

Dyslexia Friendly Schools



Section 1

Becoming a Dyslexia Friendly School

Equalities Statement

SBC welcomes and values the diversity of Swindon communities, and commits itself to ensuring that no one will receive less favourable treatment or unjustifiable discrimination on the grounds of race, sexual orientation, religion, gender, impairment, age or home address.

A Brief History of the Dyslexia Friendly Schools Initiative in Swindon

Swansea Local Education Authority's "Good Practice Guide" and subsequent dyslexia friendly schools initiative inspired the current Swindon model. In the original scheme a *whole-school approach* was adopted to include pupils with dyslexia. Several advantages were noted¹:

- Referral response times improved for School Action Plus.
- The majority of schools sought to employ a qualified dyslexia specialist.
- Schools were more able to identify and support children earlier, only requiring the help of external support services for children with severe and complex needs.

In 2001, Swindon Borough Council's own drive for more effective literacy inclusion began with the formation of a working party and Dyslexia Friendly Guidelines. Subsequent work led to the "British Dyslexia Association's Quality Mark for Inclusion" in 2006.

Since then, the Local Authority has encouraged many Swindon schools to demonstrate a commitment to inclusive good practice by way of its own accolade, the "Swindon Borough Council Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark".

What is a Dyslexia Friendly School?

The basic principle of a dyslexia friendly school runs through the following:

*"If a child does not learn in the way in which we teach then we must teach him in the way in which he learns. Let dyslexia be looked at from a different angle, not as a learning disability but a different learning ability."*²

A recent systematic review of whole class teaching found strong evidence for exploiting different learning abilities with 'multi-sensory' teaching methods: to "present children with activities which are visual, verbal and kinaesthetic, as well as text based, can remove barriers to learning and give curriculum access to a wider group of learners."³

What Happens in a Dyslexia Friendly School?

What happens in a Dyslexia Friendly School?

In dyslexia friendly schools, teachers appreciate that dyslexic children learn in these different ways and that this can be beneficial to all.

- Staff work quickly to identify the individual learning needs of children and address them with tailored programmes of learning support, based on the children's strengths.
- They continually monitor, review and improve their systems of identification and support.
- The entire school community is involved with raising the awareness of specific learning difficulties including dyslexia, and developing the specialist skills necessary for inclusion of children experiencing these difficulties.

Simply put, dyslexia friendly schools promote good practice for teaching and learning.

The following three 'STEPS' summarise the:

- Whole school principles in embedding inclusive practice.
- Principles of identifying and supporting pupils with dyslexia or literacy difficulties.
- Whole community principles in raising awareness of issues surrounding dyslexia.

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- 1 Mackay, Neil, (2001). Dyslexia Friendly Schools. In: *Dyslexia: Successful Inclusion in the Secondary School*, British Dyslexia Association.
 - 2 Pollack, J., Waller, E., Politt, R., (2004). *Day to Day Dyslexia in the Classroom (Second Edition)*. London: Routledge Falmer.
 - 3 Sheehy, K., (2009). *A Systematic Review of Whole-Class Subject-Based Pedagogies with Reported Outcomes for the Academic and Social Inclusion of Pupils with Special Educational Needs*. Available [online] at: <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk>. Accessed 20th August 2009.

S.T.E.P. 1: Embedding Inclusive Practice

In a dyslexia friendly school, children with dyslexia are children first, with areas of strength and difficulty.

Strength-Based Learning.

Strength-based learning focuses on:

- Strengths, solutions and instilling a 'can do' attitude.

Teaching.

Teaching is:

- Multi-sensory using visual, auditory and kinaesthetic channels simultaneously in learning.
- Highly structured and sequential.
- Differentiated.
- Continually monitored, reviewed and improved.

Expectations.

Expectations of achievement are high for all pupils. The achievement of every pupil is everybody's responsibility.

Policy.

Policy is endorsed by Governors and Senior Managers, setting out:

- Staff CPD and training to raise skills and awareness, with corresponding targets in the School Improvement Plan.
- The recruitment of new staff sensitive towards pupils with dyslexia.
- Homework: the amount, duration and methods of recording.
- Marking for success, to transparent targets that support those with difficulties.
- General accessibility issues; e.g. settings of computer monitors, a dyslexia friendly school website and accessible school correspondence, flyers and posters.

When whole school practice, expectations and policy support children with mild to moderate Special Educational Needs, ultimately fewer children will require learning support. This allows specialist staff to address those with most need.

S.T.E.P. 2: Identifying and Supporting Pupils

In a dyslexia friendly school:

Support.

Support is provided by all within the school community: Teachers, TAs, Tutors, Support Staff, Governors and Parents.

Tracking.

Tracking is thorough.

- Progress is continually monitored, reviewed and improved.
- The pupils own IEPs with meaningful SMART targets.

Early Identification.

Early identification and timely intervention are a priority.

- Careful and conscientious screening identifies causes for concern.
- All staff are vigilant for indicators of dyslexia or literacy difficulties.
- All available information is utilised and acted upon.
- Intervention work is 'little and often'.
- There is a timely response to need.

Provision.

Provision for pupils experiencing difficulty involves:

- Teaching and learning that is continually monitored, reviewed and improved.
- Assessment that produces a pupil profile of strengths and needs.
- Recognition that those with difficulties may be more stressed than peers, impacting on learning and emotional well-being.
- Careful planning and differentiation of work.
- Timetables that permit individual or small-group work.
- Use of ICT, accessibility software and improvement of keyboard skills.
- Direct teaching of metacognitive strategies, study skills, revision skills and examination techniques.
- Improving self-esteem, confidence and independence.
- Preparatory skills for work or further education.

S.T.E.P. 3: Raising Awareness in the School Community

In a dyslexia friendly school, dyslexia awareness is continually raised in the following groups:

Students and Pupils.

Students and pupils are encouraged to take ownership of dyslexia as an alternative thinking style. They:

- Celebrate differences and successes.
- Find ways of supporting peers.
- Are encouraged to have a voice on dyslexia issues.
- Make decisions for improvement.

Teachers.

Teachers undergo CPD to continually improve their knowledge and practice. They understand the training routes available to formalise their experience.

Everyone in the school community has a role.

- Administrative staff understand why they use certain fonts.
- Teachers consider whiteboard settings.
- Print services photocopy onto buff-coloured paper.

Parents.

Parents are particularly powerful partners. Parental involvement is nurtured by:

- Encouraging communication.
- Sharing progress.
- Providing information on further support.

All support and development materials can be found in Section 3, "Supporting Children".

Achieving the SBC Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark.

Since dyslexia friendly practice benefits all, the aim in Swindon is that all schools will become dyslexia friendly as a matter of course. However, some schools may want their commitment to the principles locally and nationally recognised by way of the "Swindon Borough Council Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark".

Although the business of achieving the award is a serious one, the Advisory Teachers for SpLD/Dyslexia (or "SpLD team" who oversee dyslexia friendly practice and the Quality Mark scheme in Swindon) aim to make the process as relaxed and straightforward as possible.

Ultimately, the Quality Mark reflects a celebration of the hard work from staff and the learning journey undertaken, raising dyslexia awareness within the school community. Teachers in schools that have received the award have not only enjoyed the process, but also felt that staff and children have benefited greatly.

Step 1.

Registration

To register for the Swindon Borough Council Dyslexia-Friendly Quality Mark, simply email a member of the SpLD team. They will return a simple registration form by reply.

iabbott@swindon.gov.uk
Helen.curtis@swindon.gov.uk

Step 2.

Induction Training for Lead Professional

The school nominates a Lead Professional who will coordinate the process (for example the SENCo). The Lead attends a half-day briefing to receive important information.

Step 3.

One-Day Whole School Training

A whole-school approach is vital for dyslexia friendly teaching and learning. An INSET day is arranged around the school's calendar to 'kick-start' the raising of dyslexia awareness and to assess the starting point for the school.

Step 4.

Training Courses for Teachers and Teaching Assistants

Nominated Teachers attend a four-day course that includes identifying dyslexia, supporting children and working with parents.

The two-day course is attended by nominated Teaching Assistants. It concentrates on recognising dyslexic difficulties and supporting children with multi-sensory programmes.

Step 5.

Gathering Evidence

While training and information begin to be disseminated, the Lead identifies evidence, matched against the Quality Mark's standards. There are four areas for development:

1. Leadership and Management
2. Quality of Learning
3. Classroom Environment
4. Partnership and liaison with Parents, Carers, Governors and other concerned parties

The checklist at the end of this section gives a rough guide to the school's 'state of readiness'. A schedule of evidence is ultimately compiled, which is used during the verification visit to check the above standards have been met.

Step 6.

Support during the Process

To guide the Lead, nominated Teachers and Teaching Assistants throughout, regular support meetings are arranged. These are optional but highly recommended, since they provide a useful opportunity to ask questions or receive feedback from the SpLD team. There is also a chance to meet other Teachers involved, share good practice and tips.

The meetings allow progress to be monitored informally and ensure that evidence is of a suitable standard before submission of the evidence log.

Step 7.

Verification

At least three weeks prior to verification, the evidence schedule is submitted and checked. This schedule is used to inform a random selection of evidence that will be scrutinised during the day.

The main purpose of the verification visit is to discuss dyslexia friendly school policy or procedures with the SENCo, Parent Governor (with responsibility for SpLD) and Headteacher. Dyslexia friendly teaching and intervention work is also observed, as demonstrated by nominated Teachers and Teaching Assistants.

Finally, informal interviews are carried out with the child representatives, their Teachers, Teaching Assistants and Parents/Carers.

Step 8.

Re-verification

Inherent in the award is a commitment to maintain standards and continue to raise awareness. A verification visit is arranged every three years, to ensure ongoing quality and good practice.

Once again, if your school would like to get involved and meet the challenge of the Swindon Borough Council Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark, simply express an interest to a member of the SpLD team. They look forward to hearing from you.

iabbott@swindon.gov.uk
Helen.curtis@swindon.gov.uk

Advisory Teachers for SpLD/Dyslexia.

Get Involved.

The Dyslexia Friendly Schools Checklist

PRINCIPLES	Comments
Guidelines regarding the management of children with dyslexia are contained within the SEN policy.	
Staff understand how the underlying difficulties associated with dyslexia impact on the Curriculum.	
Staff recognise compounding factors that may co-exist with dyslexia (dyspraxia, attention disorders).	
Staff are familiar with the individual learning styles of children and adopt a range of multi-sensory teaching approaches.	
School staff foster high expectations and positive attitudes, increasing confidence amongst pupils (and parents).	
EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND INTERVENTION	
School staff recognise the importance of early intervention and are familiar with the predictors of literacy difficulties and the early indicators of dyslexia.	
The school has access to early years screening materials and early intervention programmes.	
PROVISION AND RESOURCES	
Pupils are placed in groups according to their ability (not their level in literacy).	
A wide range of strategies is used to facilitate pupil's access to the Curriculum. Special arrangements are made for tests and exams where necessary.	
Pupils are taught a range of study skills.	

The Dyslexia Friendly Schools Checklist

A marking and assessment policy ensures pupils are assessed on the basis of their knowledge.	
Pupils are encouraged to develop an understanding of their individual profiles and effective learning strategies.	
Pupils are encouraged to develop "life skills" (problem-solving, decision making, stress management, motivation and communication).	
Procedures are in place for ensuring smooth progression through school particularly during transition phases (primary to secondary and at the end of secondary).	
School has access to a teacher qualified in SpLD / dyslexia who sets up individualised highly structured, cumulative, multi-sensory teaching programmes for pupils with severe difficulties.	
The school has a resource bank of teaching materials suited to teaching children with dyslexia.	
Information Communication Technology is used in the school to support pupils in a range of ways.	
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	
There is whole school awareness to raise issues relating to dyslexia (staff meetings, in service training etc.).	
Training courses for teachers and teacher assistants are promoted and staff are encouraged to attend (including award bearing courses).	
PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	
Schools actively seek to build a positive working relationship between teaching staff and parents that is based upon an atmosphere of honesty and mutual respect.	
Teachers listen to the concerns of parents.	

The Dyslexia Friendly Schools Checklist

Parents are made aware of the support structures in place for their child.	
Teachers and parents work together to share information and identify strategies for supporting the pupil both in the classroom and at home.	