



OUR LADY'S ABINGDON (OLA) DYSLEXIA POLICY

This policy, which applies to the whole school, is publicly available on the OLA website and upon request a copy (which can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required) may be obtained from the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Document Details

Information Sharing Category	School Domain
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Responsible Area	Leadership Team

We comply with the Government guidance and regulations, currently in force, regarding COVID.

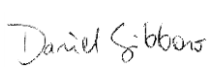

Availability: All who work, volunteer or supply services to our school have an equal responsibility to understand and implement this policy and its procedures both within and outside of normal school hours, including activities away from school.

Monitoring and review:

- This document will be subject to continuous monitoring, refinement and audit by the Head
- This policy was last reviewed agreed by the Governing Board in September 2022 and will next be reviewed no later than September 2023 or earlier if significant changes to the systems and arrangements take place, or if legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.

Reviewed: September 2022

Next Review: September 2023

Head	Deputy Head
Mr Daniel Gibbons	Dr Beth Reynaert
Signed: 	Signed: 

1. Rationale and aims

Dyslexia is a neurological difference and can have a significant impact during education, in the workplace and in everyday life. As each person is unique, so is everyone's experience of dyslexia. It can range from mild to severe, and it can co-occur with other learning difficulties. It usually runs in families and is a life-long condition. Dyslexia is a learning difficulty which primarily affects reading and writing skills. However, it does not only affect these skills. Dyslexia is actually about information processing. Dyslexic people may have difficulty processing and remembering information they see and hear, which can affect learning and the acquisition of literacy skills. Dyslexia can also impact on other areas such as organisational skills.

OLA fully subscribes to the guiding philosophy of the Dyslexia Institute, who state that: *'If a pupil can't learn the way we teach, then we must teach in the way that he or she can learn.'* OLA's approach to the identification, teaching and learning of dyslexic pupils is aimed at ensuring that all dyslexic pupils meet their potential.

It is important to remember that there are positives to thinking differently. Many dyslexic people show strengths in areas such as reasoning and in visual and creative fields. Some of the thinking skills people with dyslexia tend to be especially strong in include complex problem-solving, empathy, communication and critical thinking. These are becoming increasingly valued in workplaces as AI and machine-learning mean that more routine tasks are automated

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2. Definitions

Special Educational Needs and Disability

A child or young person has SEND if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. *A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she:*

- *has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or*
- *has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions.*

(SEND Code of Practice 2015)

The term 'Specific Learning Difficulty' (SpLD) is a term that refers to a difference or difficulty with particular aspects of learning. The most common SpLDs are dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder, dyscalculia and dysgraphia. An individual may have one of these independently or they can co-exist as part of a wider profile. Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) exist on a continuum from mild to moderate through to severe. There are common patterns of behaviour and ability, but there will be a range of different patterns of effects for each individual. Everyone has a cognitive profile. A simple way to define these cognitive skills is to describe them as the underlying brain skills that make it possible for us to think, remember and learn. These are the skills that allows us to process the huge influx of information we receive each and every day at work, at school and in life. We all have relative strengths and weaknesses in our cognitive profiles but overall most of our skills will fall in the normal range.

Where a person has difficulty with the majority of these skills which is reflected in his/her learning and day-to-day living skills he/she is deemed to have a severe learning disability. However, when an individual has difficulties or weaknesses in just one or two areas in contrast to average or good cognitive skills this is called a Specific Learning Difficulty. It is very important to note that SpLDs are independent of intellectual ability, socio-economic or language background. Having a SpLD does not predict academic potential. However, the path to achievement may be harder and may require far greater (usually unseen) effort and a distinct set of skills. The challenge and opportunity in an educational context – for teacher and student - is to be aware of the specific effects of these differences and to explore a variety of methods and techniques to facilitate optimal learning. It is crucial to remember that a person with a SpLD may also have many strengths which can sometimes outweigh the weaknesses!

The BDA has adopted the Rose (2009) definition of dyslexia:

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.

In addition to these characteristics:

The British Dyslexia Association (BDA) acknowledges the visual and auditory processing difficulties that some individuals with dyslexia can experience, and points out that dyslexic readers can show a combination of abilities and difficulties that affect the learning process. Some also have strengths in other areas, such as design, problem solving, creative skills, interactive skills and oral skills.

3. Neurodiversity and Co-occurring difficulties

Neurodiversity is a relatively new term. It helps to promote the view that neurological differences are to be recognised and respected as any other human variation. It is used to counter negative social connotations that currently exist and to make it easier for people of all neurotypes to contribute to the world as they are, rather than attempting to think or appear more 'typically'. Neurodiversity encompasses all specific learning difficulties (SpLD), many of which co-occur or overlap.

4. Signs of dyslexia

There is a misconception that dyslexia just affects the ability to read and write. If this were true, it would be much easier to identify. In fact, dyslexia can have an effect on areas such as coordination, organisation and memory. Each person with dyslexia

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will experience the condition in a way that is unique to them and as such, each will have their own set of abilities and difficulties.

However, if you know what to look for, there common signs that can help you to identify whether the difficulties being experienced could be indicative of dyslexia and would suggest that further investigation could be beneficial. At OLA, we acknowledge that whilst problems with reading and spelling are easy to detect, it is essential to remember that dyslexic learners will usually have deficits in specific cognitive areas underlying difficulties that affect the way they learn, such as weaknesses with:

- Short-term memory
- Long-term memory
- Processing and retrieving words and information
- Phonological awareness
- Sequencing or rote learning
- Auditory memory
- Spatial-awareness
- Direction – left and right

As no two dyslexic learners will have the same profile of difficulties it is important to assess each pupil to truly understand how they learn. And of course, each dyslexic learner will also have a range of unique strengths that can be built on. At OLA, we recognise a pupil's individual strengths and areas for development and we develop strategies to ensure we are addressing 'hidden' difficulties as well as reading and spelling difficulties.

a) Signs of dyslexia (Primary school age)

If a child appears to be struggling with spelling, reading, writing or numeracy, how do you know whether these difficulties are potential indications of dyslexia? There are some obvious signs such as a 'spiky' profile which means that a child has areas of strong ability alongside areas of weakness. You may also have other family members with similar weaknesses. Remember that not all dyslexic children will display the same weaknesses and abilities.

General signs to look for are:

- Speed of processing: slow spoken and/or written language
- Poor concentration
- Difficulty following instructions
- Forgetting words

Written work

- Poor standard of written work compared with oral ability
- Produces messy work with many crossings out and words tried several times, e.g. wippe, wype, wiep, wipe
- Confused by letters which look similar, particularly b/d, p/g, p/q, n/u, m/w
- Poor handwriting with many 'reversals' and badly formed letters
- Spells a word several different ways in one piece of writing
- Makes anagrams of words, e.g. tired for tried, bread for beard
- Produces badly set-out written work, doesn't stay close to the margin
- Poor pencil grip
- Produces phonetic and bizarre spelling: not age/ability appropriate
- Uses unusual sequencing of letters or words
- Struggles to spell commonly used words such as any, of, them

Reading

- Slow reading progress
- Finds it difficult to blend letters together
- Has difficulty in establishing syllable division or knowing the beginnings and endings of words

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- Unusual pronunciation of words
- No expression in reading, and poor comprehension
- Hesitant and laboured reading, especially when reading aloud
- Misses out words when reading, or adds extra words
- Fails to recognise familiar words
- Loses the point of a story being read or written
- Has difficulty in picking out the most important points from a passage
- Avoids reading

Numeracy

- Confusion with place value e.g. units, tens, hundreds
- Confused by symbols such as + and x signs
- Difficulty remembering anything in a sequential order, e.g. tables, days of the week, the alphabet
- Difficulty following multi-step maths problems
- Difficulty reading and/or interpreting worded maths problems

Time

- Has difficulty learning to tell the time
- Poor time keeping
- Poor personal organisation
- Difficulty remembering what day of the week it is, their birth date, seasons of the year, months of the year
- Difficulty with concepts – yesterday, today, tomorrow

Skills

- Poor motor skills, leading to weaknesses in speed, control and accuracy of the pencil
- Memory difficulties e.g. for daily routines, self-organisation, rote learning
- Confused by the difference between left and right, up and down, east and west
- Indeterminate hand preference
- Performs unevenly from day to day

Behaviour

- Uses work avoidance tactics, such as sharpening pencils and looking for books
- Seems 'dreamy', does not seem to listen
- Easily distracted
- Is the class clown or is disruptive or withdrawn
- Is excessively tired due to amount of concentration and effort required

A cluster of these indicators alongside areas of ability may suggest dyslexia and further investigation may be required.

b) Signs of dyslexia (Secondary school age)

Dyslexia is a combination of abilities as well as difficulties. It is the disparity between them that is often the give-away clue. A dyslexic learner, despite certain areas of difficulty, may be orally very able and knowledgeable, creative, artistic, or sporting. Alongside these abilities will be a cluster of difficulties - these will be different for every person. Dyslexia can only be diagnosed through a Diagnostic Assessment. However, there are indicators which can help you to identify a young person who may be dyslexic.

Written work

- Has a poor standard of written work compared with oral ability
- Has poor handwriting with badly formed letters or has neat handwriting, but writes very slowly
- Produces badly set out or messy written work, with spellings crossed out several times
- Spells the same word differently in one piece of work
- Has difficulty with punctuation and/or grammar

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- Confuses upper and lower case letters
- Writes a great deal but 'loses the thread'
- Writes very little, but to the point
- Has difficulty taking notes in lessons
- Has difficulty with organisation of homework
- Finds tasks difficult to complete on time
- Appears to know more than they can commit to paper

Reading

- Is hesitant and laboured, especially when reading aloud
- Omits, repeats or adds extra words
- Reads at a reasonable rate, but has a low level of comprehension
- Fails to recognise familiar words
- Misses a line or repeats the same line twice
- Loses their place easily/uses a finger or marker to keep the place
- Has difficulty in pin-pointing the main idea in a passage
- Has difficulty using dictionaries, directories, encyclopaedias

Numeracy

- Has difficulty remembering tables and/or basic number sets
- Finds sequencing problematic
- Confuses signs such as x for +
- Can think at a high level in mathematics, but needs a calculator for simple calculations
- Misreads questions that include words
- Finds mental arithmetic at speed very difficult
- Finds memorising formulae difficult

Other areas

- Confuses direction - left/right
- Has difficulty in learning foreign languages
- Has indeterminate hand preference
- Has difficulty in finding the name for an object
- Has clear difficulties processing information at speed
- Misunderstands complicated questions
- Finds holding a list of instructions in memory difficult, although can perform all tasks when told individually

Behaviour

- Is disorganised or forgetful e.g. over sports equipment, lessons, homework, appointments
- Is immature and/or clumsy
- Has difficulty relating to others; is unable to 'read' body language
- Is often in the wrong place at the wrong time
- Is excessively tired, due to the amount of concentration and effort required

A cluster of these indicators alongside areas of ability may point to possible dyslexia and further investigation is recommended.

5. Next steps and routes to identification:

If a teacher is concerned that a learner may have dyslexia or have any other SpLD, then they should consult the OLA's SENDCo to discuss a plan of action. The first symptom noticed is usually a literacy difficulty. However, features of dyslexia also include memory and information processing skills and these will be considered when assessing for dyslexia.

Routes to identification:

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- **Checklists:** A simple list of questions that give indicators of dyslexia.
- **Screening tests:** Commercially available tests (paper based or online) that can be administered by a non-specialist, although the tester should be trained and confident to interpret the results appropriately.
- **Qualified Specialist Teacher/Assessor Diagnostic Assessment:** The assessor should have a Level 7 Specialist qualification for diagnosing dyslexia (e.g. AMBDA). A battery of tests is conducted to assess intellectual capacity, cognitive development and levels of literacy attainment. A profile of strengths and weakness is produced in a report with recommendations.
- **Educational Psychologist Assessment:** The psychologist should be HCPC registered. They select appropriate tests, including closed tests only available to psychologists, to diagnosis any underlying difficulties and they produce a report with conclusions and recommendations.

It is important that appropriate support is put in place as soon as a need is identified, rather than waiting for a formal identification. The first response to a learning concern should be *high quality teaching* targeted at the pupil's areas of weakness. Where progress continues to be less than expected the class or subject teacher, working with the SENDCo or LSLSC, should assess whether the child has SEND. For some children, SEND can be identified at an early age. However, for other children and young people difficulties become evident only as they develop. All those who work with children and young people should be alert to emerging difficulties and respond early. In particular, parents know their children best and it is important that all professionals listen and understand when parents' express concerns about their child's development. They should also listen to and address any concerns raised by children and young people themselves

Under the SEND Code of Practice, if a teacher suspects that a child has special educational needs (SEND) then they must inform a child's parents and include them in discussions about what is the best support for their child. The school must also tell the parents of any special educational provision that is made for their child. Dyslexia can only be formally identified through a Diagnostic Assessment but this is not needed in order for the young person to receive support.

6. Teaching strategies:

Everyone has an individual learning style. Dyslexic learners can process information differently. Understanding how they learn best, and being flexible enough to adapt teaching approaches are vital factors in enabling dyslexic learners to learn effectively in the classroom. OLA employs the following teaching strategies supportive of dyslexic pupils:

- Use a structured and cumulative programme of work.
- Help pupils to become aware of their preferred learning styles.
- Set expectations high for students.
- When looking at pupil's work, try to understand the reason for mistakes and give them a chance to explain their difficulties.
- Ensure that written materials are accessible.
- Be slow, quiet and deliberate when giving instructions, allowing time for the meaning of the words to be absorbed and questions to be asked.
- Where possible, use multisensory methods of learning,
- Recognise that overlearning is the key to automaticity.
- Use visual prompts and mnemonics.
- Enable dyslexic pupils to show their interest, knowledge and skills, despite their difficulties with writing by using alternative methods of recording where appropriate.
- Give guidance about how to tackle tasks systematically – flow charts, grids, bullet points, paragraph starts, writing frames.
- Watch out for signs of tiredness and fatigue and provide movement breaks or sensory breaks as needed.
- Watch out for signs of falling confidence and self-esteem and find ways to promote and highlight a learner's skills.
- Present new words in small groups or in word families
- Develop handwriting skills. The letters "b and d", "f and t", "g, q and p" are confusing for some pupils. In cursive, writing the letter "b and d" require a huge difference in directionality. Developing cursive writing will benefit letter orientation as well as his letter formation.
- Use of ICT when appropriate.

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In addition, OLA's SENDCo offers weekly advice and support to staff on how to support SEND pupils, including dyslexics in the classroom.

7. Classroom:

At OLA, we recognise that the working environment can be 'make or break' for a dyslexic pupil. Already they may be having difficulties with listening, hearing, looking, sitting still, concentrating, writing and finding things they need. If their classroom environment works against them, no matter how hard they try, they may not succeed. Therefore, our classrooms are:

- Arranged so that during class lessons, the dyslexic learner can sit near the front
- Adapted so that wherever possible, dyslexic learners sit alongside well-motivated pupils or a 'study buddy' who they can ask to clarify instructions for them.
- Organised so that, when it is appropriate, there is little movement around the room and it as quiet as possible, as some dyslexic pupils find background noise and visual movement distracting.
- Equipped with clearly marked and neatly arranged resources so that they can be found easily – toolboxes.
- Teachers use coloured whiteboard pens and some are also available for pupils
- Learning prompts are clearly displayed, e.g. alphabet arcs, b/d/p/q, mnemonics, useful words and phrases.
- Partnership with parents, as the Code of Practice on the identification and assessment of Special Educational Needs clearly states: 'Professional help can seldom be wholly effective unless it builds upon parents' capacity to be involved'
- We will allay parents' fears for their pupil's education by understanding their concerns and pursuing strategies to help.
- Concerns identified by the school will be discussed with the parents at the outset.

8. Homework

- Ensure homework set is clearly explained and accessible
- Limit the amount of homework for example asking pupil to stop after 20 minutes, or asking them to do the odd numbered questions to reduce the amount covered
- Allowing work to be typed or use the speech to text feature, parents may also scribe

9. Tests and Exams

- Identify and use exam access arrangements

On entry if pupils are dyslexic then we will use Quality First Teaching (Wave 1) and if appropriate offer extra tuition (Wave 2 or 3). If we suspect dyslexia the SENDCo will screen them, make recommendations to the class teacher and recommendations for tuition if appropriate. Parents will be made aware and be advised to have their child assessed if appropriate.