

## Children with persistent literacy difficulties

There is a very small group of children who will continue to need support/intervention on a long-term basis. These children face challenges to reach age-related norms in literacy (for example, Level 2 in English at the end of KS1 and level 4 at the end of KS2\*), and often have other difficulties that affect their learning, such as a poor attention span.

NB:\*These measures will change from September 2015 to a measure that is relative rather than age related. For example, if a pupil has an average point score (APS) of 19 at KS1, the average point score of all pupils with an APS of 19 at KS1 will be calculated. If the pupil in question achieved a higher or lower scaled score than the average, then that will tell us whether or not that pupil is making good progress.

The profile of a child with persistent literacy difficulties is likely to include severe phonological problems that affect their word reading, writing and spelling. They will be behind their peer group and have lower national curriculum levels in English. Their progress in literacy will be slow and, despite support and intervention, they continue to make slow progress. It is likely they have received a specialist intervention (often called Wave 3 interventions) on more than one occasion and this has made little impact.

Over a period of time some of these children are likely to develop emotional problems and have low confidence levels and difficult behaviour.

The Rose Report (2009) identified this group of children as those who do not respond to well-founded interventions at Wave 3. Wave 3 interventions are highly personalised and are intended to boost progress.

### Specialist advice and support

Where a pupil continues to make less than expected progress, despite a well evidence-based intervention (matched to the pupil's areas of need) delivered by an appropriately trained staff as well as receiving high quality universal teaching, the school should consider seeking advice from specialists including those secured from the school or from outside agencies. Schools can involve specialists at any point to advise them on early identification and effective support.

The school should always involve a specialist where a pupil continues to make little or no progress or where they continue to work at levels substantially below those expected of a pupil of a similar age.

The Local Offer in every Local Authority should identify specialists including specialist teachers, speech and language therapists and educational psychologists which schools can call upon for advice and guidance.

The specialist's initial task is to carry out a comprehensive assessment of your child to find out what the difficulties are. They will contact you to ask for information. The assessment will provide a range of information on your child's strengths and weaknesses and can then be used to plan a programme of long-term support.

They will be looking to identify the best support and type of intervention to help your child make progress. The school must discuss the results of the assessment with you and explain the nature of the difficulties.

In some cases, this assessment may lead to a formal identification of dyslexia.

## Use of the term 'dyslexia'

*"Dyslexia is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points. Until recently, a child was deemed to either have or not have dyslexia. It is now recognised that there is no sharp dividing line between having a learning difficulty such as dyslexia and not having it."*

The Rose Report (2009)

The continuum, from mild to severe, helps to account for the differences in how a child responds to support and intervention.

What is important is that literacy difficulties are identified and addressed so that children make progress, whether or not these difficulties are described in terms of dyslexia. A formal identification of dyslexia should make no difference to how the school treats your child and the support they receive.

The development of the programme of support and intervention will include the specialist teacher and school staff. As the parent/carer you will be asked for your views. Your child should also be included in the process; older children often have particular views that need to be incorporated. It is likely the school will suggest ways in which you as the parent/carer can support your child at home.

The programme will require all teachers involved with your child to be aware of his/her needs and to make adjustments to their teaching where necessary. As your child goes through school, the programme of support will change and there will be the need to incorporate independent study skills and strategies for later life.

The school should be checking your child's progress regularly and sharing this information with you. The school's processes for informing you and for taking you and your child's views into account should be outlined in the SEND information which must be published on their website (SEND regulations 2014).

The key factor is that your child is making progress in literacy and can manage the literacy demands of the curriculum. Good progress by your child may result in a decrease of support and this should be seen as a positive step.

Additionally, the school should be carrying out regular evaluations and reviews of the programme to ensure that it still meets your child's needs and that progress is maintained. Where there are issues, there should be adjustments so the programme refocuses on your child's needs. Even though your child may be receiving an intervention from a specialist teacher it is still the class teacher who remains responsible for ensuring that your child is able to make progress in the mainstream lessons.

All teachers should be supported to develop their skills so that they can make any adjustments necessary to their teaching.

*"Teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the pupils in their class, including where pupils access support from teaching assistants or specialist staff"*

Code of Practice 6.36

## Role of the Specialist Teacher

The specialist teacher is likely to have a significant role in developing the programme and overseeing the implementation. The following is a list of roles likely to be carried out by a teacher holding a specialist qualification:

- Devising an individualised programme of support/intervention to meet the needs of your child.
- Identifying suitable resources and materials including ICT.
- Supporting the whole school in meeting the needs of your child.
- Contributing to the training of staff, including teaching assistants.
- Monitoring the progress of your child and making adjustments to the programme where appropriate.
- Evaluating the programme on a regular basis.
- Liaising with you as the parent/carer and keeping you informed.

Though at times the specialist teacher may be involved in direct teaching of your child, it is more likely that their specialist knowledge will be used to support the whole school in meeting your child's needs.

