan, or is supported at the SEN support stage by school-level planning, the school is responsible for ensuring that his/her progress is formally reviewed regularly with parents/carers.

## 8. THE ROLE OF ENGLISH ADVISERS

8.1. The Babcock LDP English Team support the teaching and learning of literacy.

8.2 The English advisers work with all those involved in learning and teaching literacy at the primary level - children, teachers, teaching assistants, subject leaders, senior leadership teams, head teachers, governors and parents. Their work focusses on developing all aspects of the English National Curriculum

8.3 The English team offer training courses for a range of literacy interventions which support pupils working below age-related expectations.

8.4 Where pupils are not making good progress, an adviser can provide support to identify barriers to learning, adaptations to quality first teaching and appropriate targeted intervention.

## 9.0 THE ROLE OF SPECIALIST ADVISORY TEACHERS

9.1 Devon SpLD (Dyslexia) Service is based at Queen Elizabeth's School and offers schools guidance and support in meeting the needs of children and young people with severe and persistent literacy difficulties through outreach, training and network support groups.

9.2 They can be requested to work with groups of schools, individual schools or with specific students by the school directly via the **Request for Access to Babcock LDP Special Educational Needs, Disability and Inclusion Advisory Service**. Please see Appendix 2 for contact details including a link to the Devon SpLD (Dyslexia) Service's webpage and 'Eligibility for Access'.

9.3 They also host the Secondary Dyslexia Network Secondary School network meetings: termly meetings offering support to and sharing good practice between staff who are involved in literacy provision in secondary schools.

For further information and training opportunities please refer to the Devon SpLD (Dyslexia) webpage. See Appendix 2 for contact details including a link to the webpage.

## **10.0 THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS**

10.1 Educational Psychologists work to support schools to meet the needs of pupils and young people with a range of literacy difficulties including those of a severe and persistent nature. Contact details are attached in Appendix 2.

10.2 Educational Psychologists (EPs) have a wide role in supporting schools with their provision for pupils experiencing literacy difficulties and in discussing the needs of individual pupils where concerns arise. They can become involved in further individual assessment where children / young people are not making adequate progress (as defined in the SEND Code of Practice and supporting LA guidance) and following school intervention as part of a graduated response to need.

10.3 Educational Psychologists (EPs) offer staff training around the identification and understanding of literacy difficulties, as well as training related to specific interventions for those pupils not making expected progress.

10.4 EPs also offer consultation and assessment in order to share a better understanding of individual need as well as working with staff and parents to find helpful ways to support those needs

10.5 Where an Educational Psychologist has become involved to gain a deeper understanding of a pupil's needs, they will consider the learning opportunities provided and teaching methods employed as well as considering the cognitive, emotional, social and environmental factors that may be involved.

10.6 The main focus of a psychological assessment will be to clarify the child's needs to inform an appropriate teaching programme.

## APPENDIX 1

### A: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

As outlined in the introduction of this document, we have used the term 'literacy difficulties' to refer to difficulties with word reading and spelling. Word reading is the process of translating written print (graphemes) to spoken word. Spelling is the process of translating spoken word to written print. This document does not discuss difficulties relating to other areas of literacy such as reading comprehension, written expression (e.g. grammar or organisation); or handwriting.

#### **1. *How do I know if a child is Dyslexic?***

There are many reasons why children and young people struggle with literacy, for example not having had access to appropriate teaching, phonological difficulties or a low sense of competence around reading or writing. Devon CC consider literacy difficulties to exist on a continuum and there to be no clear or absolute cut off point where a child can be said to be 'Dyslexic'.

The definition of dyslexia most commonly used by Educational Psychologists is that of the British Psychological Society (1999) which is as follows:

*'Dyslexia is evident when accurate and fluent reading and /or spelling develops very incompletely or with great difficulty'*

Although the above definition is recognised across many local authorities, there continues to be a lack of consensus amongst professionals working in this field leading to the term dyslexia being used in various and contradictory ways. So rather than focus on whether or not a child can be described as 'dyslexic' we believe it is more helpful to focus on the early identification of a difficulty with literacy and then to find the most appropriate way to support this difficulty.

*'What matters most is that children's difficulties with literacy learning are identified and addressed in ways that promote progress, whether or not they are described in terms of 'dyslexia' (Rose review 2009)*

#### **2. *Why do some children/ young people experience literacy difficulties?***

The processes underlying the development of literacy skills are complex and it is likely that there are a number of different reasons as to why a child experiences literacy difficulties. Biological, cognitive, emotional and environmental factors may all play a part, e.g. teaching approaches, hereditary factors, and early exposure to literacy (e.g. reading in the home).

#### **3. *Are literacy difficulties hereditary?***

Problems with literacy do appear to run in families although the interaction between genes and environment is complex. At present it is not possible to identify these difficulties from genetic analysis.

#### **4. *Can literacy difficulties occur across the full range of abilities?***

Yes. In the past the popular notion of 'dyslexia' was of highly able children and young people who had reading problems. These days it is understood that

literacy difficulties can occur at all levels of ability, and in all social classes and ethnic groups.

**5. *Is it necessary to involve an Educational Psychologist in the recognition of literacy difficulties?***

It is not necessary to have an Educational Psychologist or other specialist to identify a child as having literacy difficulties, although staff in schools can discuss a child's response to intervention with their link Educational Psychologist if there are ongoing concerns about progress.

**6. *An independent assessment carried out has concluded that a child has dyslexia. What are the next steps?***

The school should read the report and discuss its contents with parents/carers. It is worth noting that there is no single agreed definition or description of dyslexia and that professionals working outside the local authority may be using an alternative definition and/or a different assessment framework.

The school should consider any recommendations made in the report and discuss with parents/carers which of these they feel are appropriate and feasible. Parents/carers can be reassured that appropriate support should be available in school to support the child, dependent on need, and not dependent on any label.

**7. *Should we be using a dyslexia screening tool/assessment in school?***

The use of a Dyslexia screening tool/assessment is not required to identify a child as having a reading and/or spelling difficulty. Screening tools can be used to provide additional information regarding a pupil's strengths and weaknesses in a range of areas, however they should not be used as a standalone assessment to describe a pupil's difficulties as Dyslexia.

It is worth noting that, as there is no single agreed definition of Dyslexia or causal explanation, screening tools vary in terms of their content and may be based on an alternative definition and assessment framework to the one outlined within this policy. For example, some screening tools assess cognitive skills that 'could' be influencing the acquisition of literacy skills but do not reliably predict or explain reading or spelling difficulties, e.g. working memory.

Please refer to Section 5 for recommendations regarding standardised and diagnostic assessments that can be carried out by staff in school to identify a difficulty and guide appropriate intervention.

**8. *Can I use the term SpLD (Specific Learning Difficulty) instead of dyslexia?***

The term Specific Literacy Difficulty (SpLD) is a term which refers to a difference or difficulty with particular aspects of learning such as literacy, numeracy, attention.

With this in mind, it is possible to use the term SpLD, however, this should be done with an understanding that the definition covers a 'range' of difficulties, not exclusive to literacy. Therefore we advise that if using SpLD in this context then reading and/or spelling are clearly identified as the difficulty.

**9. *If a child is identified as having literacy difficulties/ dyslexia what support should they be receiving?***

Children and young people identified as having literacy difficulties should have received a graduated response to their needs in line with the SEND Code of

Practice. This should include effective literacy teaching and intervention; strategies to promote access to the curriculum in the classroom, including alternative methods of recording; and emotional support that is sensitive to the anxiety and frustration often resulting from literacy failure.

**10. What level of literacy skill can I expect a child with literacy difficulties/dyslexia to achieve?**

Unfortunately, it is impossible to predict exactly how much progress any one child will make over their school career. Almost all children/ young people will learn to read and spell to a functional level, however we are aware that a small number of learners will respond very slowly and/or with minimal progress to the evidence based literacy interventions.

It is the aim that pupils who continue to struggle with reading and/or spelling for the greater part of their school and adult lives will be taught to use a range of strategies and aids to support reading and writing tasks in their daily life. This could be, for example the use of voice activation software or other ICT software. As adults, they may continue to need additional support with literacy-based tasks such as when making a job application.

**11. If a child has been identified as having severe and persistent literacy difficulties (dyslexia), does this mean that the LA should be asked to put an EHC plan in place?**

No, not necessarily. The needs of most pupils with literacy difficulties can be met within school through differentiation and appropriate programmes of support. However, additional support should be considered for any pupil who requires a level of support over and above what the school is able to provide. Further advice on this subject can be obtained from the County SEN 0-25 Team.

**12. Is there a particular teaching approach specifically for dyslexic pupils?**

No. It is sometimes assumed that once the term 'dyslexia' has been used to describe a child or young person's needs that a particular teaching approach/intervention will be put into place. The reality is that different interventions work for different children and young people regardless of the description used. Any intervention implemented should continue to support the development of phonic knowledge, phonemic knowledge and recognition of common words. It should take account of an individual's strengths and weaknesses and support a positive attitude to reading and/or spelling. All programmes of intervention should be regularly monitored and reviewed with regards to the individual's progress. Further information about effective interventions can be found in the appendix.

**13. What can a parent do if they are unhappy with the support their child is receiving in school?**

Pupils make most progress when schools and parents work in partnership. Parents can request a meeting with the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) or the head teacher in order to express their concerns and ask questions.

Devon Information Advice and Support (DIAS) can also provide advice and support with regard to meetings in school (see contact details in Appendix 2)



**14. How will a child with literacy difficulties cope at secondary school?**

Transferring to secondary school can be an anxious time for pupils and parents. Most children make this transition without any problems. All Devon secondary schools should be aware of how to meet the needs of pupils with literacy difficulties. They should also receive records and information about individual pupils' needs from their primary school. However, it can be helpful to identify, early on, a contact (perhaps the form tutor or Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) with whom you can discuss the child's needs at the start of the year, and whom you can contact if you have any concerns.

**15. Will a child with literacy difficulties be eligible for support with exams?**

Pupils who have a history of support in school and who meet given criteria are eligible for extra support to access exams. Support can include, for example, extra time to complete exams, a reader (human and/or computer reader), or a scribe (or voice recognition software or use of a laptop with the spellcheck enabled). Support is based on the pupil's presenting needs and is not on the pupil's needs having been described as 'dyslexia'.

**16. Where can I go for further advice and support?**

There are a number of sources of support and information in Devon listed in Appendix 2 of this policy.

## APPENDIX 2

### USEFUL CONTACTS

#### **Babcock Learning and Development Partnership:**

##### **SEND Adviser:**

Tanya Haigh  
Tanya.Haigh@babcockinternational.com  
Tel: 01392 287239

Devon's SEND Local Offer

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/educationandfamilies/special-educational-needs-and-disability-send-local-offer>

Devon's Graduated Response Tool

<https://www.babcockldp.co.uk/disadvantaged-vulnerable-learners/send/devon-graduated-response>

##### **Educational Psychology Service**

[LDP-LearnerSupport@babcockinternational.com](mailto:LDP-LearnerSupport@babcockinternational.com)

Tel: 01392 287233

##### **Literacy Advisers**

[LDP-PrimaryEnglish@babcockinternational.com](mailto:LDP-PrimaryEnglish@babcockinternational.com)

<https://www.babcockldp.co.uk/improving-schools-settings/english>

01392 287361

##### **SEN 0-25 Team**

specialeducation0-25-mailbox@devon.gov.uk

Tel: 01392 380434

##### **Devon SpLD (Dyslexia) Service**

Ann Atherton and Deborah Lynch

a.atherton@qe.devon.sch.uk

d.lynch@qe.devon.sch.uk

[www.qe.devon.sch.uk/school-information/partnerships/devon-dyslexia-service/](http://www.qe.devon.sch.uk/school-information/partnerships/devon-dyslexia-service/)

##### **Devon Information Advice & Support for SEND (DIAS)**

Tel: 01392 383080

devonias@devon.gov.uk

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

##### **British Dyslexia Association**

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

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

helpline@bdadyslexia.org.uk

Tel: 0333 405 4555

##### **Dyslexia Action**

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

**PATOSS**

<https://www.patoss-dyslexia.org/>  
info@patoss-dyslexia.org  
0749 668 5076

**Devon PATOSS**

devonpatoss@hotmail.com

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<https://www.gov.uk/rights-disabled-person/education-rights>

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