

Oldham's Good Practice Guide for settings

Identification and support of pupils with specific literacy difficulties/dyslexia



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1. Introduction

This guide aims to support good practice in Oldham's educational settings and support a consistent approach to the identification and support of pupils with specific literacy difficulties/dyslexia, in line with the Code of Practice 2014.

The principles at the centre of this guidance are:

- the centrality of a whole school approach to high quality teaching (HQT)
- the implementation of appropriate targeted intervention, where needed, as part of a holistic assessment process which understands an individual's literacy profile
- an ongoing approach to assessment and intervention which follows a cyclical assess plan, do, review process (APDR)

It also sets out how external agencies can be involved in the process of identification, and what schools can expect as part of their involvement.

2. Definition

Oldham LA draws its position from the following definitions: the British Psychological Society (BPS) (1999), the Rose Report (2009) and the new Delphi Study (2024). The Delphi study identifies the same, or similar, underlying cognitive indicators of dyslexia as the previous Rose definition, alongside recognition of its impact on individuals.

"There was considerable consensus in our expert panel that dyslexia is a difficulty in reading and spelling, associated with multiple factors, and that it frequently co-occurs with other developmental disorders. It was agreed that difficulties in reading fluency and spelling are key markers of dyslexia across different ages and languages." Delphi study.

The core message is that dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty which primarily affects reading and spelling skills, rooted in underlying processing issues.

Dyslexic people may have difficulty decoding words and processing and remembering information they see and hear, which can affect learning and the acquisition of literacy skills. Dyslexia can also impact on other areas such as writing, memory, sequencing and organisational skills.

It is important to remember that there are positives to thinking differently. Many dyslexic people show strengths in areas such as reasoning and in visual and creative fields.

Oldham LA encourages adults to identify and support **all** literacy difficulties through the building of clear profiles, as soon as a potential issue is identified. In this way **all** pupils are supported at the earliest opportunity with appropriate support.

Academic papers which may be of interest

[Contemporary concepts of dyslexia: A Delphi study](#)

[Toward a consensus on dyslexia: findings from a Delphi study - Carroll - Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry - Wiley Online Library](#)

3. Identification

The Purpose of Identification

Dyslexia is an educational difference and is, therefore, the primary responsibility of educators and educational specialists. As such, this document refers to the identification of specific literacy difficulties/dyslexia rather than diagnosis. Whilst the term diagnosis is used within the field, the Oldham position is that schools should focus on the identification of need and the exact profile, or nature of those difficulties/challenges and strengths, for the purpose of meeting that need.

"The purpose of identification is to work out what action the school needs to take, not to fit a pupil into a category." It is important to provide support and reasonable adjustments based on "a full understanding of their particular strengths and needs". (CoP 6.27)

Such identification and assessment will take into consideration

- The views of parents/carers, teachers and the pupil
- Previous progress and attainment
- Formative assessment of key skills



The Process of Identification

Identification of specific literacy difficulties/dyslexia is dependent on difficulties persisting despite appropriate intervention. The graduated response, an ongoing process of assess - plan - do - review, is crucial for identifying needs through continuous information gathering (see the next section on the graduated response).

As such, specific learning difficulties/dyslexia **cannot** be identified through a single assessment but can become more evident as we observe how pupils respond to teaching, interventions and support.

In accordance with the Delphi study's definition, the primary focus is on the acquisition of key literacy skills. The most commonly observed impairment in dyslexia is difficulty in phonological processing i.e. phonological awareness, phonological processing speed or phonological memory.

In dyslexia, some or all aspects of literacy attainment are weak in relation to age, standard teaching and instruction and, level of other attainments.

Difficulties in reading and spelling fluency are a key marker of dyslexia.

Difficulties exist on a continuum and can be experienced to various degrees of severity.

If a pupil is thought to be presenting with reading and spelling difficulties, it is important to consider what else may be causing the problems mastering literacy.

- Speech and language difficulties or disorders
- Gaps in their education/attendance/engagement with learning
- Hearing
- Vision
- Social factors including, but not limited to, lack of early stimulation or access to good language models and/or literacy opportunities in the home environment.

Similarly, many **typically** developing children, up to and including Year 3, may show characteristics which could be considered to be dyslexic type difficulties; these are often part of the expected development of literacy skills.

It is also important to note that children's literacy skills develop at different rates.

Getting help with identification

Settings can request support at any point in the APDR process. Where difficulties persist over time despite appropriate support and monitored adaptations to teaching, more detailed assessment may be required.

Where you feel you need support from QEST (Advisory Teachers) or ECPS, please ask for involvement. Specific assessments are not completed on request. These services will typically engage in a SEND conversation / consultation to understand your concerns, make a judgement about next steps and, if appropriate, what further assessment is needed to identify the individual needs of the young person. Advice will be provided on how best to meet those needs.

Oldham's QEST or ECPS services may be requested to become involved with a pupil, or to offer support and advice to school staff **at any point** in the graduated response process. Please make an enquiry to Oldham Specialist Support Services (OSSS) via OSSSEnquiries@oldham.gov.uk

They may also carry out assessments pertaining to literacy skills, phonic knowledge, phonological awareness, verbal working memory and visual perceptual/processing



speed as part of the process to assist in identifying strategies for teaching staff, or to identify best practice and evidence-based intervention.

QEST and ECPS may, as appropriate, use tests of cognitive functioning. These tests sometimes show that children and young people with literacy difficulties also have difficulties with cognitive processes such as memory, processing and language. Additionally, they may investigate language skills.

Formal assessments may be undertaken by OSSS where:

- service capacity allows
- support/advice has been sought by the setting as part of the APDR cycle
- settings provide sufficient, robust information in the use of the graduated response to identify and meet need
- all parties agree that further assessment is in the best interests of the CYP
- the visual screening protocol document has been completed
- parent/carers voice has been gathered in sufficient detail
- pupil voice has been sought

The Graduated Response:

Four-part cycle: Assess - Plan - Do - Review

The Code of Practice clearly sets out statutory guidance for schools to follow when assessing and supporting pupils with additional needs and disabilities.

"Where a pupil is identified as having SEN, schools should take action to remove barriers to learning and put effective special educational provision in place. This SEN support should take the form of a four-part cycle through which earlier decisions and actions are revisited, refined and revised with a growing understanding of the pupil's needs and of what supports the pupil in making good progress and securing good outcomes. This is known as the graduated approach. It draws on more detailed approaches, more frequent review and more specialist expertise in successive cycles in order to match interventions to the SEN of children and young people." (6.44)

Oldham LA has developed a [Graduated Response Toolkit](#) available for all practitioners to use.

Assess

As a teacher or parent/carer becomes aware that a pupil appears to be struggling with literacy, individual differences are noted, and adjustments / adaptations are made to teaching.

The teacher gathers information about the pupil

- Strengths and difficulties / achievements and challenges
- Current and previous attainment across the curriculum
- Current and previous progress
- Other information which may have impacted / be impacting on literacy development
- Accuracy and fluency of reading and spelling skills

Information will be gathered through:

- Classroom observations of the pupil's approach to literacy
- Discussions / conversations
- Checklists / profiles
- Samples of work
- Reading and spelling assessments

Plan

- Adjustments and intervention are an important part of the assessment process
- Adaptations to High Quality Teaching should be planned and reasonable adjustments made
- Teaching and learning strategies should be planned
- A plan is developed, and a programme to help pupil develop identified key skills is put in place

Do

- Carry out the plan - intervention, strategies, adaptations etc.

Review

- Evaluate the impact of the intervention, strategies, adaptations against expected progress
- Consult with other colleagues / SENCo / external agencies as required

5. Supporting Pupils with specific literacy difficulties/dyslexia

High Quality Teaching (HQT)

'Teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the pupils in their class... (6.36)

High quality teaching, differentiated for individual pupils, is the first step in responding to pupils who have or may have SEN. Additional intervention and support cannot compensate for a lack of good quality teaching. (6.37)

All teachers, therefore, are responsible for supporting literacy development across learning.

Additional intervention and support cannot compensate for a lack of good quality teaching. Pupils with specific literacy difficulties/dyslexic difficulties benefit from HQT; teaching which is effective for all learners.

Adaptation / personalisation aims to use the learner's strengths and provide them with opportunities to learn in ways which suit their individual preferences.

- High Quality training materials freely available to schools
- Inclusion Development Programme (Dyslexia module)
[The Dyslexia-SpLD Trust - Inclusion Development Programme](#)
- Advanced Training materials (units 9-16)
www.advanced-training.org.uk/module4/M04U01A.html
- Dyslexia SpLD Trust
www.thedyslexia-spldtrust.org.uk

Training can also be delivered to settings by OSSS via a request/enquiry through OSSSEnquiries@oldham.gov.uk . This can also be discussed with your school link advisory teacher, QEST, or school link education psychologist (EP).



6. Interventions to improve literacy skills

The Rose review (2009) states there is a 'well-established evidence-base showing that intervention programmes which systematically prioritise phonological skills for reading and writing are effective for teaching reading to children with dyslexia'. (page 13)

the-rose-report.1294933674.pdf (thedyslexia-spldtrust.org.uk)

Sir Jim Rose also states that pupils with dyslexic difficulties particularly benefit from teaching that adheres to the following principles:

- highly structured
- systematic
- little and often
- use graphic representation
- allow time for reinforcement
- encourage generalisation

and that any intervention sessions for dyslexia should have a strong, systematic phonic structure and be sufficiently frequent to secure pupil's progress and consolidate learning.

Schools should involve parents/carers and pupils as active and valued participants in designing and reviewing the support which is put in place for them.

There are many commercially available schemes available for teaching literacy and specific interventions for helping pupils with dyslexia/dyslexic difficulties build key skills, many of which are research and evidence based.

Interventions should be carefully targeted through identification and assessment of need. There are important principles of effective implementation described in the EEF's guidance report

Putting Evidence to Work: A School's Guide to Implementation

<https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/eeef-guidance-reports/implementation/EEF-Active-Ingredients-Summary.pdf?v=1635355218>

Greg Brooks "What works for children and young people with literacy difficulties" is now in its 6th edition.

[Brooks's What Works for Literacy Difficulties?](#)

The Dyslexia Trust also has updated information about interventions on their website

www.interventionsforliteracy.org.uk/

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is a useful resource to help schools target their resources most effectively. The Teaching and Learning Toolkit (2014) and Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools Guidance report are available at

www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk

Oldham L.A. has also produced a helpful document - the Graduated Response toolkit online.

www.oldham.gov.uk/grt

7. Examination access arrangements



There will be pupils who, despite appropriate support, have not sufficiently developed their literacy skills to enable them to fully demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in timed examinations in the usual way.

Access arrangements can be applied for if certain criteria are fulfilled. Pupils must qualify for them, and settings must demonstrate that such arrangements are their **normal way of working** in school. Information should be gathered **over time** and arrangements put in place and trialled in order to determine what should be applied for.

N.B. Pupils with dyslexia /dyslexic difficulties do not automatically qualify for access arrangements, even if they have a diagnosis which has been given by an appropriately qualified professional.



Primary sector

The Standards and Testing Agency is responsible for the development and delivery of all statutory assessments from early years to the end of key stage 2.

Guidelines for schools are set out in the Access and Reporting Arrangements document and there is a requirement to evidence that any arrangements are the pupil's normal way of working. Applications are made via the Primary Assessment Gateway.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-2-tests-access-arrangements>

Secondary sector



Joint Council for
Qualifications

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) sets out mandatory procedures for both requesting and making arrangements for students with learning needs and disabilities. This process requires evidence from school settings regarding the pupil's difficulties, normal ways of working and, for learners with learning difficulties, assessments and an assessment report from a suitably qualified specialist assessor. Schools must adhere to the JCQ regulations.

It should be noted that arrangements which are put in place by a Primary school may not be needed in the secondary setting as needs can change over time.

The JCQ regulations can be found at <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration>

These regulations are updated every year. All senior staff, SENCo/Exam Access Arrangements Coordinator and relevant others should familiarise themselves with these, in full, each year. Other staff should be made aware of their roles and responsibilities within the school process in line with school policy. (Further support/guidance can be given by QEST if required).

The key principles are:

- Levelling the playing field, **not** giving unfair advantage
- Arrangements are based primarily on normal classroom practice
- Support must adhere to the rules set by the JCQ
- All answers given **MUST** be the pupil's own
- Consultation with the pupil to discuss appropriate arrangements and permission sought from the pupil to request arrangements in line with legislation

Examples of arrangements which may support students with dyslexia/dyslexic type difficulties may include:

- Access to a reader or computer reader
- Use of a laptop
- Additional time (up to 25%)

8. Transitions



Good transition planning is important to ensure that processes are as smooth as possible, relevant information is passed on and continuity of provision is enabled where this remains appropriate. Parents/carers and pupils should, where possible, be involved.

Primary schools should highlight pupils with additional needs, including those with specific literacy difficulties /dyslexia.

Secondary schools should support learners making applications for further study or other courses to outline their strengths and areas of difficulty alongside any additional support

they have received. Any Form 8s that have been completed for access arrangements purposes should be passed to the receiving college.

The purpose of clear information sharing is to ensure that appropriate plans can be put in place with the student's agreement.

It may also be helpful for settings to share examples of a student's work, copies of relevant assessments, details of any software being used and information about helpful strategies.

Support and training for settings can be requested from the OSSS enquiries
OSSSEnquiries@oldham.gov.uk

9. External assessment

If a parent/carers would like to pursue an independent formal diagnostic assessment, it is important that they make an informed choice and understand that only suitably qualified persons will be able to identify and formally diagnose dyslexia*.

It is important for parents/carers to understand that, even if a pupil is given a diagnosis of SpLD or dyslexia, they will not necessarily receive any more/different support in school than they are currently receiving. They will **not** automatically be entitled to access arrangements for external examinations. A diagnosis is **not** needed for access arrangements for external examinations.

*Refer parents/carers to the BDA or SASC websites for further information.

https://cdn.bdadyslexia.org.uk/uploads/documents/Services/Assessments/Guidance_for_choosing_an_Assessor.pdf

<https://sasc.org.uk>

References

Brooks, G. (2013) What Works for children with literacy difficulties

Department for Education (2015): Special Educational Needs Code of Practice: 0-25 years

Rose Review (2009) Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties

Useful information

[BDA font guidance 2023.](#)



BPS and Rose
definitions.docx



Delphi definition.docx

[Dyslexia action - finding out more](#)