

Dyslexia Assessment Policy

SEND Supported makes reference to the following definitions of Dyslexia:

‘Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty which mainly affects the development of literacy and language related skills. It is likely to be present at birth and to be life-long in its effects. It is characterised by difficulties with phonological processing, rapid naming, working memory, processing speed, and the automatic development of skills that may not match up to an individual’s other cognitive abilities. It tends to be resistant to conventional teaching methods, but its effects can be mitigated by appropriately specific intervention, including the application of information technology and supportive counselling’.

(British Dyslexia Association Management Board, October 2007)

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 Rose Report *Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties*. Sir Jim Rose, 2009)

We believe that the decision to carry out a Dyslexia diagnostic assessment needs to be taken carefully and that it may not be the most appropriate course of action for some learners at the given time. Alternative approaches can be discussed with SEND Supported. It is also crucial when a referral is made for an assessment that the school, parents/carers and the learner all agree on this course of action.

SEND Supported will prioritise post 16 diagnostic assessments in order that learners are equipped for their important transitions into further and higher education and ultimately into employment. Any learners aged 8 years or older are also eligible for assessment although it should be noted that a diagnosis of dyslexia is not needed in order to access support at school or for access arrangements in examinations; provision should be put in place in response to a learner's individual needs regardless of a diagnosis.

SEND Supported makes further reference to the 'Train the Trainer: Teaching for Neurodiversity project'. This was led by the British Dyslexia Association in partnership with the Dyspraxia Foundation, Dyslexia Action, Helen Arkell, Manchester Metropolitan University, and Patoss and funded by the DfE.

We believe that it may be important to look beyond a label of Dyslexia in order to understand a learner's needs and as stated by the British Dyslexia Association:

'We want to encourage teachers to be open-minded and build a unique picture of their learner's needs in which a number of SpLD may overlap ie in terms of neurodiversity. This technique has the potential to result in a more tailored approach to meeting your learner's needs'.

<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/about/projects/dyslexia-spld-support-project-2016-17>

SEND Supported therefore offers three levels of assessment:

- graduated approach to your learner's needs
- general assessment of learning strengths and needs
- Dyslexia diagnostic assessment.

In order to reflect the SEN Code of Practice (updated 2015) 'Assess, Plan, Do, Review' cycle, all of these assessment approaches will identify needs, provide recommendations for appropriate outcomes for your learner and advise on strategies and resources so that support can be put into place as quickly as possible.

Referral Process for schools

When a referral for assessment is submitted, schools will need to be able to:

- Supply information about interventions and support strategies already put in place and the outcomes of those provisions.
- Show that they have discussed the above with the learner and parents.
- Complete the SpLD checklist available on the SEND Supported website, taking into account the views of teachers and teaching assistants currently working with the learner.

A referral form will need to be completed and signed by both school and parents/carers. Please email to clair@sendsupported.com together with the checklist.

SEND Supported will evaluate the referral information in order to consider appropriate further action. Referrals will be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt and next steps will be discussed with the school within 10 working days. School and parents will be informed of the outcome:

Outcome 1 - Graduated approach:

- Questionnaire sent to parents in order to gather further background information.
- Observation of the learner in class.
- Discussion with the learner with a view to better understanding their learning needs.
- Meeting with the parent, learner and school in order to plan effective provision in school and strategies for supporting at home.
- Potential training needs for staff discussed with school.
- Short summary report produced by SEND Supported.

Outcome 2 - Assessment of learning strengths and needs:

- Background information gathered from school and parent.
- Observation of the learner in class and analysis of samples of their work.
- 1:1 work with the learner, involving discussion and assessment of skills using standardised tests related to language, memory, processing, literacy and numeracy as appropriate.
- Report produced by SEND Supported and shared with school, parents and learner in order to plan appropriate provision in school and support strategies at home.

Outcome 3 - Diagnostic assessment:

- For post 16 students.
- For younger learners where the graduated approach process has not been able to fully identify their needs.

Where parents / carers wish to make a referral for a diagnostic assessment, they should in the first instance email dyslexiainformation@sendsupported.com