

Dyslexia – The Notts Approach

1. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: PARENTS/CARERS

Q: Do I need to get a specialist teacher or educational psychologist involved in order to have my child's dyslexia recognised?

A: No. Formal dyslexia assessments can only be completed by a specialist teacher with an appropriate qualification or an educational psychologist. However, with the right training and tools, staff in schools are able to identify literacy difficulties, including dyslexia and put support in place. They can use a range of screening tools, assessments and other relevant information to identify strengths and areas of weakness. Where schools feel they need further training to do this, or where pupils' needs are particularly complex or exceptional, advice may be sought from SFSS. A formal assessment of dyslexia is not needed to access any support in school, including access arrangements.

Q: Do the school have to accept the findings of a private dyslexia assessment?

A: School should read the report and it would be good practice to meet with you to discuss its findings. School should listen to your concerns and should share with you any support which is already in place, especially if it is different from the recommendations contained in the report. School should be able to explain why a particular type of support has been selected and give evidence of its impact. Remember that the report will provide a snapshot of a learner, whereas school will have information gathered over time. The best outcomes will be seen when school and home are able to work together.

Q: Does my child need an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP)?

A: No. An EHC plan is a legal document which details the support a child or young person should receive in relation to their education and healthcare. This plan is written by your Local Authority and can be given to schools and other professionals to explain the support your child requires. An EHC plan is not necessary for your child's needs to be identified and supported in school.

My child has been identified as dyslexic. What support should they be receiving? Should it be delivered by a specialist dyslexia teacher?

Children with dyslexia will experience persistent difficulties with literacy and will require targeted provision to meet their needs.

They will need high quality teaching in a dyslexia friendly classroom.

Often, they will need some form of intervention as well as a dyslexia friendly environment to learn in. The best interventions are evidence-based and should be carefully selected based on a detailed understanding of a learner's strengths and areas of weakness.

Interventions can be carried out by teachers or teaching assistants, providing they have the relevant training. Consideration should also be given to support a learner's self-esteem, and learners should be helped to understand their own areas of strength and difficulties so they can acquire self-help strategies too.

Q: What can I do if I'm unhappy with the support school is providing?

A: You should request a meeting with school, where you will be able to explain your concerns and hear school's views. Your school's complaints procedure will identify a relevant person to meet with.

Q: What support will my child get during exams?

A: During exams and assessments, arrangements can be made to support your child, depending on their needs and according to a set of criteria. This support might be a reader, a scribe or extra time. School will need to provide evidence of a learner's needs and show that the proposed support is part of their normal practice. The evidence does not need to be a formal dyslexia assessment.

Q: How can I support my child at home?

A: Understand that your child may be working significantly harder than their peers and they may be exhausted and frustrated at the end of a school day. Break homework into manageable chunks and allow your child time to relax at home. Foster their interests and celebrate their strengths. Praise their successes and help them stay organised. Maintain a positive, open dialogue with school in order to achieve the best outcomes

8. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: SCHOOLS

Q: What steps should we take if we suspect a learner is dyslexic?

A: Discuss your concerns with their parents/carers. Begin the process of gathering information about their barriers to learning and their strengths, following the guidance in this document. Make sure that there is dyslexia friendly provision in the classroom and that appropriate evidence-based intervention is in place if necessary. Consider supporting self-esteem and also teach metacognitive strategies that will help the pupil to develop confidence and independence.

Q: What should I say to a parent/carer who has an independent assessment which concludes their child is dyslexic?

A: You should read the report and invite parents/carers into school to discuss it. The report may contain information which is new to you and may contribute to your overall understanding of a learner's strengths and areas of weakness. If the report makes recommendations about support and interventions, you should discuss these with parents/carers. You should explain what you are already doing to support their child and if you do not agree with the recommendations, you should explain your reasoning and provide evidence. You may need to discuss which interventions are manageable within the given resources. You should be able to demonstrate that you are aware of their child's needs and that appropriate support is available.

Q: Do I need a specific qualification to identify dyslexia?

A: No. Using the information gathering process described in this guidance, and a clear definition of your understanding of dyslexia, you will have the skills needed to identify dyslexic learners. You should be clear that this is not a formal identification. You may decide to use the term “dyslexic traits” or “tendencies” to communicate this to parents/carers. You should be able to demonstrate to parents/carers that a formal identification of dyslexia is not necessary in order for you to meet their child’s needs.

Q: Should all learners with dyslexia be on SEN Support?

A: Not necessarily, this will depend on their level of need. However, you should keep a record of who has been identified as having dyslexic traits. It would be good practice to keep a separate register, including learners’ provision, so you can track progress and to support transition between classes and schools.