

# The Blake C.E. (A) Primary School

## Dyslexia Policy

### Introduction

This policy has been developed specifically for The Blake C.E. (A) Primary School using guidelines from the Oxfordshire Dyslexia Policy, 2006. It is meant as an overview of the procedures that The Blake C.E. (A) Primary School follows if there is concern raised by children, teaching assistants, class teachers, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and/or parents regarding a child's difficulty in accessing the written curriculum. For more in depth information, please refer to the county policy found at <http://intranet.oxfordshire.gov.uk>

### Principles

The Blake School recognises that dyslexic difficulties represent a barrier to learning and achievement across the curriculum.

The school has adopted the British Psychological Society Report (BPS, 1999) working definition of dyslexia. This states that

*'Dyslexia is evident when accurate or fluent word reading and/or spelling develops very incompletely or with great difficulty. This focuses on literacy learning at the word level and implies that the problem is severe and persistent despite appropriate learning opportunities. It provides the basis for a staged process of assessment through teaching.'*

The school recognises that some children who experience dyslexic-type tendencies may also present with other difficulties associated with dyslexia or which occur as a consequence of dyslexia

Dyslexic difficulties may co-exist with other barriers to learning and the existence of other difficulties should not preclude assessment for dyslexia or vice versa. This is particularly relevant for pupils presenting behavioural or emotional difficulties, children in public care, travellers or those who have changed school frequently.

The Blake School recognises the need for culture-fair assessment, which requires that learning difficulties of a dyslexic nature are identified irrespective of language, culture, socio-economic status, race and gender.

## **Aims**

- To meet the diversity of children's literacy learning needs through appropriate provision in our school.
- To promote partnership with parents and voluntary organisations such as the Parenting Partnership Programme and Oxfordshire Dyslexia Association.
- To provide a range of high quality support for dyslexic pupils by:
  - Raising awareness of dyslexia throughout the school
  - Ensuring that parental concerns are acknowledged and addressed
  - Improving assessment and intervention practice so that children's learning differences are noticed and teaching is adjusted as early as possible
  - Increasing training opportunities for teachers, teaching assistants and governors.

## **What happens at The Blake School?**

### **Early Years Unit and Year 1**

Early identification of literacy difficulties is vital. Teachers and teaching assistants in our Early Years Unit and Year 1 use the *Letters and Sounds* Programme which helps them to notice learning differences when the children are still very young. Regular assessment within the *Letters and Sounds* Programme helps to identify any child who may need additional support when reading and spelling. Teachers will then adjust their teaching accordingly to suit the child's needs. Phonics sessions are used to support small groups of children who are experiencing literacy difficulties for children in Year 1. These children very often do not need further support higher up the school.

### **Years 2 - 6**

All year groups follow the New Literacy Framework. Year 2 continues to use the *Letters and Sounds* Programme. The Blake School has a focused and structured assessment programme which is followed throughout the school. Class teachers assess children's reading in Years 2 - 6 bi-annually using the NFER test, which gives a standardised reading age. Spelling is also assessed bi-annually using the Vernon test. Both of these assessments will be viewed alongside a child's specific progress in reading, spelling and writing.

When teachers are concerned that a child is not progressing as expected, they will meet with the SENCo to discuss the need for further, more in depth assessment of the child using either the *Letters and Sounds* assessment tools or the *Literacy Assessment Pack* (LAP Pack).

The LAP Pack is used for children in the Junior department as it highlights very specific areas of literacy difficulty.

Assessments using one or more of *Letters and Sounds* and Dyslexia Screener LAP Pack will be carried out either by the class teacher or SENCo or by a trained teaching assistant. The assessments identify precisely where the child is experiencing difficulties. Depending upon the results, it is at this stage, that the child may also be placed on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Register for 'Specific Learning Difficulties' and an Individual Education Plan (IEP) will be developed for them which will provide time-specific targets for the children to work towards. An intervention programme will be recommended by the SENCo and put into place by the class teacher. After the intervention programme has taken place, there will be a further assessment to see where progress has been made.

Where a child experiences persistent difficulties, the SENCo will seek advice from Outside Agencies e.g. Educational Psychologists. This advice will be sought only after gaining permission from the child's parents.

### Identifying barriers to learning

The BPS report recommends a staged process of assessment through teaching over time linked into the Code of Practice and the Primary Strategy. From the working definition it follows that assessment of dyslexia should include three strands of evidence and show that

- fluent and accurate word reading and/or spelling has been learnt/is being learnt very incompletely
- appropriate learning opportunities have been provided
- progress has been made only as a result of much additional effort/instruction and difficulties are, nevertheless, persistent

A range of dyslexia screening programmes exists. The SENCo or trained teaching assistant may use the *Dyslexia Screener* programme with children from the age of Year 2. While in some cases it may provide useful information about the pupil's overall ability, it cannot be used exclusively to identify dyslexic difficulties and is thus used more to reflect a child's strengths and/or weaknesses in their literacy ability. It must also be seen only as a 'snapshot' into how the child performs on a particular day.

At The Blake School, teachers and teaching assistants recognise that pupils of **all abilities** may experience learning difficulties of a dyslexic nature. However there are additional needs that might arise if a pupil's understanding of curriculum content is superior to his/her ability to access course materials because of weak literacy skills. Class teachers provide a curriculum content that is appropriate to the pupil's levels of understanding and interest and do not teach children in low ability groups on the basis of their literacy skills alone.

The Blake School is aware that the assessment of children experiencing dyslexic-type tendencies should not be based entirely on their phonological awareness. Whilst there is general agreement among researchers and practitioners that phonological skills have a central role in the development of reading and spelling, phonological difficulties cannot be used as the defining feature of dyslexia as a large minority of dyslexic pupils will have intact phonological skills.

While an assessment of word level skills is central to an assessment of dyslexic difficulties, teachers at The Blake School are aware that it is essential to assess other factors that could affect learning outcomes and that are often associated with dyslexia, such as organisational ability, motor difficulties, sequencing and retention. The development of emotional and behavioural difficulties can often occur as a consequence of dyslexic difficulties. The SENCo will be involved in this type of assessment and will refer to Outside Agencies if necessary. If children are showing signs of dyspraxia, the class teacher will discuss this with the child's parents and the SENCo and may suggest a GP referral. The Movement Assessment Battery for Children checklist may be completed at this time by the class teacher.

### **Assessing children with EAL and children from ethnic and cultural minorities**

When assessing children with English as an additional language and children from ethnic and cultural minorities, including travellers and refugees, care is taken to get information from parents, teachers, teaching assistants and past records. Further advice on working with ethnic and cultural minorities is sought from the SEN Handbook, the Travellers Advisory Service and from the Ethnic Minority Achievement Team when necessary.

### **Adjusting teaching**

The Blake School regards dyslexia as primarily a mainstream issue. For dyslexic pupils, teaching is adjusted throughout the pupil's time at the school. However, the expression of the difficulties may change as the pupil matures and different adjustments will need to be made.

All pupils are entitled to have access to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, which is differentiated by presentation, resources, pace, level and outcome to meet their individual needs. Pupils with dyslexic difficulties are provided with differentiated teaching materials and tasks that make allowances for their particular learning style.

At The Blake School, the primary responsibility for teaching pupils with special educational needs rests with the class teacher, with advice from the SENCo. For dyslexic difficulties, two strands of intervention may be necessary: firstly, to provide structured systematic teaching programmes for reading, writing and spelling skills; secondly, to facilitate curriculum access at a level appropriate to the pupil's general ability levels.

Some pupils will require special arrangements for QCA Statutory Assessment at the end of Key Stage 2. It is the responsibility of the SENCo to be alert to both pupils' needs for their special arrangement and to the appropriate guidance from QCA and the Examination Boards.

All teachers at The Blake School should feel confident in working with pupils with literacy difficulties, including dyslexia. Regular training is offered to ensure that this happens. The Blake School recognises that identifying children with dyslexic-type tendencies and implementing programmes to address their difficulties is paramount. The school has a teaching assistant specifically trained to work with children with dyslexic-type tendencies. This teaching assistant assesses and works with children throughout the school on a regular basis.

The Blake School recognises that good progress in literacy skills for dyslexic pupils is usually linked to structured, systematic teaching programmes, often involving a multisensory approach. However, a programme that is effective for one pupil may not be so for another. Any intervention programme is monitored and teaching adjusted as necessary to meet the continuing needs of the pupil.

### **Outside Agencies**

The Blake School is aware that across the county a range of support services is available, aimed at promoting literacy skills. The Primary National Strategy team within the Educational Effectiveness Service oversees the county initiatives. The Educational Psychology Service visits all Oxfordshire schools on request. Consultants for Inclusion and SNASTs also visit on request. The Dyslexia Support Service provides short term intensive help for a small number of children who have exceptionally severe difficulties. The remit of each group is different and only the Dyslexia Support Service has a particular brief to work with dyslexic pupils.

It is the responsibility of the SENCO at The Blake School to contact these different groups. The SENCo liaises closely with our literacy co-ordinator to ensure that all literacy advice received by the school is adapted for pupils with special educational needs, including those with dyslexic difficulties.

### **Provision and resources**

Alongside the systematic teaching that forms part of the national literacy strategy some pupils may benefit from additional programmes to supplement the strategies included in the literacy hour.

Following advice from the Educational Psychologist, short but frequent teaching sessions are often used for children with dyslexic-type tendencies. Our teaching assistants use programmes such as *Toe by Toe* and *Accelerated/Accelerwrite*, which take from 5 - 20 minutes four/five times a week. These are likely to be more effective than long and infrequent

sessions. *Toe by Toe* is particularly useful in the fact that it can easily be followed up from home.

At The Blake School, pupils on the SEN Register at **School Action** will be supported from within the schools' own resources with frequent regular intervention as part of the IEP, together with regular monitoring and assessment and the involvement of the SENCo. Pupils at **School Action Plus** on the SEN register should receive targeted support as above. Pupils with **statements** may receive additional LEA funded support at a level dependent on their needs. Short-term help for a small number of maybe statemented pupils with exceptionally severe needs is available from the Dyslexia Support Service.

### **Promoting pupil participation**

At The Blake School, pupils are regarded as active participants in the learning process. They take an active role in their own learning by helping to set learning targets with the teacher and/or SENCo, identifying helpful and less helpful support strategies, and receiving prompt feedback on their progress. The children will be involved in monitoring their own targets on their IEP and also in giving feedback on the process. Some older pupils will also be included in the review meetings with parents, depending upon the circumstances.

### **Monitoring arrangements**

Monitoring procedures for pupils with dyslexic difficulties, as with all pupils with special educational needs, occurs at three levels:

- monitoring pupils' progress
- monitoring the effectiveness of the interventions
- monitoring curriculum access and the effectiveness of whole school approaches

All pupils with SEN (including pupils with dyslexic difficulties) at School Action or above on the Code of Practice are monitored via their Individual Education Plan (IEP) and its regular termly reviews, following guidelines laid down in the Code of Practice. Additionally, pupils with a statement have the benefit of a statutory annual review.

These procedures also contribute to The Blake School's evaluation of planning for, and implementation of, support programmes for dyslexic pupils.

The Blake Schools' response to special educational needs is monitored via the county moderation process and the self-evaluation procedures outlined in the LEA booklet *The Self-evaluation of Educational Inclusion: From Audit to Action*.

## **Intervention Programmes at The Blake School**

Support for pupils with dyslexia should be consistent with the curriculum. Effective literacy provision at primary level has been described in terms of three 'waves' of intervention (DfES 2003).

- **Wave 1**

The effective inclusion of all children in a daily and high quality literacy hour

- **Wave 2**

Additional small-group intervention for children who can be expected to catch up with their peers as a result of the intervention

- **Wave 3**

Specific targeted approaches for children identified as requiring SEN support (on School Action, School Action Plus or with a Statement of special educational needs)

### **1. Wave 1 support**

Wave 1 whole class support is the entitlement of every pupil in our school. This includes the delivery of a 'quality literacy hour' with effective planning and management. To maximise the effectiveness, our school needs to be 'dyslexia friendly' creating a positive literacy environment. Class teachers will receive training in creating a 'dyslexia-friendly classroom'. At this level teachers carry out regular assessments of progress in literacy through the curriculum, including National Curriculum Assessments. There is often 'in class' support from a teaching assistant for some literacy activities on a regular basis. The Blake School will also enlist the support of parents through setting homework.

### **2. Wave 2 support**

For some children who are 'at risk' of underachievement, the DfES has provided a range of structured small group interventions, designed to boost achievement in literacy. At The Blake School these include Phonic Support and Reading Recovery in Year 1 and 2, *Catch-Up programme* in Years 3 and 4. Small group intervention based on pupils' needs in Year 5 and Year 6. Children identified for Wave 2 support do not generally have special educational needs although their attainments in reading and writing are below average. It is expected that with support many of these pupils will 'catch up' with their peers.

### **3. Wave 3 support**

The DfES guidance on Wave 3 support includes a list of interventions which are backed by research evidence (DfES 2003). Children receiving Wave 3 support at The Blake School will receive focused teaching assistant support in short, frequent bursts. A 15-20 minute package based on *Precision Teaching* has been developed to work specifically on areas of difficulty for each child. This programme will involve targeting phonics and spellings that the child has difficulty in, using handwriting practice of letter strings as well as other multisensory

approaches to reinforce the teaching. It might include the use of *Word Probe* or computer programmes such as *Wordshark*. The children will be assessed on a regular basis as to the impact of this teaching and this will inform their next IEP.

- **For those children on School Action**

Support at this level would include additional differentiated learning experiences, including specific interventions. ICT and other specialised resources might be used to support children at School Action. Teachers at The Blake School are expected to provide differentiated homework and to enlist the support of parents in reinforcing IEP activities. Support for literacy within the classroom and some structured small group work would be provided on a regular basis.

- **For those children on School Action Plus**

Children at School Action Plus would regularly receive support both in a small group and/or individually. Structured programmes selected on the basis of evidence of effectiveness are followed. Guidance is given to parents at Parents' Meetings and at the termly Reviews with the SENCo.

- **For those children with Statements of SEN**

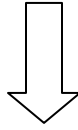
Children with statements of special educational needs would have already have had a detailed assessment of areas of need and appropriate provision would be specified. This would include additional support from a teaching assistant and advice/support from a specialist teacher, in addition to normal provision at School Action Plus. Specific resources might be listed on the statement. The progress of pupils with a statement will be closely monitored by the SENCo and the Annual Review will determine objectives for the next 12 months.

The Blake School considers the partnership between parents/carers and school of the utmost importance. The SEN display board outside the assembly hall contains advice and information for parents/carers on how to support their child's reading and writing at home, as well as providing information leaflets on the support parents can access from organisations such as Parenting Partnership Programme. Class teachers and the SENCo are happy to discuss your child's needs on an informal basis and this will also happen more formally at Parents' Meetings and IEP Reviews.

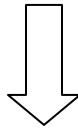


## Support for children with Dyslexic-type tendencies

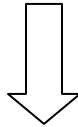
Initial concern raised by class teacher / parent.



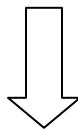
Assessment using Letters and Sounds programme or Lapack (Literacy Assessment Pack).



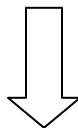
Strategies put in place to target specific areas of difficulty identified by assessment. This may be in the form of support in a small group or 1:1 work with a teaching assistant.



Evaluation of Intervention programme. If successful, further intervention support may not be necessary. If little or no progress has been made, class teacher to meet with to meet with parents.



Class teacher meeting with SENCo. An IEP will be drawn up with targets for the child to achieve. Intervention programmes will be advised. Review meetings with parents to occur X 3 per year to monitor progress and set new targets as necessary.



Further advice may be sought from outside agencies such as SALT (Speech and Language Team) who may undertake an assessment of the child with suggested activities for the child to do at school and at home. Reports from the outside agencies will be sent to parents/class teacher and SENCo. Parents' permission will always be obtained before doing so. Targets will be reviewed and new ones set at meetings with parents and the class teacher and/or SENCo X 3 per year. Children will always be involved in the monitoring process.

Adapted from the Oxfordshire Dyslexia Policy, 2006 by Victoria Stoneham, The Blake C.E. (A) Primary School Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo), June 2011.

An Easy Read version of this Policy is available from the School Office and also from the 'Information for Families' noticeboard in the school corridor.