



East London Consortium of Educational Psychologists (ELCEP) Dyslexia Policy

ELCEP is comprised of Barking and Dagenham, Newham and Waltham Forest Educational Psychology Services.

Introduction

ELCEP has produced this policy to clarify the expectations of schools, Educational Psychology Services and Local Authorities (LAs) regarding identification and support for pupils with Specific Literacy Difficulties (SpLD) / Dyslexia. The policy is informed by research, and recent guidance including the Rose Report (2009).

Definition

Current research evidence indicates that SpLD/Dyslexia may involve biological, cognitive and behavioural factors. This has led to a range of theories, adding different perspectives. There is consensus regarding the persistence of difficulties and need for appropriate teaching.

ELCEP use the following functional definition of SpLD/Dyslexia, developed by a working party of the British Psychological Society (BPS):

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. BPS, 1999 (p18).

This is consistent with the working definition of Dyslexia and its characteristics as described in the Rose Report (2009):

- Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling
- Characteristic features of Dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed

- Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities. 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 co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organisation, but these are not, by themselves, markers of Dyslexia
- 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.

The definition has no exclusionary criteria. It recognises that learning difficulties of a Dyslexic nature occur in pupils of different general ability, and across languages, ethnic, socio-economic status and gender.

Pupils with literacy needs can show an uneven profile of development with marked differences in their abilities and skills in different areas. This might be particularly evident in oral versus text-based skills. Recognising a pupil's strengths/assets can increase their success and engagement with learning.

It is recognised that pupils with literacy needs can experience high levels of frustration, and without appropriate teaching support, associated needs may arise in attention, motivation, behaviour and self-acceptance.

Principles

The general principles of ELCEP's policy on SpLD/Dyslexia do not differ from the response to other types of special educational needs. These involve a focus on early intervention, equality of opportunity, raising attainment, working in partnership with parents/carers, inclusive education (that is, all children being able to learn together in ordinary schools) and a coherent training framework for school staff. Unless there are significant additional needs, children with SpLD/Dyslexia will have their needs met in a mainstream setting.

We work within the following additional, specific aims and principles for children demonstrating literacy needs which are described in the Rose Report (2009):

- All teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) should have awareness-level training to enable them to recognise children with literacy needs, develop an understanding of the potential frustration and emotional responses that accompany such difficulties, and develop appropriate practices to help them access the curriculum
- Through their local cluster/network of schools, all settings should have at least one teaching member of staff who has accessed the next level of training, which will give them a 'hands on' knowledge of effective teaching methods of teaching children/young people with literacy needs

- Schools should be able to access specialist advice (either in-house, in the case of, for example, secondary schools or larger primary schools, or from outside) from qualified teachers who have had accredited diploma level specialist training in SpLD / Dyslexia, leading to a nationally recognised qualification.

School Role

Schools can most effectively meet the needs of individuals with literacy needs by providing an ethos that is 'SpLD/Dyslexia friendly', where there is a focus on staff development, on the quality of teaching and learning, and a commitment to providing an inclusive context.

Partnership with Parents/Carers

Schools are expected to help parents/carers understand their child's strengths and weaknesses and to keep parents/carers informed of the progress their child is making, as well as the provisions that can be jointly agreed to promote their learning, overcome difficulties and develop their literacy skills.

The School's Role in Assessment and Intervention

Schools are expected to promote early identification of the difficulties that children experience in their literacy development by facilitating a prompt response through a graduated cycle of assessment and intervention as outlined in the Rose Report (2009).

Level 1 – Monitoring Progress

Class teachers are expected to adjust their teaching to meet individual differences in the way that children respond to learning opportunities. Through regular on-going assessment and observation, teachers can identify children experiencing difficulties with reading skills, phonological processing, and/or spelling. At this stage, alternative hypotheses such as difficulties with hearing or vision should be considered and checked. Teachers should also ensure that literacy difficulties are investigated and identified where pupils have English as an Additional Language.

All schools are able to provide targeted interventions or 'catch-up' programmes. The provision may involve daily work in a small group with a trained practitioner using a recognised holistic literacy/phonemic based approach, and working on early speaking and listening skills. Reviews of progress and the child's response to literacy interventions will indicate whether difficulties need further investigation and intervention.

Level 2 – Skills Assessment

Difficulties may persist after initial 'catch-up' programmes have been rigorously applied and evaluated. An experienced literacy teacher or a specialist SpLD/Dyslexia teacher and/or the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) can carry out assessment of the child's difficulties and their response to intervention. Assessment will be carried out with the aim of planning further intervention at Level 2 or Level 3. This should be planned in partnership with parents/carers.

Additional intensive interventions at Level 2 will consist of structured small group or one to one programmes, that are carefully targeted and delivered by teachers or trained teaching assistants who are monitored and supervised by teaching staff. This provision will be offered in addition to whole class teaching and a differentiated approach it will be:

- Evidence based (i.e. with a proven research based record of success)
- Open to on going evaluation
- Structured and cumulative
- Using multi-sensory methods for teaching word level work
- Delivered regularly and frequently according to the programme

The pupil's progress will be monitored and reviewed by the school and parents/carers on a regular basis.

Level 3 – Comprehensive Multi-Faceted Assessment

For children or young people who experience significant, persistent and complex literacy difficulties further specialist assessment, guidance and intervention will be sought from external agencies, for example ELCEP, and local SEN Support Services.

The individual's strengths and areas for improvement and support are examined more closely. All the information gathered so far will form part of a comprehensive appraisal of the nature and extent of the difficulties. Appropriate qualified specialist teachers and other professionals (including Educational Psychologists) in consultation with parents/carers and school would make a decision on whether or not the pupil presents with SpLD/Dyslexia and the impact on learning.

This input will be used to enable specific personalised approaches to be developed. Teaching support will be delivered through an individualised programme informed by the assessment outcomes.

Provision can be made for the emotional well-being of children with literacy needs by ensuring that there is:

- An explanation of their difficulties and strengths that makes sense to them
- A shared understanding and a collaborative approach between school staff and parents/carers
- Positive and supportive feedback from peers facilitated by staff

Involvement of Educational Psychologists

Educational Psychologists can become involved through consultation for individuals and groups of pupils and in contributing to training programmes to support schools in their identification and intervention for children/young people with literacy needs.

Where pupils have failed to make satisfactory progress having participated in appropriate interventions in school, Educational Psychologists can contribute to further assessment and targeted intervention.

Assessment and identification

Psychological assessment will:

- Ideally be conducted over time and in relation to different contexts
- Be formative and help to clarify any required intervention
- Involve parents/carers as contributors to the process
- Incorporate the pupil's understanding of his or her world
- Draw, where appropriate, on the views of other practitioners
- Take account of the assessments and information gathered so far

The comprehensive assessment described above can identify when a formal label of SpLD/Dyslexia is appropriate, with an indication of level of intervention required.

Assessment of appropriate learning opportunities and persistence of difficulties

Information can be obtained through consultation and through more direct observations. The appropriateness and effectiveness of interventions provided can be judged in relation to research on the characteristics of effective instruction, including consideration of the nature, frequency, intensity and duration of support provided.

Assessment of accurate and fluent word reading and spelling

Schools can provide assessment information on word reading and spelling. Educational Psychology assessment may include the use of normative tests of reading and spelling, as well as observations of the strategies that individual children use to read and spell.

If the conclusion is reached that the acquisition of reading and spelling is 'very incomplete', it is likely to trigger further investigation of the factors that may be impacting on the difficulties experienced. Assessment of individual abilities may consider the areas of phonological and orthographical awareness, memory, key gaps in the child's/young person's knowledge, and compensatory styles and coping strategies used.

Profiles of test scores from cognitive assessments can help in understanding an individual's strengths and weaknesses. However, no particular cognitive profile can discriminate between children/young people with and without literacy difficulties of a SpLD/Dyslexic nature. Information concerning cognitive strengths may also be derived from non-psychometric assessment activities.

Statements of Special Educational Needs and Pupils with a Disability

In rare circumstances, where an individual is experiencing significant, persistent and complex literacy difficulties, a decision may be made by the Local Authority to carry out a Statutory Assessment. This is a detailed assessment based on specialist advice and parental views regarding the child or young person's special educational needs and future provision.

Exam Access Arrangements

Some pupils with SpLD/Dyslexia will have a range of support available in class to overcome their literacy difficulties. Where such arrangements have been in place, it may be possible to replicate these for test / examinations. Schools should apply for the relevant access arrangements. These could include additional time, a reader, and/or a scribe or word processor, for example. A case must be made for these arrangements being the student's 'normal ways of working', backed up by documentary evidence.

The school or establishment can apply for additional time. If readers or scribes are required, an assessment must be carried out by an Educational Psychologist or appropriately qualified member of staff designated by the Head Teacher.

Further and Higher Education

When young people transfer from school to further or higher education they can expect to receive some support and help from the college or university. This may take a variety of forms depending on their needs and the requirements of their chosen course.

Students with SpLD/Dyslexia who transfer to higher education may be entitled to extra financial support to overcome their difficulties through a DSA (Disabled Student Allowance). They will need to obtain a 'post 16 diagnostic report' from an Educational Psychologist or a specialist teacher holding a current assessment practising certificate.

Acknowledgements:

This policy has drawn upon several sources including: The SpLD/Dyslexia policies of Barking and Dagenham Community and Educational Psychology Service, Kent County Council, Newham Local Authority and Educational Psychology Service and Waltham Forest Educational Psychology Team.

Useful sources of information

British Psychological Society (1999). *Dyslexia, literacy and psychological assessment. Report of a working party of the Division of Educational and Child Psychology.* Leicester: BPS.

Brooks, G. (2007) *What Works for Pupils with Literacy Difficulties? The Effectiveness of Intervention Schemes.* 3rd edition. London: DCSF

Rose, J. (2009) *Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties.* London: DCSF.

Assistive Technologies: <http://www.dyslexic.com/index.asp>: Provides technology to help people with dyslexia make the most of their abilities.

British Dyslexia Association: www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

Dyslexia Action: www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/

Dyslexia-SpLD Trust: www.thedyslexia-spldtrust.org.uk/

Dyslexia Teacher: www.dyslexia-teacher.co.uk/

Every Child a Reader (ECar) www.everychildachancetrust.org/every-child-a-reader/introduction

Inclusive Technology: www.inclusive.co.uk/

No to Failure Project: www.xtraordinarypeople.com/no_to_failure/

Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (PATOSS): www.patoss-dyslexia.org/