

<i>item:</i>	10
<i>report:</i>	CYP25/07

## **THE EDUCATION OF PUPILS WITH DYSLEXIA**

### **By Hugh Fraser**

#### **Summary**

This report, which has been approved by the Education, Culture & Sport Committee, sets out a policy statement on “The Education of Pupils with Specific Learning Difficulties/ Dyslexia” and seeks endorsement of this policy. This policy contributes to the Council’s Programme for Administration and will promote improved attainment in literacy and numeracy and implementation of Getting It Right for Every Child.

#### **Introduction**

- 1.1 Education and Disability legislation require the Council to assess and make appropriate educational provision for all pupils who have Additional Support Needs. In order to support the development and maintenance of educational provision of a high standard there is a continuing programme of work which includes developing policies, procedures and practice guidance and ensuring a range of appropriate training opportunities for ECS staff.
- 1.2 Previous work has included the Support for Learners Policy Framework, and specific guidance in relation to Individualised Education Planning, the Education of Pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders, The Education of Looked After Children, and Developmental Coordination Disorders. These documents and others can be accessed on the Council’s Support for Learners website: <http://www.highlandschools-virtualib.org.uk/sfl>
- 1.3 The main content of policy document The Education of Pupils with Specific Learning Difficulties/Dyslexia, is attached (and appendices are accessible on the website).

#### **2. Specific Learning Difficulties/Dyslexia**

- 2.1 The terms ‘Specific Learning Difficulties’ and ‘Dyslexia’ have closely related meanings. ‘Dyslexia’ is widely used in the community when talking about individuals who have a special difficulty in learning to read, write or spell even though they do not have other more general learning difficulties, and is also used internationally in academic literature. ‘Specific Learning Difficulties’ is often used by educationalists

as it is felt to give a clearer and more helpful focus on planning the practical help that a pupil requires. Various types of specific learning difficulty have been identified including in relation to literacy skills, numeracy, memory and language.

- 2.2 Different authors suggest that between 2% and 10 % of the population can be categorised as dyslexic. While the level of incidence suggested is dependent on the details of the definition used and on the research methodology it is clear that teachers should regularly expect to encounter pupils who have particular difficulties in acquiring literacy skills.

### **3. Some Key Elements in the Policy**

- 3.1 Research and experience have shown that some pre-school children show reliable signs that they may find learning to read, write or spell difficult in the future. It is therefore worthwhile to undertake early screening in order to identify children who show these signs in order to give them early help to prevent or minimise possible future difficulties.
- 3.2 Although a few children have very severe specific dyslexic difficulties and require regular and individualised help the majority of pupils with literacy skills require only modest levels of support, for example some extra time to complete work, lists of key spellings etc. This support is part of general good practice in teaching. The majority of pupils with dyslexia will be supported by their class teacher in the primary school and by subject specialist teachers in the secondary school.
- 3.3 Where a pupil has longer term and more severe difficulties with acquiring and using literacy skills a staged approach to identification and planning has been developed. This approach brings in increasingly specialist staff if required and can lead to the preparation of an Individualised Education Plan and to consideration of whether a Coordinated Support Plan is required. These planning processes are both within the new 'Getting it Right' framework.
- 3.4 The policy emphasises the importance of involving parents/carers at all stages in planning for and meeting the needs of pupils who require additional support.
- 3.5 The policy also emphasises that children learn most effectively when they are involved in planning and monitoring their own learning, and that it is essential that individualised support will only be effective if it is considered by the pupil.

### **4. Resource Implications**

- 4.1 There are no resource implications arising from these proposals.

## **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note this report and to endorse the policy “The Education of Pupils with Specific Learning Difficulties/Dyslexia”.

### **Hugh Fraser**

Director of Education, Culture & Sport

## **APPENDIX**

### **Education Culture and Sport Service The Education of Pupils with Specific Learning Difficulties/Dyslexia**

Note: In Scotland different professional groups use different terminology. The term ‘dyslexia’ is widely understood, is used internationally and in research, and is therefore used in this policy document. Terminology is discussed in more detail in section 2 of this policy document.

#### **1 Rationale**

- 1.1 This policy takes account of recent legislation including the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995, Code of Practice and subsequent amendments made by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA), the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act, 2004 and its Code of Practice, and the DDA 2005.
- 1.2 There is substantial understanding and good practice with respect to dyslexia in Highland and this policy sets a framework for maintaining and developing this practice further to achieve a consistently high standard across all educational establishments.
- 1.3 Appropriate strategies and structures of support must be available for all children who have additional support needs and may be finding learning problematic. Additional support needs vary in both duration and severity so that a range of procedures, interventions and provision is required. This document sets out the policy and framework of support for children with dyslexic difficulties from the earliest stages throughout the school-age years. It also gives pointers to promoting access to lifelong learning. It should be noted, however, that the approaches and methods described in this policy can be used to benefit all children who find the learning of literacy difficult.
- 1.4 Educational, psychological, neurological and biological research in the field of dyslexia are progressing. This policy will require revision as knowledge of dyslexia progresses.

#### **2. Terminology**

- 2.1 Both ‘specific learning difficulties’ and ‘dyslexia’ are widely used because they are felt to be useful in different contexts
- 2.2: The term “Specific Learning Difficulties” refers to difficulties which are not of a general nature, but are specific to certain areas of functioning.

It implies a recognition both that much of an individual's learning may be progressing without difficulty and that particular support and intervention may be needed to support one or more aspects of learning. Specific difficulties in the acquisition of both literacy skills (dyslexia) and numeracy skills (dyscalculia) are widely recognised.

2.3 The British Dyslexia Association defines 'Dyslexia' as follows,

Dyslexia is a specific learning difference which is constitutional in origin (in the make up of the person) independent of socio-economic or language background, and can occur at any level of intellectual ability.

It can cause unexpected and persistent difficulties in acquiring certain skills in one or more of the following areas: reading, writing, spelling and sometimes numeracy and spoken language.

There may be accompanying weaknesses in: speed of processing, short term memory, sequencing, motor skills, auditory or visual perception. (Tresman, The British Dyslexia Association, 2005)

2.4 From a practical viewpoint, dyslexia can be seen as "a difficulty with literacy which results in a person requiring a set of accommodations to be made to enable them to demonstrate their abilities".

2.5 A British Psychological Society working group suggested that "Dyslexia is evident when accurate and 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 a basis for a staged approach of assessment through teaching." (British Psychological Society, 1999)

2.6 Research suggests that the majority of dyslexic individuals have an underlying difficulty with phonological processing i.e. with processing information related to sounds and/or processing information related to the links between sounds and printed letters and words. Nevertheless it must be emphasised both that other types of dyslexic difficulty also occur and also that the severity of difficulties vary from individual to individual. While there are distinctive patterns of difficulties, the strengths and weaknesses of individuals vary considerably and where difficulties are severe and long term it is essential to identify the individual's strengths and weaknesses and to tailor learning and teaching approaches to address and compensate for these.

### **3. Incidence**

3.1 Miles (1991) suggests that between 2% and 4 % of the population can be categorised as dyslexic. However, the British Dyslexia Association proposes that the figure is nearer to 10% in acknowledgement of the wide spectrum of difficulties which can be present. While the exact incidence found in research studies is clearly dependent on the details of the definition used and on the research methodology it is clear that teachers should regularly expect to encounter pupils who have particular difficulties in acquiring literacy skills.

- 3.2 Research indicates that boys are more likely than girls to have significant difficulties in acquiring literacy skills.

#### **4. Early Identification of Dyslexia**

- 4.1 When dyslexia goes unrecognised, the subsequent loss of self-esteem or motivation can affect the child's emotional wellbeing. This can result in frustration for the child and can on occasions be acted out through the child's behaviours, sometimes leading to withdrawal or challenging behaviour.
- 4.2 Until recently, it was considered inappropriate to consider the possibility of dyslexia before a child's entry into primary school. The identification of dyslexia was centred around difficulties, discrepancies and differences related to both reading and written work. Research in Edinburgh's Pilton area, however, has shown that children who make a poor start in reading tend to continue to have difficulties, in spite of subsequent intervention. Both this and other research has also shown that "it is possible to predict, to some extent, the likely future success of children in learning to read long before they enter school" (McMillan & Leslie, 1998).
- 4.3 The Highland Council recognises that it is important that any difficulties which a child may have are recognised as early as possible in order that strategies can be put in place, and so a programme of Early Screening is in place for children in their pre-school year. Observations and assessments based on the 3-5 curriculum are a routine part of all early years provision and should lead to the identification of individual needs and to the implementation of appropriate strategies for promoting the learning and development of each child.
- 4.4 Early Screening builds on the observations already carried out by nursery staff while adding a few further areas of observation which could indicate a specific difficulty. While Early Screening does not focus on dyslexia, dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty which may be highlighted by the screening
- 4.5 The aim of the Early Screening Programme is to look systematically at children early who MAY be "at risk" of failing to learn effectively in school. Labels such as 'dyslexia' may not be helpful or meaningful at the early stages, but early intervention is widely thought to be effective both in limiting the impact of any early educational difficulties and in facilitating better progress as the child progresses through education.
- 4.6 Early Years staff routinely work closely with parents/ carers to address jointly any minor concerns which may arise. Early Screening builds on and formalises the good practice which is already in place, and reassures parents/carers that staff are looking out for difficulties which are not always obvious before a child goes to school and embarks on more formal learning.

- 4.7 Relevant support can usually be given in a play context within the 3-5 curriculum framework, but for the few children with very significant difficulties a Staged Approach to understanding and responding to the individual child's additional support needs should be initiated in accordance with the Highland Council's policies and the requirements of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act, 2004.
- 4.8 Checklists have been found to be helpful in raising awareness of potential indicators of dyslexia. Samples of these can be found in Appendices 4, 4a and 4b. For example, specific weaknesses (e.g. short-term-memory, phonological awareness) that lead to later reading and written language difficulties can be recognised before formal schooling starts.
- 4.9 Other factors including lack of socio-cultural opportunities, bilingualism, and language delays and disorders affect the performance of some children. The information gathered during observation and Early Screening can be used to identify other patterns of difficulties which are indicative of certain Specific Learning Difficulties or even of an underachieving bright child or a child with global difficulties. Staff should be alert to early indicators of difficulties and be prepared to address these for all children. Intervention should be tailored to the needs of the child based on the observations of staff and on any further information which is available, for example from outside agencies. Identification of difficulties is not an end in itself.
- 4.10 Information should be passed from Nursery staff to the Primary 1 teacher at least three months before the child starts to attend Primary school. It is important that primary school staff are made aware of any concerns about specific children in pre-school centres and are given information about any individualised support or intervention which has been given. This should be contextualised by also giving information about the strategies in place for all pupils. Proper liaison and information sharing at the pre-school to primary transition is essential in order to ensure that children who show indications of developmental delays or possible learning difficulties in literacy have their needs acknowledged and so that appropriate action can be taken without delay to prevent or minimise the negative effects of any problems. The Primary 1 teacher can then observe the child to monitor progress and ensure continued support if concerns or difficulties persist.

## **5. Bilingual Children**

- 5.1 Teachers need to be alert to the possibility that bilingual pupils may have dyslexic difficulties which are masked because they are in the process of developing English as an additional language. See the document – *Learning in 2(+) languages: Ensuring effective inclusion for bilingual learners: Good practice for teachers, educational establishments and local authorities* – available at [www.LTScotland.org.uk](http://www.LTScotland.org.uk) .

- 5.2 It has been found that children who learn in two or more languages, as happens in Gaelic Medium Education, benefit cognitively from the processes involved. It does not mean however that dyslexia can be ruled out, and if children are finding learning to read and write problematic in either language, then the possibility of a specific learning difficulty should be investigated. Assessment needs to consider reading and writing in both languages, and where the difficulty exists across the two languages further more detailed assessment may be needed.

## **6. Identifying and Planning for Pupils with Dyslexia in Primary and Secondary Schools.**

- 6.1 The majority of pupils with an additional support need will be supported primarily by their class or subject teachers in mainstream schools, and whatever the pattern or severity of difficulties the pupil with dyslexia will primarily be supported by these teachers. This is in line with the Highland Council's commitment to inclusive education. This commitment is supported by a commitment to offer a range of high quality training to staff. (See section 11)
- 6.2 For all pupils with literacy difficulties the educational aims are:
- To assist them to overcome their literacy difficulties
  - To support them to access and achieve across the full range of the school curriculum
- 6.3 Parents/carers are the longest serving and most influential educators of almost all children. If there is a concern about a child's learning parents/carers should be kept fully informed and should be invited to contribute to planning processes for their child. Many parents will wish to contribute to support their child's education for example by reinforcing work done in school, for example by playing rhyming and phonic games, hearing their child read at home, helping with learning spellings, or using paired reading or paired spelling techniques.
- 6.4 The Highland Council has in place a staged process for the identification of children who may have difficulties in learning. See Pathway Plan in Appendix 1.
- 6.5 Class or subject teachers will recognise when a child is showing some difficulties with learning and will often respond by offering some extra time or attention, presenting material in varying ways and taking steps to maintain the pupil's confidence as a learner.
- 6.6 If, however, difficulties are more severe or longer term it is the responsibility of the class or subject teacher to investigate further, for example by observing the pupil's behaviour as a learner noting patterns of strengths and difficulties in relation to literacy skills, and to consult with colleagues as appropriate. Key colleagues at this point are the

person responsible for Support for Learning in the school and the Head Teacher and/or Principal Teacher. An English as an Additional Language teacher should be consulted where appropriate. If the pupil's literacy difficulties appear particularly unusual or severe the school's educational psychologist is sometime also consulted as part of this process. Most dyslexic children and young people, however, do not require an educational psychologist's assessment in order that appropriate strategies and support can be identified and put into practice.

- 6.7 For some dyslexic pupils this consultation process will identify simple measures which can be put in place to provide the necessary support.
- 6.8 For children whose difficulties are a little greater, Support for Learning staff may advise some differentiation of the curriculum and other supports such as homework books. Teachers may need to give small periods of additional time. Teachers will need to ensure that classroom seating arrangements are appropriate and that children are treated in a positive way to maintain self esteem and encourage learning. Peer group support approaches may also be used.
- 6.9 If there are severe problems, a collaborative approach is vital to ensure appropriate intervention, and where appropriate schools should ensure that Health and other agencies are involved in planning for the child.
- 6.10 Support for Learning staff may carry out more detailed observations for example through the analysis of errors in reading or in spelling and by looking at the pupil's learning style. It may be helpful to use some standardised assessment materials and Appendix 5 gives examples of some materials that teachers might find helpful.
- 6.11 For pupils with long term and significant difficulties some elements of the literacy teaching programme will be of an individualised nature and the child is likely to require an IEP, teaching may take place either in a one-to-one or small group situation. The class teacher in liaison with the Support for Learning teacher, the pupil, parents/carers and appropriate others will plan this daily support in a range of literacy areas, including reading, phonics, word attack, spelling and dictation. Much of this can be supported by the use of technology. Programmes will be carefully structured and progress carefully monitored. Teaching has proved most effective when supported both at home and by school staff on a daily basis.
- 6.12 If, after a few months working on an individualised programme, there is still little significant progress the IEP should be reviewed. It may be appropriate to carry out a more detailed assessment. If the school is still unsure about how to meet the pupil's needs effectively or the school's Educational Psychologist should be consulted.
- 6.13 If the pupil's difficulties are:
  - complex or multiple;
  - long-term (last a year or longer);
  - are having a significant adverse effect on their learning, and

- require substantial input from one or more agencies outwith Education;

it is appropriate to consider whether pupil will benefit from a Co-ordinated Support Plan (CSP). This is illustrated in diagrammatic form in Appendix 1.

- 6.14 Many children with dyslexia also have other difficulties: for example in relation to attention and concentration, personal organisation, movement and coordination, physical difficulties, speech and language problems. These difficulties may or may not be related to dyslexia. What is important is not that we try to tease out how much of what we see is due to one difficulty and how much is another, but that we understand how far the child has progressed, identify what the next steps are, and put in place appropriate support and accommodations.
- 6.15 There are considerable cultural and social differences in children's backgrounds, and children will also exhibit a range of individual patterns of strengths, difficulties, discrepancies and differences. Careful assessment must therefore investigate all the areas likely to be affected and consider how these match the child's potential. We can then use the areas of strength to develop the weak areas. We must also continue to develop the wider abilities of the child. Through knowledge of individual learning needs gained by observation and assessment, we can appropriately differentiate, individualise, adapt, enhance and/or elaborate the curriculum. It is important to balance developing areas of weakness with giving access to the full breadth of the curriculum.

## **7 Meeting the Needs of Pupils with Dyslexia in Primary and Secondary Schools.**

- 7.1 Dyslexic pupils should have access to the full breadth and depth of the curriculum and strategies should be found to allow each pupil to access the curriculum at an appropriate level. If pupils require the support of a reader or scribe, notes, mind maps or taped materials, or technology such as a word processor and/or dictaphone to enable this access then every effort should be made to make this support available. Different types of support may be given by class, subject and support teachers, by non-teaching support staff and by peers. It should be noted that where a pupil is benefiting from the use of a computer and/or other aids, and is working at an age-appropriate level **with** the use of appropriate technology, it is important to maintain this support. It should not be withdrawn simply because the technology has brought the pupil's academic work to an age-appropriate level.
- 7.2 Any intervention must be appropriate for the age and stage of the child and should not affect access to other areas of the curriculum. Identifying and implementing the most appropriate strategies is almost always assisted by taking account of the pupil's view, and this is especially important for older pupils and young adults.
- 7.3 Self esteem and motivation are vital to the learning of all children and young people. Dyslexic pupils are particularly vulnerable to feelings of failure and lack of self-worth because of the unusual; and specific

nature of their difficulties, and will benefit from educational and emotional support throughout their school years. Different children may, therefore, require different approaches, and there is no one method of tackling dyslexic difficulties. The type of support given will depend on whether the child is at the mild or severe end of the dyslexia continuum, on the child's learning style and on the pattern of strengths and weaknesses. While help for areas of difficulty is important it should not be at the expense of encouraging pupils to develop their strengths. For example a talented swimmer should not be excluded from swimming lessons in order to give more language practice. Emotional support may be best achieved through involvement in non academic areas where the pupil can achieve success and gain enjoyment. In some cases, where "success" is not obvious, close observation of the child can result in positive reframing – e.g. "he is a loner" can be phrased "his independence skills are good".

- 7.4 Teaching methods and groupings require to be given sensitive consideration and different methods and groupings may be appropriate in different situations. For example, while a dyslexic child may be seated with other readers of similar reading level for certain reading activities, it should be possible for that child to sit with others of similar oral ability for discussion of other material. The grouping of children within classes should be sufficiently flexible to ensure that all children have access to talking and listening activities where good language models are offered
- 7.5 It should never be assumed that a pupil with dyslexia will be incapable of progressing in a specific subject area such as learning a modern foreign language. Some dyslexic pupils do make very good progress in such areas and every effort should be made to ensure that the curriculum is presented in a way that suits the learning needs and styles of the pupil. However, when every effort has been made by pupils, school staff and parents/carers to ensure access to the full range of the curriculum, there may be a few severely dyslexic pupils for whom a curricular area becomes clearly inappropriate or even intolerable after a time. In such situations it is appropriate to consider whether alternative arrangements should be made for the pupil so that they can opt out of this part of the curriculum. This is most likely to apply in relation to learning a modern foreign language, where a pupil with severe short-term memory and auditory problems may be unable to gain from even speaking and listening. In such cases careful consideration is required to ensure that the pupil is able to use the time freed up for more profitable learning in another subject area. Both the pupil and parents/carers must be involved in the decisions which are made.
- 7.6 Pupils with early or mild difficulties will benefit from appropriate and timely intervention from the class teacher within the routine classroom situation. Difficulties which are severe and/or identified later, may require specific one-to-one tuition. The vast majority of children will however be able to be supported effectively in the classroom. (The

assessment and planning processes are described in section 6 of this policy).

- 7.7 While children with basic decoding difficulties may be grouped with others with similar decoding difficulties, it is very important that all children with literacy difficulties have access to a full range of language activities including experience of challenging text. The teaching of phonics requires to be kept under review in discussion with both the child and their parents/carers in order that repeated failure can be avoided and appropriate circumvention strategies can be put into place at a relevant stage.
- 7.8 The importance of a supportive ethos cannot be overstated, and dyslexic pupils must be confident that others understand their difficulties. It is important to have a range of support strategies and that the choice of strategies should be negotiated with pupil, and wherever possible parents/carers should be involved in planning for and supporting the pupil. Through collaborative working, even the smallest success of any child can be celebrated, and the child can be motivated to continue to strive for further success. Dyslexic pupils have sometimes been described as 'lazy' but this rarely either helpful or appropriate. It is important to identify the pupil's learning styles and to put in place appropriate strategies which utilise strengths and accommodate weaknesses.
- 7.9 Positive teacher expectations have been shown to be powerful. It is important to be sensitive to the difficulties which children are experiencing while at the same time having regard to the fact that (a) pupils with dyslexia will have variable performance, and (b) when given the appropriate support may be capable of showing knowledge and understanding at a far higher level than they can read and write about. The use of peer group tutoring of various kinds can help children to develop their literacy skills, for example both paired learning and peer group tutoring can be of enormous value in helping children to develop their literacy skills. It is important that teachers feel confident that they can support children with literacy difficulties and that they empathise with the challenges which literacy acquisition can present to some children.
- 7.10 As well as ensuring that a dyslexic pupil can access a curriculum which is appropriate it is also important to provide support to develop the pupil's literacy skills. This may require more individualised teaching, for example additional practice, over-learning or learning to specified criteria (described as 'Learning to Mastery' within Precision Teaching approaches), or multi-sensory approaches.
- 7.11 The term 'metacognition' is often used to describe an individual's awareness of his or her own learning styles and approaches to learning. Helping a pupil to develop this understanding has often been found to have significant positive effects: typically such pupils feel more in control of their own learning, are able to take more responsibility for their own learning, are less anxious and are more able to learn effectively. Teachers should encourage pupils to think about their own

learning and to develop effective learning styles and strategies. Active participation by children in their own learning and in the learning of others can transform approaches to learning for all.

- 7.12 Homework can be a particular source of frustration and stress for dyslexic pupils, and a stressful experience for parents/carers if it is not well managed. Schools should be aware of how long a piece of homework may take dyslexic pupils – what may appear to be a poor piece of work produced with insufficient effort may be the result of hours of work at home. Consultation and collaboration with the pupil and the parents/carers will ensure that homework, where necessary, is set in a way which is manageable to the school, the pupils and the parents/carers. This may involve for example giving a week's homework in advance so that the pupil and parents/carers can plan what will be done when.
- 7.13 For pupils of secondary age it is particularly important to ensure that strategies appropriate to the pupils' age and stage of development are put in place. Some pupils may not be willing to cooperate with further teaching of literacy skills and the emphasis may need to be on ensuring access to an appropriate curriculum with support to demonstrate knowledge and understanding. Secondary and older primary pupils with reading difficulties may be acutely if asked to read aloud in class and should not be asked. Pupils with reading difficulties or whose work is difficult to decipher, may require training in the use of assistive technology (keyboard skills, use of software, use of a Dictaphone), a reader and/or scribe. It is important that the use of technology is explored to enable the pupil to access written material. Where it is considered appropriate for the pupil to have a reader and a scribe it is important to ensure that the pupil routinely practises with the person who will read and scribe in important assessments.

- 7.14 The Highland Council has developed an Accessibility Strategy. Although this strategy covers buildings, physical access and information, the most relevant aspect for children who may be dyslexic are issues relating to access to the curriculum. The Highland Council's Accessibility Strategy is available at [www.highlandschools-virtualib.org.uk](http://www.highlandschools-virtualib.org.uk)

## **8 Primary/Secondary Transfer**

- 8.1 The transfer from primary to secondary school is extremely important for all children, but particularly so for the child with difficulties of any kind. It is therefore vital that all those who will be concerned with a young person with dyslexia in the secondary school are made aware of the likely difficulties and the additional support and accommodations which will be required to allow the pupil to gain maximum advantage from all subject areas.
- 8.2 For pupils with Additional Support Needs the Education, Culture and Sport Service has identified the need to begin to plan the primary to

secondary transition up to three years in advance, because of the time which may be required to take any action necessary. The planning timetable should be as follows:

- 3 years before transition: identify any building adaptations which are likely to be necessary;
- 2 years before transition: identify any specialist staff training which will be required;
- 1 year before transition: identify any staffing or equipment needs.

A member of the secondary school's management team should be involved throughout in the transition planning process for each pupil with significant needs.

- 8.3 A meeting involving both primary and secondary teaching staff, parents/carers, and the young person involved may be helpful. Where there are significant needs, the secondary school should nominate a key member of staff to take responsibility for ensuring transitions are as smooth as possible, including ensuring that all relevant information is circulated to secondary staff before the pupil joins the school.
- 8.4 It may be appropriate to organise a meeting or a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for appropriate staff to ensure that they are informed about the pupil's needs and the support and accommodations required.
- 8.5 It is the responsibility of the designated secondary staff member to ensure that appropriate information is acted on.
- 8.6 With relevant strategies in place, the pupil's transfer from primary to secondary school should not cause undue anxiety.

## **9 Supporting Pupils with Dyslexia during Assessments and Examinations**

- 9.1 If a pupil has literacy difficulties and receives support in the classroom in order to access the curriculum and to demonstrate knowledge and understanding then reasonable adjustments reflecting those which are made in the classroom should be available in assessment situations. This should apply to all formal and informal testing situations in both primary and secondary schools.
- 9.2 The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) provides guidelines on how and when to apply for reasonable adjustments for formal national examinations. If a pupil is dyslexic and there is evidence that reasonable adjustments will enable the pupil demonstrate his or her true level of attainment, these can be made available at the discretion of the SQA. A range of reasonable adjustments is available: e.g. readers and scribes, computer technology and extra time. For certain arrangements, candidates may require separate accommodation. The

presenting centre is required to make application through the Area Education or Service Manager, and the young person should be given opportunities to practice the use of appropriate skills in order to take full advantage of the reasonable adjustments which are made available. Schools that require further information should contact the Development Officer (Secondary and Special) or contact the SQA directly. There is also information on the SQA website ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)).

## **10 Technology**

- 10.1 The contribution of Information and Communication Technology to the development and support of literacy in all pupils has long been recognised. Its particular relevance to pupils with dyslexia and associated difficulties is well documented.
- 10.2 Difficulties experienced when writing and recording work can be eased considerably through the use of voice recording devices, word processors, spelling checkers, and software that helps with the organisational demands of writing. Issues such as illegibility of writing and spelling difficulties can be significantly reduced through the use of relatively simple and accessible tools. More severe writing and spelling difficulties can be addressed using predictive software and, in some cases, software that translates speech into text. The use of such software tools can also reduce or remove dependence on a scribe.
- 10.3 Research and experience have shown that pupils with reading difficulties can find it very helpful to have text read out to them by computer software. Text readers and word processors that support text-to-speech can increase reading rate and understanding, and can reduce the anxieties so often reported by pupils with dyslexia and by their parents/carers. Supporting reading and study through such technology also offers greater independence and, arguably, a more useful life skill than reliance on a human reader. If it is felt that the pupil's independence skills have reached a point when an aspect of technological support is no longer required, then the help should only be withdrawn in consultation with the pupil, and with the full knowledge and collaboration of parents/carers.
- 10.4 A wide range of software packages exist that address specific areas of difficulty for dyslexic pupils such as spelling, phonic development, word building, and reading. There are also similar programs that support development in the area of numeracy. Such software is often presented as a game or challenge to try to make the intended, but necessarily repetitive, over-learning more enjoyable.
- 10.5 It is important for all staff to know of the general benefits of technology in teaching and learning but it is critical that staff supporting pupils with dyslexia have a high level of awareness and practical experience with key hardware, software, and delivery models for effective deployment. Training and advice for pupils, staff, and parents/carers is available

though an annual diet of in-service training as well as by the individual referral and assessment procedure provided by the Assistive Technology Support Service.

## **11 Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**

- 11.1 According to their role teaching and support staff in schools will require different levels of knowledge and competence in assessing and meeting the needs of dyslexic pupils. A range of CPD opportunities is therefore required.
- 11.2 Basic staff development should raise awareness of patterns of difficulties, differences and discrepancies within a child's profile, and should enable staff to understand the importance of both addressing the specific learning difficulty and providing access to an appropriate curriculum. It should also empower and enable staff to be able to provide suitable interventions which takes account of the individual pupil's strengths and learning styles.
- 11.3 All staff should be able to recognise and support dyslexic pupils with modest levels of difficulty and should have the opportunity to undertake awareness training either during their initial professional qualification or as part of personal post-qualification CPD. Staff with more specialist roles, for example in support for pupils' teams, may need to undertake further CPD through attendance at short, specialist courses and conferences. In addition, externally accredited qualifications will provide for those who require or desire more specialist knowledge.
- 11.4 In every school, including nursery classes and partner centres, the aim should be to ensure that there is access to an identified member of staff who is familiar with techniques for supporting pupils with dyslexia. Where there is no appropriately trained person on the staff of the school it will be the Head Teacher's responsibility to ensure that personnel outwith the school are consulted and involved where appropriate.

## **12 The Role of Specialist Services**

- 12.1 Many children with dyslexia have other difficulties and these may include health problems. For example problems with hearing and eyesight may occur in any child but have an additional impact on those with dyslexia and may exacerbate any existing difficulties. In some cases, if problems are persistent, they can result in misdiagnosis. For this reason it is important that hearing and eyesight are checked at an early stage if a child is having a significant difficulty with learning. In particular, if a child is having difficulty in progressing in phonics, or with developing auditory discrimination, or appears to have visual-perceptual or memory difficulties etc, then it is best to rule out any sensory problems. These can appear to be signs of dyslexia when in some cases they are the result of a health problem.
- 12.2 Dyslexia can occur together with almost any other difficulty or need. Research has shown, however, that a child who has any one of the conditions of Attention Deficit with or without Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD/ADD), Developmental Co-ordination Difficulties (DCD) or

Dyspraxia, a Speech and Language disorder, or an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASDs) is more likely than other children to have one or more of the other conditions. These conditions are sometimes called 'co-morbidity disorders' because they may occur together.

- 12.3 Some symptoms of Dyslexia can be symptoms of other conditions or visa versa. Particular symptoms like headaches, tummy aches and a reluctance to go to school can indicate that the child finds school difficult for a whole number of reasons. Whilst it is important to be aware that health problems can occur alongside dyslexia this is not always the case and each child needs to be individually considered. Staff should be aware of the possibility of health problems and should know who to consult about whether to refer for further assessment or diagnosis.
- 12.4 It is important that concerns such as those mentioned above are investigated at an early stage and not left until they become real difficulties for the child and/or family. If school staff suspect a hearing or vision problem, or one of the co-morbidity disorders, then it may be appropriate to consult with the School Nurse (Health Visitor in Nursery).
- 12.5 Educational psychologists are able to offer advice and consultation to staff involved in supporting pupils with additional support needs, including those with dyslexia. Large schools receive pre-arranged regular visits, while smaller schools can contact 'their' educational psychologist at need. In most instances schools are expected to have used a staged approach to assessing and meeting the needs of a pupil before consulting the educational psychologist, so that there will already be information from observation and assessment which will inform the consultation. The educational psychologist may suggest implementing particular strategies. Occasionally, where the strategies put in place by the school have not proved successful, the educational psychologist may become directly involved with a pupil for assessment and / or intervention. (The Staged Approach to identifying and planning for pupils' Additional Support Needs is set out in Appendix 1, some assessment materials for use in schools are suggested in Appendix 9).
- 12.6 Educational psychologists also contribute to authority and whole school initiatives and to awareness raising and training for school staff to support the development of practice in working with dyslexic pupils and in creating "dyslexia friendly" schools and classrooms.

### **13 Working in partnership with Parents and Carers**

- 13.1 Parents/carers are the longest serving and most influential educators of almost all children. If there is a concern about a child's learning parents/carers should be kept fully informed and should be invited to contribute to assessment and planning processes for their child. Working collaboratively with parents/carers is vital in order that appropriate support is given both in school and at home. Many parents will wish to contribute to support their child's education and should be advised how they can best do this. It is often helpful for parents/carers

to attend and/or contribute to staff development activities. If for any reason there cannot be active collaboration with parents/carers it may be helpful to involve other significant adults, for example grandparents, provided that parents/carers give consent.

- 13.2 Where parents/carers are concerned that their child may be dyslexic, Form 1 (See Appendices 2 and 3) should be completed even though the class teacher may feel that the pupil is not dyslexic. Strategies should also be in place to reassure parents/carers that their concerns are being taken seriously and that appropriate teaching is in place.
- 13.3 If a parent or carer is concerned about an aspect of their child's education it is usually quickest and most effective to contact the school. It is recommended that parents/carers contact the class teacher in the first instance. If, however, concerns are long-term or significant, or the parent or carer feels that appropriate assessment and/or support is not being given to their child, they should contact the Head Teacher in order to discuss their concerns and identify a way forward. It may be helpful to agree an action plan including who will do what, and over what time scale. Parents/carers should be given a copy of the action plan. Solution-focused meetings are often helpful in developing action plans.
- 13.4 If parents/carers continue to be concerned it is recommended that they make further contact the Head Teacher. The Head Teacher should consider organising a meeting of appropriate personnel to try to address parental/carers concerns. Parents/carers should be consulted on who will be involved and may wish to take someone to the meeting in a supportive role. An action plan or an individualised educational plan should be compiled and a copy given to the parents/carers
- 13.5 If all school-based dialogue has been exhausted and a satisfactory conclusion has not been reached, the Head Teacher or parent/carers may wish to request the assistance of a representative of the Authority by involving the Area Education Manager/Education, Culture and Sport Manager.
- 13.6 As required by the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act (2004) The Highland Council also provides access to independent mediation and dispute resolution services. Further information about these services can be found on the Council's Support for Learners website: [www.highlandschools-virtualib.org.uk/sfl](http://www.highlandschools-virtualib.org.uk/sfl). Independent mediation and dispute resolution can be accessed by contacting the Additional Support for Learning Co-ordinator (See Appendix 9).