Specific Literacy Difficulty/Dyslexia

What is Dyslexia?

Literacy skills are a key foundation from which many educational opportunities arise and develop. Any student who has difficulty with reading, writing and spelling skills may have difficulty in making the most of education and ‘enjoying and achieving’ in school.

Children learn to read and write at different speeds. However, there are some children who experience ongoing and persistent difficulties with these skills, in spite of the teaching and support they receive. These children may have the specific learning difficulty of dyslexia.

As with any area of need, dyslexia lies on a continuum. Some children may have relatively mild difficulties, whilst others may be significantly and severely affected.

The British Psychological Society defines dyslexia as follows: -

- Dyslexia is evident when accurate and fluent word reading and/or spelling develops very incompletely or with great difficulty.

British Psychological Society (1999)

The British Dyslexia Association defines dyslexia as follows: -

- A specific learning difference which is constitutional in origin, independent of socio-economic or language background and can occur at any level of intellectual ability: it can cause unexpected and persistent difficulties in acquiring certain skills in one or more of the following areas – reading, writing and sometimes numeracy and spoken language. There may be accompanying weaknesses in the skills that support personal organisation – for example speed of processing short-term memory, sequencing and possible weaknesses in auditory or visual perception skills.

British Dyslexia Association (2004)

Although different, the above definitions have features in common: -

- Firstly, dyslexia can occur at any level of intellectual ability. Current research is clear that it is not necessary for there to be a discrepancy between a person’s general abilities and their literacy skills in order for them to be viewed as dyslexic.

- Both definitions suggest that the persistence of a person’s literacy difficulties is a defining feature when considering whether or not they are dyslexic.

A recent body of research has indicated that many children with literacy difficulties respond well when offered appropriate interventions: their difficulties are a consequence of initial literacy provision not being closely matched to their needs.
However, even after intervention, some children experience persistent difficulties. Extensive academic evidence has indicated that often these are children with significant and persisting difficulties with hearing and manipulating the sounds in words (phonological skills). Research suggests most people with dyslexia have these persisting phonological difficulties.

**Key Principles**

Taking into account the above research, key principles of the present policy for children with dyslexia are as follows: -

- Appropriately supported inclusion will address the needs of many pupils with dyslexia.
- Support from the Local Authority will be offered for those pupils with the most severe and persistent literacy needs.
- Pupil’s responses to earlier, less intensive forms of intervention will help to determine what future interventions are necessary.
- Intervention for pupils with dyslexia should be multi-tiered, increasing in intensity for those pupils with persistent difficulties.

**A Staged Model of Intervention**

The above staged or tiered model of intervention ties in well with that described by the Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs (DfES, 2001). The Primary National Strategy also describes ‘waves’ of intervention as follows: -

- Wave One is ‘Quality First Teaching’ delivered in schools which takes account of the needs of all learners. The British Dyslexia Association maintain that the most effective and desirable way of supporting pupils with dyslexia is through making schools more ‘dyslexia friendly’ i.e. trying to ensure that all staff have the necessary knowledge and skills to assess and analyse individual differences, set appropriate targets, employ appropriate teaching methods and materials and use the most effective strategies to ensure maximum progress.

- Wave Two involves group based interventions to support students with additional needs. In recent years the Primary National Strategy have published a range of scripted intervention programmes aimed at students of different ages. There are also other published intervention programmes available commercially.

- Wave Three involves individualised interventions to address literacy needs. Students at this wave of support have not made the expected progress when supported at the earlier waves and require a more individualised approach.
Support for Pupils at Wave One and Wave Two

There is a range of support from the Local Authority (LA) for schools working with pupils at wave one or wave two. These include:

- Ongoing input from the School Improvement Team, particularly in relation to analysis and use of data and the National Strategy Intervention programmes.

- Provision of materials to support an audit of inclusive practices for children with special educational needs.

- Training to enable teachers to gain specialist accredited qualifications in the teaching of pupils with specific literacy needs.

- Specific training from colleagues within the County Psychological Service and the Specialist Advisory Teaching Service to promote the inclusion of pupils with additional literacy needs in classrooms.

- Specific training regarding other ‘wave two’ interventions’ that may be appropriate for groups of students.

Cumbria Children’s Service is committed to working in partnership with local Dyslexia Associations to provide support for students, parents and schools. There is a nominated officer to link with relevant organisations.

What is an Effective Wave Three Intervention?

There is clear research evidence outlining general principles for supporting children who are considered to be at ‘wave three’. In particular research by Brookes (2002) suggests:

- Interventions should be based on a diagnostic assessment of pupil’s strengths and weaknesses.

- Teaching should be delivered by skilled staff who can continually adapt and tailor teaching to pupil’s skills.

- Incorporating explicit work on letter sounds/phonics is an essential part of each programme.

- Long interventions do not necessarily produce proportionally greater benefits.

It is expected that many children receiving an effective ‘wave three’ intervention will be able to make at least double the usual rate of progress.
Support for Pupils at Wave Three

Arrangements for Local Authority support for pupils in primary and secondary schools in Cumbria differ.

For students in year 7 and above, resources to support students with specific learning difficulties are delegated to the school to enable them to make appropriate SEN provision. Advice and guidance for secondary school staff is available from the County Psychological Service and Specialist Advisory Teaching Service.

Primary schools are supported by:

- Provision of advice for individual programmes from the Specialist Advisory Teaching Service or the County Psychological Service.

- Support and training to enable school staff to deliver the Cumbria Reading Intervention Programme to students who would benefit from this programme. This intensive 12-week research based programme is appropriate for children at the beginning stages of learning to read and write. Part funding to help schools with the cost of implementing this programme with individual students will also be available.

- Support and training to enable them to implement an intensive, individualised and time-limited ‘Structured Reading and Spelling Programme’, devised by a Specialist Advisory Teacher (specific learning difficulties) and implemented by trained school staff. These programmes will be consistent with the research-based principles identified above. Part funding to help schools with the cost of implementing this programme with individual students will also be available.

- Longer term funding for students with severe, ongoing needs, where these persist after provision of the time limited programmes listed above. Such funding will be made on a non-statutory basis through provision of a resourced individual education plan.

Decisions regarding which programme is most appropriate for an individual pupil will be based on consideration of their unique and specific individual needs.

Details regarding the Cumbria Reading Intervention programme, Structured Reading and Spelling Programme and resourced Individual Education Plans for literacy are attached, alongside details of arrangements for accessing these.

These arrangements are intended for pupils with literacy needs. Pupils whose primary needs are in other areas, for example general difficulties with learning, speech and language difficulties, hearing impairment, behaviour etc will follow arrangements indicated in other sections of the SEN handbook.

Where necessary, pupils who hold Statements of Special Educational Needs in areas other than literacy, will have their needs for literacy support recognised as part of the provision specified in their Statement.
Reading Intervention

Outline of the Reading Intervention Programme

Reading Intervention is an intensive and very successful approach to teaching children who are experiencing difficulties with literacy skills. The effectiveness of the Reading Intervention approach is recognised internationally in current research. The progress made by children in Cumbria is constantly monitored and evaluated.

Numerous studies have shown a relationship between phonological skills and learning to read. Children who are good at perceiving sounds within words learn to read more efficiently than those who are not good at such tasks.

The structure of a Reading Intervention Support programme mirrors the above research findings. The one-to-one programme combines a highly structured reading programme, with systematic activities to promote and link phonological awareness to reading and writing. The programme usually consists of 48 support sessions of 35 minutes duration, delivered over a 12-week period by a Reading Intervention trained teacher/teaching assistant.

Children typically make 8-9 months progress in word reading and spelling over the 12 weeks of intervention. Significant gains in text reading skills are also evident. School staff report gains in youngsters’ confidence, attention and self-esteem during the intervention. Follow-up studies indicate that gains are maintained six months after the intervention programme has ended.

Reading Intervention training is organised regularly. The training is intensive and involves participants in over 100 hours of work over a 5-month period. Training is delivered by the Reading Intervention co-ordinator and a team of Reading Intervention Tutors.

Staff delivering programmes of Reading Intervention Support are provided with varying levels of support from a Reading Intervention tutor, to offer advice and ensure the quality of the provision.

Guidelines for Allocation of Resources to Support the Delivery of a Reading Intervention Programme

- Pupils to be considered for programmes should be significantly delayed in the development of their reading and spelling skills. Pupils receiving programmes will be in school year 2 or above.

- There should be evidence that a pupil has received structured and significant previous intervention in school and, in spite of this, has not made expected progress. Such interventions could include the Early Literacy Support Programme. Additionally, pupils should have followed at least one further individual education plan with external specialist involvement at school action plus. Evidence of the implementation and review of this programme should be presented.
• Pupils beginning Reading Intervention programmes should show sufficient maturity of attention control, behaviour and language to cope with a structured, intensive 35-minute one-to-one teaching programme. Pupils who need support to develop these skills should have this work included as part of their individual education plans.

• The programme appears most effective when some early literacy skills are already present [e.g. being able to hold a book the correct way up and turn the pages; knowing that print carries meaning; recognising about half a dozen letters or words; being able to write some letter shapes]. The programme can be used with pupils who do not have these skills. However, pupils are likely to gain maximum benefit from the intervention if some skills are already emerging.

• In general, we would not expect the intervention to be appropriate for KS1 pupils reading beyond level 15 of the list of graded books or, older pupils who are beyond level 21.

However, particularly weak phonological skills, a marked discrepancy between reading / writing skills, or use of a very limited number of reading strategies may influence this decision.

• Programmes will be allocated only after a recommendation from a specialist literacy teacher or an educational psychologist that the intervention would be necessary and beneficial. Direct requests from schools, without such supporting evidence, will not be considered.

• Priority for awarding programmes of Reading Intervention support will be given to pupils with the most significant literacy difficulties. Particular attention will be given to pupil’s phonological skills and their development of text reading strategies.

• Schools will receive a £600 or £350 contribution towards the cost of employing a suitably trained Reading Intervention teacher / teaching assistant to deliver a programme. Resources will be released on completion of the programme when all relevant pre and post intervention documents have been considered.

• Schools who have concerns regarding a pupil’s progress with the development of literacy skills should follow the recommendations contained in the Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs. If they consider a referral at ‘school action plus’ is necessary, this should be made in the usual way. A Reading Intervention programme is one of a range of interventions that may be suggested by the specialist teacher or educational psychologist.

• Specialist Literacy Teachers and Educational Psychologists wishing a pupil to be considered for a programme should submit an outline report to the Literacy Provision Panel in their area of the County. This should include details of the
pupil’s present literacy skills; any previous interventions and other relevant information. Given the pupil’s likely skills, norm referenced tests may be inappropriate. Details of reading / spelling vocabulary; letter knowledge; phonological skills; text reading skills and written language skills are needed. Any assessment information should be recent (within the last 3-4 months).
Structured Reading and Spelling Programmes

Overview of Structured Reading and Spelling Programmes

Structured Reading and Spelling Programmes are designed for those children who have already developed basic sight vocabulary, phonological/phonic skills, letter knowledge and are able to read texts at above approximately a 7 year level. Nevertheless, they may show ongoing literacy weaknesses that would benefit from further individualized support.

The Structured Reading and Spelling Programmes will:

- Be devised with input from specialist teachers from the Specialist Advisory Teaching Service
- Be based on a diagnostic assessment which will inform the structure and content of the programme
- Incorporate information from the latest research on the teaching of phonic skills and phonological awareness
- Contain a balance of content that is explicitly designed to address individual need

Structured Reading and Spelling Programmes will be delivered by staff who hold a Reading Intervention Certificate, or who hold the Cumbria Advanced Certificate in Specific Learning Difficulties (or an equivalent course validated by the British Dyslexia Association at ‘Approved Teacher Status’ level or above).

Additional training in the delivery of Structured Reading and Spelling Programmes will be provided by the Specialist Advisory Teaching Service: three half day sessions will be needed for those new to delivering the packages. Consultative support will be provided prior to each further package being delivered. Where appropriate, further advice and monitoring will be provided by the Specialist Advisory Teaching Service.

Each Structured Reading and Spelling programme will be delivered over 36 sessions, with 3, 1-hour sessions being provided each week.

Guidelines for Allocation of Resources to Support the Delivery of a Structured Reading and Spelling Programme

- Pupils to be considered for programmes should be significantly delayed in the development of their reading and spelling skills and be in key stage 2. In general, the panel will not consider requests for support where pupil’s reading or spelling skills fall above the 10th percentile, although each pupil’s needs would always be considered individually.

- There should be evidence that a pupil has received at least two terms of structured and significant previous intervention in school at school action plus. and, in spite of this, has not made expected progress. Evidence of the
implementation and review of this intervention should be presented. Apart from in exceptional circumstances, the pupil will already have received a Reading Intervention programme.

- Pupils should show sufficient maturity of attention control, behaviour and language to cope with a structured, intensive 45-50 minute one-to-one teaching programme.

- Programmes will be allocated only after a recommendation from a specialist literacy teacher or an educational psychologist that the intervention would be necessary and beneficial. Direct requests from schools, without such supporting evidence, will not be considered.

- Priority for awarding support for Structured Reading and Spelling Programmes will be given to pupils with the most significant literacy difficulties.

- Schools will receive a £600 or £350 contribution towards the cost of employing a suitably trained teacher / teaching assistant to deliver a programme. Resources will be released on completion of the programme when all relevant pre and post intervention documents have been considered.

- Schools who have concerns regarding a pupil’s progress with the development of literacy skills should follow the recommendations contained in the Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs. If they consider a referral at ‘school action plus’ is necessary, this should be made in the usual way. A Structured Reading and Spelling Programme is one of a range of interventions that may be suggested by the specialist teacher or educational psychologist.

- Specialist Literacy Teachers and Educational Psychologists wishing a pupil to be considered for a structured Reading and Spelling Programme should submit an outline report to the Literacy Provision Panel in their area of the County. This should include details of the pupil’s present literacy skills; any previous interventions and other relevant information. Details of reading / spelling vocabulary; letter knowledge; phonological skills; text reading skills and written language skills are needed. Any assessment information should be recent (within the last 3-4 months).
Resourced Individual Education Plans

Overview of Resourced Individual Education Plans

In spite of receiving additional individualized programmes of support, research suggests that some pupils may have persistent and significant literacy needs. Longer term resourced individual education plans may be necessary for such students to support the further development of their literacy skills and to maintain their access to the curriculum.

Resourced Individual Education Plans for literacy will:

- Be devised with input from specialist teachers from the Specialist Advisory Teaching Service
- Be based on a diagnostic assessment which will inform the structure and content of the programme
- Incorporate information from the latest research on the teaching of phonic skills and phonological awareness
- Contain a balance of content that is explicitly designed to address individual need
- May include input/support relating to curriculum access strategies, alongside explicit and systematic programmes of literacy teaching.

All literacy teaching/support specified within the Resourced Individual Education Plan will be delivered by staff who hold a Reading Intervention Certificate, or who hold the Advanced Certificate in Specific Learning Difficulties. The Specialist Advisory Teaching Service will provide additional training as necessary.

Guidelines for Allocation of Resourced Individual Education Plans for Literacy

Resourced Individual Education Plans will be considered where:

- Pupils are in key stage 2 and are reliable school attendees.
- The pupil’s reading and spelling skills fall at or below the 2\textsuperscript{nd} percentile
- There should be evidence that a pupil has received at least four terms of structured and significant previous intervention in school at school action plus and, in spite of this, has not made expected progress. Evidence of the implementation and review of this intervention should be presented. In all but exceptional circumstances, pupils will have already received at least one programme of Reading Intervention support and one structured Reading and Spelling programme and in spite of this not shown gains in their standard scores on word reading and spelling tests that have been maintained over time.
• The schools are able to demonstrate through provision mapping that they have used delegated resources to attempt to address the pupil’s needs.

• Resourced Individual Education Plans will be considered only after a recommendation from a specialist literacy teacher or an educational psychologist that the intervention would be necessary and beneficial. Direct requests from schools, without such supporting evidence, will not be considered.

• Specialist Literacy Teachers and Educational Psychologists wishing a pupil to be considered for a Resourced Individual Education Plan should submit an outline report to the Literacy Provision Panel in their area of the County. This should include details of the pupil’s present literacy skills; any previous interventions and other relevant information as detailed above. Details of reading / spelling vocabulary; letter knowledge; phonological skills; text reading skills and written language skills are needed. Any assessment information should be recent (within the last 3-4 months).

Resourced Individual Education Plans will run for up to 6 months and provide up to 3 hours support each week for a pupil. Resources will be released on completion of the programme when all relevant pre and post intervention documents have been considered.

HJS
EP