Scottish Borders Council

Policy and procedures: children and young people with literacy difficulties including dyslexia.

Foreword

Literacy skills are fundamental in today's society.   For many years it has been recognised that some young people have particular difficulties with learning to read, write and spell. In the past such difficulties have been variously described as specific difficulties, specific learning difficulties, or dyslexia. The present policy has been developed by a dyslexia working group following the launch by the Scottish Government of the national toolkit. This toolkit, re-launched in summer 2012 as *'Addressing Dyslexia,'* is a comprehensive resource for all teachers, parents and other professionals. This emphasis is important; all teachers should play a direct role in supporting the development of literacy skills across the curriculum. Strong and effective strategies for supporting literacy development cannot be separated from effective strategies and procedures for identifying and supporting dyslexia. What is required is an integrated approach which provides support for all pupils as and when they need it. All teachers therefore need to have an appropriate awareness of the development of literacy skills and of the principles, resources and materials which are relevant to providing effective help to those who need it. The importance of effective whole school approaches for supporting literacy should not be underestimated. Not all pupils who experience some difficulty will be identified as having dyslexia, but for those who require it, each school will have access to teachers with relevant experience, skills and knowledge who will have a more specialist role. It is important to emphasise that such teachers may appropriately co-ordinate the assessment and identification of dyslexia. Where appropriate, advice and additional support can be sought from the school educational psychologist and from a range of allied health professionals.

Dyslexia can have a profound impact on children's feelings and confidence. In supporting children and young people in our schools with dyslexia we all need to ensure that they do not lose confidence in their ability to succeed. Our job is to support all our pupils, to foster their development as individuals, to reach their full potential nurturing their strengths as well as supporting their challenges with learning. Knowledge and understanding about how to support literacy skills for those experiencing difficulties has grown considerably in recent years. What is needed is a mix of well-evidenced teaching approaches that promote literacy for all children combined with targeted interventions for those with most difficulty. Technological solutions need to be available to those who can benefit from it.

Donna Manson, Service Director, Children & Young People.

Writing an essay is:

' the most awful thing in the world and all the right words are ending up spelt wrong '

Secondary pupil in a Scottish Borders school

Contents

A separate Operational Guidance has been written to support the implementation of this policy. Relevant parts of the operational guidance will be referred to throughout this policy

In this document the term '*parents*' will refer to parents, carers or guardians, and the term '*pupil*' will refer to children and young people.
For ease some of the main references cited throughout the document can be followed up through referring to Section 11 of the Operational Guidance which provides a summary of links.

1. Situating dyslexia within the wider local and national priorities

This dyslexia policy should be considered within the context of Scottish Borders Council's wider approaches for supporting inclusion and literacy. A key question in the identification of dyslexia asks for evidence that difficulties are persistent despite the child or young person being provided with appropriate learning opportunities. Therefore, this policy assumes the delivery of high quality curriculum in literacy for all from the early years onwards. Implementation of this dyslexia policy also relies on a collaborative approach in all schools which delivers well evidenced programmes to support literacy for all children combined with targeted interventions for those with difficulty. Pupils need to be actively taught how to read through accessing appropriate instruction and experiences for developing and extending their literacy skills, ensuring prior knowledge is built upon. . Such an emphasis maximises the development of literacy skills and ensures that pupils will generally be considered for identification of dyslexia after they have received provision of both universal and individually targeted programmes and continue, nevertheless, to demonstrate persistent difficulties.

This approach reflects the principles emphasised both in the national definition of dyslexia and in the national toolkit. It is also consistent with the national priorities which emphasise the need to support literacy and pupil wellbeing across the curriculum. All teachers have a responsibility for supporting and developing wellbeing and literacy skills (as outlined in the General Teaching Council for Scotland's professional standards for Registration of Teachers). The approach outlined in this policy requires commitment and support from all teachers, classroom staff and parents to identify those presenting with literacy needs and to provide appropriately tailored resources and support. Such an approach is best delivered through a staged approach to assessing,   supporting and reviewing needs such as has been established in Scottish Borders over many years. Evidence is gathered throughout this process of ongoing literacy assessments, intervention and review. The process begins during the child's early years and continues throughout primary and secondary education. The staged approach is appropriate for identifying and supporting pupils presenting with a range of additional support needs including dyslexia.

2. Definition of dyslexia

The 2009 working definition of dyslexia followed in this guidance and noted below was developed by the Scottish Government, Dyslexia Scotland, a wide range of stakeholders and the Cross Party group on Dyslexia in the Scottish Parliament. The aim of this particular definition is to provide a description of the range of indicators and characteristics of dyslexia as helpful guidance for educational practitioners, learners, parents/carers and others.

Dyslexia can be described as a continuum of difficulties in learning to read, write and/or spell, which persist despite the provision of appropriate learning opportunities.

These difficulties often do not reflect an individual's cognitive abilities and may not be typical of performance in other areas.

The impact of dyslexia as a barrier to learning varies in degree according to the learning and teaching environment, as there are often associated difficulties such as:

- *auditory and /or visual processing of language-based information*

- *phonological awareness*

- *oral language skills and reading fluency*

- *short-term and working memory*

- *sequencing and directionality*

- *number skills*

- *organisational ability*

Motor skills and co-ordination may also be affected.

http://addressingdyslexia.org/what-dyslexia

The national guidance developed in Scotland on dyslexia goes on to say that:

'*Dyslexia exists in all cultures and across the range of abilities and socio-economic backgrounds.*

It is a hereditary, life-long, neurodevelopmental condition. Unidentified, dyslexia is likely to result in low self-esteem, high stress, atypical behaviour, and low achievement.

Learners with dyslexia will benefit from early identification, appropriate intervention and targeted effective teaching, enabling them to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.'

This Scottish Borders Council policy emphasises that there is no single identifying pattern for dyslexia. Instead dyslexia should be understood as a functional descriptor for a range of presenting patterns which impact detrimentally upon reading, writing or spelling. It is critical to recognise however that each individual learner experiencing difficulties with reading, writing and spelling may also demonstrate wider patterns of associated difficulties that will require appropriate recognition and support.

The working definition highlights that difficulty with literacy is not the only factor to consider when identifying dyslexia. A number of associated difficulties may be relevant to an individual's experience of dyslexia. For example challenges with motor co-ordination. Identifying these may be very relevant to supporting children who are experiencing difficulties with literacy (especially writing). However, no single associated difficulty or feature (or combination of features) should be regarded as evidence of the presence of dyslexia (as the identification model for dyslexia rests on response to targeted literacy intervention over time).

3. Key messages

This policy replaces the previous SBC guidance (2002) on 'Understanding, identifying and responding to specific learning difficulties/dyslexia'. There are some key points to note, each of which is important:

- Adoption of the national definition for dyslexia means that the term, 'dyslexia' can now be used to refer to difficulties with learning to read, write or spell (or a combination of these).

- Dyslexia should only be identified when the child or young person's difficulties persist despite provision of appropriate learning opportunities. The identification and assessment of dyslexia requires an ongoing process of information gathering over a period of time in the learning context. All professionals involved have a responsibility to contribute to this process.

- It is not appropriate to identify dyslexia on the basis of a single test carried out at one point in time.

- It is important that all children experiencing difficulties with any aspect of literacy are identified and appropriately supported. It is to be expected that literacy difficulties will always be identified and targeted prior to a decision to identify dyslexia.

- Dyslexia will *usually* not be identified earlier than the P3 stage because assessment involves implementation and evaluation of targeted intervention over a significant period of time.

- The identification of dyslexia is a collaborative process co-ordinated by the designated learning support teacher who will consult with all involved including young people, parents, class teachers and key specialists, for example educational psychologist, occupational therapist and/or speech and language therapist, as required.

4. The National Toolkit

In June 2010 the Scottish Government launched an online national resource the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit. In 2017 the toolkit was redeveloped to improve user navigation and it continues to support Curriculum for Excellence. The Toolkit is a comprehensive resource set within the Scottish context for inclusive education and has a range of free resources and information for all educational practitioners. New free online professional learning opportunities are available to support practitioners further develop their pedagogy and practice for dyslexia, inclusive practice and literacy.Many approaches and strategies for dyslexia (as promoted in the toolkit) are appropriate and beneficial in teaching literacy for all learners.

This Scottish Borders' policy sits alongside the national toolkit. The link for the national toolkit is http://www.addressingdyslexia.org/

This Scottish Borders' policy identifies the key procedures and processes to be followed in all schools in Scottish Borders and also highlights specific resources that have been identified, developed and promoted in Scottish Borders.

5. GIRFEC and the Additional Support for Learning (ASfL) Act

GIRFEC (*Getting It Right for Every Child*, Scottish Government, 2008) is the national framework which aims to ensure improved outcomes through staged and collaborative intervention. This approach places the child at the centre of the process. The approach is designed to ensure that children get the help they need when they need it. This staged approach is often represented using the "GIRFEC Triangle". The GIRFEC triangle used in Scottish Borders is shown below.

Staged Model of Support for Children and Young People
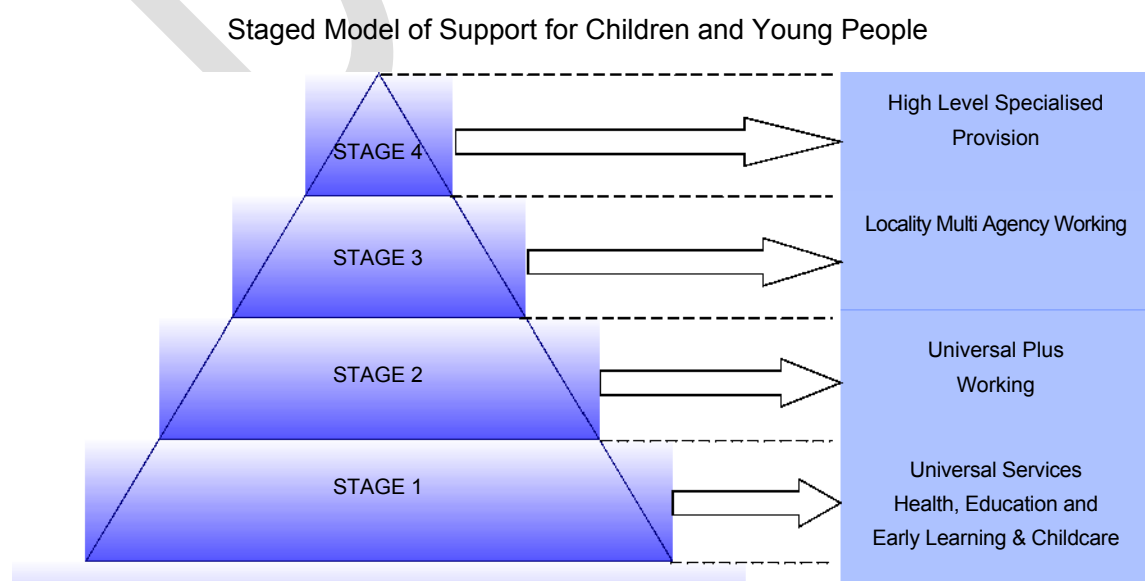
This triangle depicts a four-level framework of support ranging from Universal Services to those offering progressively greater degrees of specialisation.

The framework is intended to ensure that appropriate and proportionate support can be deployed from a range of services when required.

Scottish Borders Council uses the GIRFEC Staged Model of Support to identify, assess and support ALL needs, including all learning needs. The principles for identifying and responding to difficulties with literacy are the same as for all other types of need. What is distinctive is the focus and nature of assessment and support.

When considering support for these learners *The Additional Support for Learning Act* (2004, as amended) is also relevant. This emphasises the following values and principles for effective assessment and intervention:

- adopting the least intrusive and most effective course of action

- taking a holistic view of the pupil and their circumstances, and what they need to grow and develop and achieve their potential

- seeking, taking account of and noting the views of the pupil and parents and involving them fully in the assessment process and in finding solutions

- ensuring that parents and the pupil understand, and are asked to agree to, the aims of any assessment and the purposes of any action proposed

- ensuring that assessment is an ongoing, integrated process of gathering and evaluating information, planning, providing for and reviewing services for the individual

- taking into account issues of diversity and equality and ensuring that outcomes do not discriminate against the pupil and their families

- working in partnership with parents to develop skills to support children's education and health and wellbeing

Together, *The Additional Support for Learning Act* and the *Getting it right for every child* approach carry some important implications for practice in supporting learners who are experiencing difficulties with literacy.

It is important to consult with the child at an early stage about their experience of the learning process, about what is challenging, and about what helps.

Whilst it is important to provide effective support it is also important to consider how to do this sensitively and proportionately. In recognition of SBC pupils' feedback during the consultation on this Policy, schools should consider the possible impact upon learners' confidence and self-esteem of receiving support within or outwith the classroom. School staff should actively seek and respect learners' preferences about how they access support; and should communicate these preferences to those who

teach and support them. Schools also need to seek and respect learners' preferences about how widely information about their support needs is shared.

In the case of support for literacy difficulties it is envisaged that most learners' needs will be effectively met by universal services; namely Class Teachers (Stage 1). Class Teachers remain responsible for meeting a learner's needs when support requires to be enhanced through consultation, assessment and intervention from other specialist services from Stage 2 or above (e.g. Support for Learning Teacher, Speech & Language Therapy Services, Educational Psychologist).

Initial concerns should be registered and responded to by the Class Teacher, who will then consult with parents or carers and colleagues within school (eg the Support for Learning Teacher) as required. Evidence of the learner's progress will be gathered over time and this will inform decisions about teaching approaches and targeted interventions. Where further advice, assessment or intervention from specialist services is required this should be integrated into the continuing processes of teaching and learning for which universal services remain responsible. The emphasis when seeking specialist multi-agency support should be on acting to support effective teaching and learning, and effective planning of future teaching and learning; rather than on external assessment to identify a disorder or deficit.

6. The importance of a positive, confident and inclusive school culture

Curriculum for Excellence emphasises the fundamental importance of positive relationships in school as a pre-requisite for effective learning and achievement. All pupils (and staff) need a sense of belonging and wellbeing in their (school) community. Hand-in-hand with the requirements to support literacy and numeracy, all teachers have a vital role in supporting emotional wellbeing to ensure all pupils are supported to develop positive relationships and have confidence in their ability to succeed.

The HMIE *Literature Review of current approaches to the provision of education for children with Dyslexia* (HMIe 2007) strongly emphasises the emotional impacts of experience of Dyslexia. It positions *facilitating a positive sense of self* as a key dimension of effective teaching and intervention (section 2.2.3 pp.13-15).

Survey evidence from a Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) study carried out pupils with dyslexia indicates that a crucial, even the over-riding, factor associated with academic success is what has been described by Mike Johnson as the *'emotional climate of the classroom'* (cited in British Dyslexia Association, Dyslexia Friendly Schools Pack, page 24). How classroom teaching is organised and experienced can have a great impact on what pupils think and feel about their capacity to learn and, through this, how they see themselves. Critically, what learners with dyslexia require is, what Dyslexia Scotland describe in one of their publications, as *'empathic and effective class teachers '* (*Supporting pupils with Dyslexia at primary school, Book.3 The upper primary*, 2011).

One of the dyslexic pupils who contributed to the MMU survey described what good teachers do as follows:

> *'They notice when you are having problems and they don't dismiss you by ignoring you and your questions. When I am stuck I know I can put my hand up and not get shouted at for not listening. The teacher smiles at me and then explains again, doing at least two examples with me.'* (British Dyslexia Association, Dyslexia Friendly Schools Pack, p 24)

Mike Johnson helpfully summarises the perspectives from dyslexic learners as follows:

> *'Overall, it is clear that these pupils have no difficulty recognising the learning environment in which they can succeed. It is interesting that the underlying theme is the emotional climate in the classroom rather than any specific techniques or special methodology. They want calmness and security, the feeling that teachers might actually like them and are enthusiastic about their subject, quiet recognition of their difference and the provision of two key structures, differentiation and support.*
>
> *This all builds up to a picture that suggests that enhancing the achievements of pupils with dyslexia does not make unreasonable demands on teachers at either primary or secondary phases of education, it is the way .. teachers go about teaching and organising classrooms that are seen as either facilitating or frustrating. The key comes in understanding how each pupil thinks and feels. '* (British Dyslexia Association, Dyslexia Friendly Schools Pack, p 24)

Literacy difficulties and dyslexia have the potential to profoundly damage feelings, self-esteem and confidence. It is therefore vital to ensure that class or subject teachers provide pupils with calmness and security, recognition of their strengths as well as their needs and a willingness to adopt flexible approaches which recognise, and embed, the ways they learn best. It is also important that when pupils are experiencing difficulties that teachers mediate the responses of other pupils. This includes effective management of unhelpful reactions, as well as effective modelling of supportive and affirming responses.

School leadership should promote a school culture which supports all staff to effectively meet individual needs whilst ensuring that pupils experiencing challenges have appropriately broad opportunities to develop and demonstrate their strengths across the curriculum. In this way, self-esteem and social recognition will be actively promoted. The goal is to develop learners who have a balanced and informed understanding of their strengths and difficulties, are motivated to learn, assured in their use of learning strategies and have the confidence to ask for help whenever and wherever they need it. This presumes that early and ongoing perspectives from the pupil are sought regarding their experiences of the learning process, both in terms of those aspects that are challenging and those supports that are most enabling. Parents also may possess key information regarding how the pupil's learning is affecting their social confidence and life skills; and schools should promote a culture that encourages pupils and parents to request appropriate support. Active home support is crucial to enable pupils to fully achieve their literacy potential. In this way schools will ensure that the support available at the universal Getting it right for

every child stage (i.e. within classroom) will be maximised and the numbers requiring more focused involvement of ASN / SfL staff for targeted (e.g. IEP) and specialist stages (e.g. CSP) will be minimised.

7.1 The process to be followed in investigating whether dyslexia should be identified

In relation to literacy difficulties, the process of assessment, support and review will be delivered collaboratively and follow a staged approach. Over time this process will support staff to:

- provide a baseline measure of pupil's abilities and skills in literacy

- build a profile of pupil's literacy development in terms of strengths, difficulties and needs over time

- provide targeted and effective intervention

Support provided will be the least intrusive to deliver effective intervention but will emphasise a positive and holistic approach which builds health, wellbeing and confidence. In this model assessment is therefore linked integrally with intervention. Evidence of progress over time will be an important part of the assessment. Evaluation of this progress will ultimately inform the decision as to whether identification of dyslexia can be evidenced.

The flowcharts below outline the process of assessment and intervention of literacy difficulties in primary and secondary schools respectively.

- For the Primary process (Flowchart 1) please note that evidence may be gathered on the Early Level Checklist – Early Learning and Childcare and P1 (see Section 1 of the Operational Guidance).[1] However it is not appropriate to identify dyslexia for pupils at this stage. Rather the focus will be on identification of needs, providing effective intervention, and continuing assessment.

The following points apply to both Primary and Secondary processes:

- The flowcharts capture the common core processes that should be included in schools' procedures; however individual schools may add additional detail

- Optional consultation with Educational Psychologist and other professionals/ colleagues is available at any point

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[1] Please note that the checklists included in this policy have been adapted from the national materials in the toolkit; however it should be emphasised that the present policy supports the use of the toolkit checklists as an alternative.

FLOWCHART 1: Process of assessing literacy difficulties and identifying dyslexia in primary school

Concerns raised by pupil, staff or parents about the pupil's progress in literacy

Support for Learning Profile may be opened if screening or class work raises concerns

Teacher uses appropriate checklist (usually Section 1-3 in Operational Guidance) and puts strategies in place. Checklist and records of interventions retained as part of the evidence profile

Teacher reviews progress, If concerns continue.

Consultation with **SfL/Class Teacher/Parents/Pupil** using evidence gathered inc. checklist and strategies tried. Concerns recorded additional strategies and date for next consultation agreed. **Records to be retained in all instances.**

Further involvement from SfL e.g. assessment, direct intervention, advice to teachers and ANAs

Concerns continue; pupil not progressing

SfL and teachers continue to monitor areas of need and progress. Evidence continues to be added to the Support for Learning Profile

If difficulties *persist, despite the provision of appropriate learning opportunities,* then SfL & Class Teacher bring the evidence gathered in the SfL Profile, meet with the team around the child & all consult '**Deciding to identify dyslexia'** in this policy

Limited evidence that needs meet the definition of dyslexia

Sufficient evidence that needs meet the definition of dyslexia

Outcome: Decision made to gather more information

Action: CT & SfLT continue to assess & support identified need

Outcome: Minute of meeting /report records **dyslexia is identified**

Action: CT & SfLT continue to assess & support identified need

FLOWCHART 2: **Process of assessing literacy difficulties and identifying dyslexia in secondary school**

Concerns passed on via primary school transition **or** new concern raised by pupil, staff or parents about the pupil's progress in literacy

Support for Learning Profile may be opened if screening or class work raises concerns

Secondary staff to check student records (including centrally held info & P7 review info) for background on needs & strategies

Teacher uses appropriate checklist (see Section 4 or 1-3 of Operational Guidance as required) and puts strategies in place.

SfL Teachers advise class teachers of suitable strategies & updates centrally held information

If concerns continue, SfL staff support further assessment, gather evidence, advise teachers as well as organise direct intervention following baseline measurement.

During intervention SfL staff and teachers continue to monitor areas of need and progress. Learning Support Profile built over time

Following sufficient learning opportunity SfL Teachers monitors effectiveness of direct intervention

If difficulties *persist, despite the provision of appropriate learning opportunities,* then SfL and Class Teacher bring the evidence gathered in the SfL Profile, meet with the team around the child and all consult '**Deciding to identify dyslexia'** in this policy

Insufficient evidence that needs meet the definition of dyslexia

Sufficient evidence that needs meet the definition of dyslexia

Outcome: Decision made to gather more information

Action: CT & SfLT continue to assess & support identified need

Outcome: Minute of meeting /report records **dyslexia is identified**

Action: CT & SfLT continue to assess & support identified need

*All evidence gathered and stored in the Pupil Profile will be helpful in respect of any SQA Assessment arrangements

Schools must follow 'Additional Support for Learning' legislation. This means all pupils with additional support needs will be supported by an ongoing process of assessment, planning, provision of support and review, irrespective of whether their needs are identified as dyslexia or not.

In keeping with the principles of assessment and intervention outlined above, parents, and the pupil will be involved in an ongoing way and this includes the decision making processes relating to the identification of dyslexia.

The process of identifying dyslexia may be triggered by the pupil, parents or the professionals working with the pupil. Confirmation of dyslexia can help the pupil understand their literacy difficulties and improve self-esteem.

Please refer to Section 10 'Identification of dyslexia, conceptual issues' within the Operational Guidance for a more detailed summary of how dyslexia has been conceptualised in this policy. This information is particularly intended for those with a specialist role in supporting and identifying pupils presenting with dyslexia.

7.2 Supporting pupils with literacy difficulties including dyslexia

Support needs change over time and strategies implemented will change to reflect this. Intervention for pupils with literacy difficulties/dyslexia is dependent on comprehensive ongoing assessment of their strengths and difficulties. This helps teachers to target their intervention appropriately and modify it depending on the pupil's response to that intervention.

This policy offers ideas for classroom strategies and choice of teaching approaches and interventions for pupils. Efficient recording and transfer of information during transition times from class to class, teacher to teacher and/or school to school is central for planning and continuing support.

Effective early literacy teaching

It is recommended that all early literacy instruction should:

- have a strong focus on developing phonological awareness

- emphasise a structured and progressive phonics approach

- teach fluency through exposure to different texts suitable for the level of the reader alongside teaching phonics

- teach vocabulary explicitly using multisensory approaches e.g. spoken word, printed word, object, picture, motion

- embed literacy learning in talking and listening and other language based teaching

- teach sight recognition for key words

- teach comprehension skills

For further information about support strategies and approaches designed for mainstream teachers see Section 8: Strategies to support pupils with literacy difficulties/ dyslexia in the mainstream classroom in the Operational Guidance. Additionally the national toolkit provides a wealth of advice and resources.

7.3 When is it appropriate to identify dyslexia?

National guidance (cf HMIe report, *Education for learners with dyslexia,* 2008) advises that assessing children for dyslexia at the Early Learning and Childcare stage is premature. The position taken in this policy is that identification in the early level years (i.e. generally Nursery and Primary one) is inadvisable.

It is unhelpful to identify dyslexia prematurely i.e. before the pupil has had sufficient opportunity to receive targeted, and as necessary, specialist interventions designed to address their individual learning needs. Identification would only be appropriate where robust assessment, teaching and targeted intervention have been in place for several years. Dyslexia will therefore *usually* not be identified earlier than the P3 stage because assessment involves implementation and evaluation of targeted intervention over a significant period of time.

Although it is not appropriate to identify dyslexia in the early years it should be emphasised that all young children will benefit from programmes and experiences designed to support literacy. It is important that relevant staff identify and support children experiencing any difficulty and provide effective intervention. In this policy the Early Level Checklist – Early Learning and Childcare and P1 (see Section 1 of the Operational Guidance) should be used to build up an individual profile to identify needs and assist targeting of early support. This will help to lessen the impacts in later years.

Just as it is unhelpful to identify dyslexia prematurely it is also generally unhelpful to delay identification. Schools are encouraged to complete identification of dyslexia as soon as they are confident that they have sufficient evidence in the Dyslexia Profile.

It is important to note that the requirements associated with school work change over time and, in the secondary school years particularly, the amount of reading and writing increases. In addition, in response to increasing demands, other associated difficulties may become apparent. Some pupils who have experienced –and

overcome - difficulties in learning to read, write or spell may experience new patterns of challenge (e.g. from the demands associated with lengthy reading requirements in exam papers or the associated working memory or processing demands). It is important for all secondary staff to be alert and responsive to these needs as, and when, they occur. It is also important that secondary schools are able to identify dyslexia promptly through gathering relevant evidence effectively. Such patterns of development are recognised in the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit which provides guidance for all staff at every stage. Identification of dyslexia in the secondary school years does not therefore need to imply that there has been a failure to appropriately identify dyslexia before this. [2]

The assessment of dyslexia in children and young people is a process rather than an end-product. The information provided in the assessment should support the planning for the learner's next steps and this will require monitoring due to the changes and challenges which will occur as the child grows and the curriculum develops. For example, the difficulties experienced in P6 may not be exactly the same in S3 – they may be harder or easier and other challenges may replace them.

7.4 What evidence is needed?

The basis of identifying dyslexia is from the evidence gathered during the ongoing process of assessing and supporting literacy difficulties.

The process of gathering evidence may take account of;

- observations

- samples of work

- checklists

- information about adaptations made and/or interventions tried

- information about the pupil's response to interventions

- information about the pupil's strengths and needs from professionals and parents

- information from the pupil

- relevant factors in developmental history (eg delayed milestones, hearing or sight difficulties, speech or language impairment, experience of trauma or neglect, head injury etc)

- standardised, criterion referenced and dynamic assessments (see section8)

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[2] A formal identification of dyslexia is not required in order to access Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Assessment Arrangements – this process is needs led, it is not dependent on a 'label' –see section 10 below.

All these materials will be added to an ongoing profile which can be accessed by relevant staff.

7.5 How does the decision making process work? The two key questions

The Scottish Government's working definition of dyslexia and the pupil's profile are at the core of decision making. The decision making process involves assessing the evidence gathered over time against the requirements of the definition.

The first sentence of the definition (see section 2 above) gives two key questions; both must be answered with a yes to identify dyslexia.

More information about the two key questions is given below.

Key Question 1: Is there evidence of difficulties in learning to read, write and/or spell?

This must include one or more of the following:

- Significant decoding and word recognition difficulties including difficulties in rate of reading

- Slow progress in writing such as writing speed, technical skills, and planning and organising ideas

- Significant spelling difficulties across the curriculum

- Evidence may be reflected in standardised assessment scores that are significantly below average

Refer to Section 1-4 of the Operational Guidance for the four checklists covering the Curriculum for Excellence levels. These tools have been adapted from materials in the national toolkit and can be used as an initial assessment tool or to add to the evidence profile of the pupil. Completion of these tools should be informed by teacher observations and assessment. If significant difficulties are identified these tools should be used to gather information regarding progress over time.

It is important to note that some pupil's difficulties may emerge or become more significant at a later stage.

Key Question 2: Is there evidence that these difficulties are persistent despite the child or young person being provided with appropriate learning opportunities?

It is important to note that it is the type, persistence and severity of the pupil's needs and not the existence of dyslexia that determine the type, frequency and content of intervention.

Is there evidence that the support on offer in school has been appropriate in level, content and frequency?

Have appropriate universal support strategies and targeted interventions (such as those summarised in Section 8 and 6 respectively within the Operational Guidance) been introduced and reviewed that target the specific needs of the pupil?

Has the powerful and enabling support provided by Information and Communication Technology (ICT) been considered and, as appropriate, been explored and reviewed? Please refer to Section 7: Using ICT to support pupils with literacy difficulties/dyslexia in the Operational Guidance for detailed practical advice.

Has evidence been gathered over a sufficient amount of time, to show that the pupil has experienced appropriate supports?

Is there evidence of factors in the pupil's life (other than dyslexia) that may have limited their engagement in appropriate learning opportunities? The impact of these factors needs to be taken into account before identifying dyslexia. Examples of factors that fall into this category are:

- The only types of support provided are *not* evidence-based as having significant impact on literacy difficulties or dyslexia, e.g. movement based programmes such as DORE and Brain Gym

- The pupil having missed substantial amounts of school

- A disrupted period in school, for example, rapid changes in teaching staff

- Factors in the pupil's home life that have prevented them fully engaging with learning

- Health issues that have prevented them fully engaging with learning, including sensory impairment

- Emotional or behavioural issues that have prevented them from fully engaging with learning

- English as an additional language

- Specific speech and language difficulties

- Motor difficulties

- Developmental disorders (e.g. Autism)

The current definition of dyslexia is wider in the sense that it may now encompass children with a broader range of difficulties then in the past. However, there may be cases where other descriptors may provide a better explanation for the pupil's difficulties. In such cases professional judgement should be exercised in consultation with those involved (including parents) about whether it is meaningful to identify dyslexia.

Educational psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, and other specialised practitioners are available for consultation as required.

7.6 How to report the decision

The language we use when discussing dyslexia is important. There is a need for consistency, confidence and clarity in how we communicate with parents regarding identification (or not) of dyslexia. It can be expected that a pupil's support needs will change over time. It is important to safeguard, as far as possible, that a pupil is not incorrectly identified as having dyslexia. The following reflects current national guidance and should be followed:

- Avoid terms such as 'dyslexic tendencies', 'signs' or 'indicators of dyslexia' and 'at risk of dyslexia' as these can be potentially confusing for pupils and parents.

- A pupil is either identified as having dyslexia or not (as reflected in the Scottish Government definition).

- A pupil is **identified** (not 'diagnosed') as having dyslexia.

- Modifiers such as 'mild', 'moderate', or 'severe' should only be used to describe the present impact on learning. These terms should not be used to describe the severity of dyslexia as they cannot be reliably quantified but rather exist on a continuum.

- If there is insufficient evidence to support the identification of dyslexia ongoing difficulties with literacy may be indicated. All progress is reviewed over time and this does not necessarily preclude future identification of dyslexia.

Identifying dyslexia is a collaborative process – parents, professionals and the pupil should be involved as fully as possible at every stage of the process. The decision making may be done in a meeting where the team around the child collaboratively

reviews the evidence and makes a decision as to whether identifying dyslexia is appropriate.

It is important to consult with everyone concerned and adopt a sensitive approach to how and when this information is communicated with the pupil.

If the evidence indicates that the child has dyslexia, the reasons for this decision should be carefully explained and recorded. Similarly if the evidence indicates that the child does or does not have dyslexia, or is insufficient to determine this either way, the reasons for this should be carefully explained and recorded, and next steps, if relevant, outlined.

For examples of report wording see Section 9: Assessment and intervention profile: Suggestions for wording feedback to stakeholders within the Operational Guidance.

Whatever the decision, it is important to emphasise the continued support the pupil will receive.

8.   Assessment and Intervention

Assessment is fundamental to what teachers do on a daily basis for all pupils. Teachers interpret evidence in relation to the progress of a child toward the goals of a particular section of work. Next steps are decided according to what has been achieved and what problems have been encountered. This assessment evidence can come from a variety of sources, such as:

- Day-to-day work
- Observations
- Specifically constructed summative assessments
- Standardised assessments

This policy stresses the importance of high quality learning and teaching of which assessment is an integral part. The following types of assessment will have particular relevance to this policy:

- Formative assessment/AfL – seeking and interpreting evidence, through day to day activities, for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how they are going to get there.
- Teacher-constructed summative assessment tasks at the end of a block of learning.
- Criterion referenced assessment – e.g. tasks made up of items with right or wrong answers to determine whether specific phonic skills or sight words being taught are secure.

- Assessment through teaching to explore and clarify whether a child responds well to particular teaching approaches or to adaptations in the learning environment (dynamic assessment).

Such assessments will feature as part of regular and ongoing teaching practice by all class teachers for all learners.

Use of criterion referenced assessments

To determine whether there is evidence that a child is presenting with dyslexia, specific criterion referenced assessments repeated over time may be appropriate. Used over time they can capture accuracy, fluency and level of consolidation. They also have the advantage that, as well as measuring progress, they can be veryindividualised and, when used appropriately, will indicate clearly what needs to be taught next. They may also be adapted flexibly to carry out dynamic assessment.

Use of standardised (or norm referenced) assessments

These assessments generate a standardised measure of how a child performs on a fixed series of assessments compared with other children of the same age. It is important to bear in mind that presentation is inflexible and that there can be detrimental effects on a pupil who is administered age appropriate assessment tools when this is not appropriate to their attainment level. In such circumstances, these assessment results will not be purposeful and may undermine confidence. Such superfluous assessments should be avoided on the basis of advice of relevant members of staff.

It is important to select a test with a suitable age range to permit future re-testing. Standard scores should be used in preference to age equivalent scores when conclusions need to be drawn as to whether a child is dyslexic or not. This is because standard scores provide a more reliable measure of progress over time.

Use of screening assessments for dyslexia

No specific dyslexia screening assessments are recommended in this policy (although evaluative comments on some are given in Section 5 of the Operational Guidance). Schools will carry out general literacy screening assessments in accordance with requirements agreed at Authority, Community Learning Board or school level. These literacy assessments may provide early evidence of pupils who are experiencing some challenge and contribute to their individual pupil profile. However, the approach taken in this policy is to promote the use of checklists administered by classroom teachers (supported as required by support for learning teachers) over a period of time to build up a pupil profile (cf Sections 1-4 of the Operational Guidance).

Considerations when determining Interventions

Given that identification of dyslexia rests on limited response to appropriate targeted intervention over time, conclusions need to take into consideration whether the intervention(s) provided meet the criteria for effective literacy intervention (cf Section 6 of the Operational Guidance). Assessments need to coincide with the period of time during which the child has been receiving targeted intervention.

Section 6 of the Operational Guidance in this policy provides details about catch-up interventions that are used in primary and secondary schools in SBC, along with evidence of their effectiveness. In commenting on effectiveness this policy has drawn on reviews published by Greg Brooks. Section 6 of the Operational Guidance provides a link to his latest review (*'What works for children and young people with literacy difficulties?'* 2013, fourth edition) along with a complete list of all the interventions which are featured in the fourth edition. Section 6 of the Operational Guidance also identifies other interventions for which the evidence is less robust than for those cited in the fourth edition. This includes some locally used interventions that are currently not supported by empirical evidence but which some SBC practitioners regard as useful.

It should be emphasised that the levels of effectiveness demonstrated in published studies reflect the specific conditions which applied during the intervention study (e.g.) the target population, duration, frequency and quality of teacher/adult support etc. Mere use of an evidenced intervention in another context does not guarantee equivalent results. Similarly, use of an approved intervention which currently lacks robust empirical evidence may, especially when delivered intensively, be very effective. It is important that practitioners make informed judgements about the interventions to be used in the light of the specific needs and context.

Notwithstanding the specific conditions required for individual intervention programmes to be effective, the following general guidance may be helpful when considering the appropriateness of a catch-up programme:

- Good classroom teaching remains central to effective practice in supporting learners with literacy difficulties.

- Is the approach to be used structured and systematic?

- Before choosing an intervention, consider the practicalities. Remember that the levels of effectiveness demonstrated in published studies are based on specific standards regarding amount and quality of teacher support for the intervention. So consider:

    1. Will the sessions to be provided be sufficiently frequent to be effective?
    2. Will the sessions to be provided be sufficient in duration to be effective?

- In order to work best ICT interventions should be precisely targeted and skilfully mediated by an adult (teacher or assistant). Adequate time should be committed

to using the diagnostic tools within ICT interventions in order to ensure that the intervention is appropriately targeted, and that pupil progress is assessed robustly.

- Some interventions for pupils who are experiencing difficulties with spelling can be effective if they are highly-structured, targeted and delivered systematically "little and often". Generally, such schemes are more successful in enabling children to grasp relatively regular spelling patterns.

- Targeted intervention can be effective in improving comprehension skills. It is important to enable children who are having difficulties with reading to experience rich, exciting texts. Activities that enable them to explore the texts' meaning will embed the relevance of reading by relating it to their wider experience; and will enable them to experience and practise using new vocabulary.

- A small number of recommended schemes are specifically targeted at upper primary and early secondary pupils. Those recommended may be effective in supporting pupils to continue to make gains in reading that will enable them to better manage the secondary curriculum.

- Structured Reading Partnership interventions (which involve assistants, parents and other appropriate adults as pupils' reading partners) can be very effective. To be effective these schemes require provision of training and ongoing support to the reading partners; and robust systems to enable partners and the class teacher to review progress.

Where an evidence based intervention is being implemented as outlined above, Brooks concludes that, if the catch-up programme meets the child's needs *'Good impact – sufficient to at least double the standard rate of progress – can be achieved, and it is reasonable to expect it' Brooks, 2013, p18).* Class teachers and SfL teachers have a role in collaboratively monitoring a learner's response to strategies and interventions and the gains being made over time. If a strategy or intervention is not giving the expected results the needs of the learner should be reconsidered and the strategy or intervention modified.

Further, there will be some pupils with persistent difficulties who may not respond well to intervention, even though it is appropriately selected and skilfully delivered. Their progress may be very limited or very slow. This group of pupils may benefit from intensive, one to one instruction. It is important to note that while failure to respond to intervention(s) may indicate dyslexia, the impact of social emotional difficulties or other barriers to learning should also be considered.

Factors that support a good response to Intervention

Multiple factors will influence a learner's responsiveness to well-structured interventions.

Professional literature recognises many *protective factors* which may support the successful acquisition of literacy skills. It is widely recognised that learners may be more likely to respond to effective teaching and to well-structured interventions when:

- they have had positive early experiences of exposure to print in various forms

- people in their life value reading; and home and school work effectively in partnership to support the pupil's progress

- they have a positive view of themselves as learners

- they practise reading

- they have strong phonological awareness

- they have good articulation

- they recognise letters, sounds and have good rapid automatic naming (RAN)

- they have good short-term memory which is central in learning to read and spell

- they have good oral language skills (a prerequisite to reading comprehension)

- they have extensive vocabulary and good expressive syntax and grammar

- teachers ensure that teaching of phonology, vocabulary and print mutually reinforce one another. Work on phonological skills for reading should be embedded within a broad approach that involves graphic representation, reading for meaning, speaking and listening.

- they have supportive social networks

- all staff, parents and peers support and understand their difficulties.

9. Arrangements for pupils identified as dyslexic under previous policies within or external to Scottish Borders Council

When the method of identifying any condition or difficulty changes there may be some concern raised as to whether pupils previously identified as dyslexic will still be considered dyslexic under the new guidelines. This policy is very clear that there are no expectations that children previously identified as dyslexic should be re-assessed for the purpose of identification. However, all pupils with literacy difficulties or dyslexia, will be involved in ongoing assessment and monitoring to identify their

current needs and to review the effectiveness of the intervention they are receiving. Thus, if requested or it was felt necessary, it would be within current procedures to apply the new identification process to support or refute the previous identification of dyslexia.

Where schools are approached by parents, pupils or others with a privately commissioned report by an external agency indicating that a pupil has been identified as dyslexic, the school is under no obligation to adopt this view. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasise that the education authority is required legally to take account of such reports and advice as a part of the evidence gathering procedure. Such reports and advice should be added to the pupil's profile. Schools must also seek and take account of the views of parents and, where appropriate, of pupils themselves in relation to such reports and advice. However, any single stand-alone assessment does not on its own provide sufficient evidence for identification of dyslexia. Information gathered and views held by partner agencies and external services are an important part of understanding a pupil's needs and this policy encourages the consensual sharing of information.

10. Literacy difficulties, dyslexia and SQA arrangements

Where there is evidence of significantly improved performance, pupils undertaking assessments (internal or external) may receive some form of assessment arrangements (AA). It is important to emphasise that entitlement is based on evidence. Identification of dyslexia is not a necessary requirement for the provision of AA; conversely, on its own, identification of dyslexia is not sufficient evidence for the provision of AA.

AA should reflect as far as possible the young person's normal way of learning and producing work. Requirements for AA should be considered on a subject by subject basis.

Current and more detailed information can be found at this link:
http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/14976.html

11. Post-school transition and dyslexia

If a pupil has been identified as dyslexic then they may be eligible for support in higher education.

Pupils with a disability entering higher education are eligible for extra support through the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA). Students with dyslexia may qualify for this support. Detailed information about DSA can be found on the Student Awards

Agency for Scotland website: http://www.saas.gov.uk . Before leaving secondary school any young person can request a report or statement from the school confirming that they have dyslexia and detailing support needs and history of any support given. This may be provided to prospective employers or education institutions. Further post school transition information is available on the Addressing Dyslexia toolkit, Dyslexia Scotland and Dyslexia Unwrapped.

http://addressingdyslexia.org/post-school

https://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk/our-leaflets - Employment and the Workplace

https://unwrapped.dyslexiascotland.org.uk/info-and-support/articles?field_age_group_tid=14

12. Operational Guidance

Operational Guidance is key to supporting classroom practitioners and senior management identify and address literacy difficulties including dyslexia. A comprehensive toolkit has been developed to support the implementation of this policy in schools. This guidance consists of the following:

- Early Level Checklist

- First Level Checklist

- Second Level Checklist

- Third, Fourth and Senior Level Checklist

- Assessment tools used in Scottish Borders Council

- Effective interventions used to support literacy difficulties/dyslexia in SBC

- Using ICT to support pupils with literacy difficulties/dyslexia

- Strategies to support pupils with literacy difficulties/

- dyslexia in the mainstream classroom

- Assessment and Intervention Profile; Suggestions for

- wording feedback to stakeholders

- Identification of dyslexia; conceptual issues

- Useful Links

13. Acknowledgements

This policy update has been developed by a Scottish Borders Council Dyslexia working group. The members of this working group would particularly like to acknowledge the following resources as having made a particular contribution to the present policy:

- The national dyslexia toolkit. http://www.addressingdyslexia.org/

- What works for children and young people with literacy difficulties? The effectiveness of intervention schemes, Fourth Edition. Greg Brooks (2013) http://www.interventionsforliteracy.org.uk/widgets_GregBrooks/What_works_for_children_fourth_ed.pdf

- British Dyslexia Association dyslexia friendly schools resource pack http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/files/dfs_pack_English.pdf

- HMIe report, 2008: Education for learners with dyslexia http://www.addressingdyslexia.org/sites/default/files/resources/Making%20Sense%20Dyslexia%20Report%202014.pdf

Education Scotland 2014: Making Sense: Education for Children and Young People with Dyslexia in Scotland – National Improvement Hub – Making Sense Report In addition the working group would like to acknowledge the particular value to the present work of the policy documentation generated by Stirling Council published on the web as Stirling Council Education: Policy and procedures for assessing, identifying and meeting the needs of children and young people with dyslexia.

In addition the Local Authority is grateful for guidance and advice provided by Fran Rinaldi, Development Officer – Dyslexia and Inclusive Practice, Education Scotland.