

## Children with persistent difficulties

The most effective schools understand the importance of high expectations and the use of accurate data. Success with some pupils with the most severe problems is elusive. There is a small group of pupils who show a poor response to well-founded literacy interventions and need prolonged support.

Factors that can place pupils at risk of not responding to specialist interventions include:

- Having the lowest levels of phonological skill at the start of the intervention.
- Being rated low on measures of attention and behaviour.
- Adverse socio-economic circumstances.

(Rose 2009)

Pupils with persistent difficulties tend to have long-standing word reading problems and many in this group may be described as having dyslexic difficulties. Pupils with the most severe problems 'resist' intervention, fail to make satisfactory progress in literacy and fall further behind their peers. For some members of this group the social and emotional aspects of learning can become a further problem.

These pupils need prolonged support matched to their needs to maximise progress. Parents and carers will be particularly anxious at this stage and require time with school staff to discuss their concerns and what the next step will be.

### Specialist advice and support

When school-based provision at the most personalised level is failing to make a difference, there is the need for the school to seek specialist support and advice. Specialist support and advice may be available within the school but for many this support would be external.

The Rose Report, *Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties* (2009), refers to the need for external support and advice.

*"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. External support and advice can be from an educational psychologist, specialist teacher and other professionals as necessary, such as a speech and language therapist or occupational therapist."*

The Rose Report (2009)



Local Authorities must publish a Local Offer, setting out in one place information about provision they expect to be made across education, health and social care for children and young people in their area who have SEN or are disabled. It must include arrangements providers have in place for identifying the particular SEN of children and young people, how they will consult with parents, and how schools can secure the services and provision required by children who have SEND.

Schools have additional duties under the SEND Regulations 2014. Schools must publish more detailed information about their arrangements for identifying, assessing and making provision for pupils with SEND.

The specialist, through an in-depth comprehensive assessment, may find reasons why the pupil is failing to progress. A number of these pupils will have cooccurring difficulties so it is likely that for some, more than one specialist may be involved in this process. The pupil's individual strengths and weaknesses will be examined in depth and the information gained can then shape the support. Where a learning difficulty is identified that requires special educational provision to be made, the pupil's teachers will be made aware that the pupil requires additional SEN provision. The school will have its own internal processes for communicating what that provision is and the outcomes that are expected as a result.

## 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 pupils respond to support and intervention.

This approach should also help parents to understand the reluctance of some schools to seek a formal identification when a pupil is making satisfactory/good progress. What is important is that literacy difficulties are identified and addressed so that the pupil makes progress, whether or not these difficulties are described in terms of dyslexia.

When all the information is gathered from the comprehensive assessment, a programme of support/intervention can be drawn up to meet the needs of the pupil with persistent difficulties. This is likely to be the stage where, for some pupils, a formal identification of dyslexia is made. A formal identification of dyslexia has to involve an appropriately qualified specialist teacher or other professional such as an educational psychologist.



The development of the personalised programme should include the specialist teacher, the SENCO, the parents/carers and the pupil. Older pupils may have particular views that need to be incorporated. The programme will require all teachers involved with the pupil to be aware of his/her needs and to make adjustments to their teaching where necessary.

The individualised elements have to address the main literacy difficulties and needs of the pupil. As the pupil develops, there will be value in incorporating independent study skills and strategies for later life. Regular evaluation is required to check the impact of the programme and ensure progress is maintained. The evaluation should use a range of progress data, including standardised test results, and draw upon the pupil's perspective.

## Role of the Specialist Teacher

The following is a list of roles likely to be carried out by a teacher holding a specialist qualification:

- Carrying out the comprehensive assessment.
- Devising an individualised programme of support/intervention to meet needs of the pupil.
- Identifying suitable resources and materials including ICT.

- Supporting the whole school in meeting the needs of the pupil.
- Contributing to professional training of staff, including teaching assistants.
- Monitoring of progress of the pupil and making adjustments to their programme where appropriate.
- Evaluating individualised programmes on a regular basis.
- Liaising with parents/carers.

Though at times the specialist may be involved in direct teaching of the pupil, it is more likely that their specialist knowledge will be used to support the whole school in meeting the needs of pupils with literacy difficulties and dyslexia.

Further information and guidance for pupils with literacy difficulties and dyslexia is available as part of the *Inclusion Development Programme* (IDP) and in the online Guidance published by the Dyslexia-SpLD Trust: *Supporting schools and Local Authorities to implement the SEND reforms for children and young people with literacy difficulties, specific learning difficulties and dyslexia*.

**Both of these resources are available via the Dyslexia-SpLD Trust website.**