

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

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Local Authority Approach to Dyslexia: Assessment, Training Opportunities and Typical Provision Available in Schools

Introduction

The local authority approach in Plymouth is to provide support to schools in developing their skills in identifying and meeting a range of special educational needs, including Dyslexia. To achieve this the authority offers guidance to schools on evidence based practice such as that identified in the most recent Government review of Dyslexia lead by Sir Jim Rose, 'Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties', published in 2009. The authority also has a role to champion the needs of children and provide appropriate challenge to schools to ensure provision is made to meet those needs.

Provision in schools: identification, assessment and intervention

Every school has a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) who is a qualified teacher who would be expected to work as a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team. The SENCo has a specific responsibility for identifying special educational needs, keeping a record of pupils with identified needs and for supporting teachers in ensuring that individual pupil needs are met through appropriate support and provision.

As with all kinds of special educational needs for children with literacy difficulties, including Dyslexia, it is important to identify and respond to those difficulties early, by monitoring the progress of children and identifying those who are not making progress in key skills, e.g. against the communication and language aspect of the EYFS profile for young children. The phonics screening assessment for year 1 children is key point where children might be identified as having a difficulty with decoding skills. Local authority guidance supports the widely understood definition within the Rose review 'Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling'. Testing, or assessment that is most appropriate focuses on those key skills and takes place at different points of a child's education.

Where an initial concern is raised regarding possible Dyslexia, schools consider what support is in place within the class teachers' quality first teaching and make adaptations to address the concern. All class teachers are expected to differentiate work and provide appropriate resources and support as required.

Where concerns continue and the above support does not enable a child to make appropriate educational progress a school should put in place specific interventions in collaboration with parents/carers. Plymouth's Advisory Learning Support Team (PALS) and the Educational Psychology Service provide advice and training about effective evidence based programmes to improve key literacy skills.

In a small number of cases, where a child's difficulties are not reduced by school based intervention, the SENCo can request the involvement of PALS or an Educational Psychologist. Their role is to undertake additional assessments and to advise on specialist approaches to

addressing needs including advice on literacy resources. These teams draw upon a range of assessment methods including observation, consultation and direct assessment of learning skills using dynamic and standardised tools.

When young people with dyslexia transfer into higher education and do not necessarily routinely have access to specialist IT as they would in school, there is a national system of grants for support for disabled students, including those with dyslexia. This scheme, which used to be administered in Local Authority Student Award Teams, until 2011, is now run through the national Student Loans Company and universities carry out the assessments of students' requirements and then provide the necessary equipment or support.

Training opportunities

The LA provides a range of support and training specifically for SENCoS including termly meetings, central training opportunities and in-school advice and support.

Plymouth schools have attended central training on Dyslexia provided jointly by Plymouth Advisory Learning Support Team and Educational Psychologists. Take up on these courses has been high with most schools having staff who attended at least one of the courses available.

Training on Precision Teaching, an intensive monitoring and evaluation approach to the acquisition of key skills, continues to have a high level of take up. This has built upon locally based research which demonstrated the significant impact of this approach in improving reading skills.

The LA has provided to every school the nationally produced 'Inclusion Development Programme' (IDP) on Dyslexia, which provided advice on identifying and supporting pupils with Dyslexia within the classroom. This consisted of eight modules of high quality training for the Senior Leadership Team/ SENCoS for dissemination to all staff. Over a third of schools requested further support from the LA to launch the IDP within their school.

In 2011 an updated Dyslexia IDP was disseminated to schools. Every school in Plymouth has this refreshed IDP and thus has access to their own complete dyslexia assessment and training programme, which they can revisit at any time.

Below is a list of Dyslexia-based training provided by the Local Authority to schools since 2010 including on- going work in schools:

Central training 2010 - 2012
Developing Classroom practice for students with dyslexic difficulties (Secondary)
Classroom Support Dyslexia (Primary)
SEND: Supporting pupils with dyslexic difficulties – addressing parental concerns
Primary Teacher training
Primary TA training
Secondary Teacher training
Secondary TA training
In-School Support/Training On-going
Pupil Consultations incorporating staff coaching / SENCo support
Dyslexia / SpLD bespoke staff training sessions
Precision Instruction
Literacy Interventions

Planned Training Spring Terms 2013
SEND: Supporting dyslexic difficulties across the curriculum (Secondary)
Bespoke in-school staff training sessions on Dyslexia / SpLD following individual school requests

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