



Council for the Registration of Schools Teaching Dyslexic Pupils



Questions to ask when considering a school for a dyslexic (SpLD) pupil

Birnbaum (2010) *Choosing a School for a Child with Special Needs: Questions to ask when considering a school for a dyslexic child*

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- 1 How many dyslexic children are there in the school? Does the school undertake screening for specific learning difficulties and, if so, what was the result?
- 2 How many of these children are at School Action, School Action Plus and have Statements?
 - Please Note: Now replaced with SEN Support in Schools (graduated approach) and EHC Plan
- 3 How many teachers, specially trained to work with SpLD children, are on the staff and, specifically, what are their qualifications, eg are they BDA Approved? Do the teachers hold an SpLD diploma or advanced (Level 7) certificate (such as OCR with AMBDA)?
- 4 If there are no specialists on staff, how does the school access the Local Authority services for dyslexia and how frequently do the dyslexia teachers attend the school?
- 5 The current aims of PATOSS are to ensure that there is:
 - awareness and foundation training for all teachers and support staff
 - a lead teacher (certificate level) in every primary school
 - two teachers in every secondary school or pupil referral unit
 - one expert teacher (diploma level) to be shared between a small group of schools.
- 6 How do non-specialist teachers address the needs of dyslexic children in their classes, and what specific training have the non-specialist teachers had during the last year?
- 7 What are the arrangements for catch-up in training for absent staff or teachers who join during the year? Training of whole-school awareness is likely to take up to one day.
- 8 How is special teaching delivered, eg in class, withdrawal, individually or in small groups?
- 9 Does the teaching take place in a department and, if so, are there any specific resources or equipment available and how does the school address the fact that the child has to leave other lessons to attend a different department or unit?

- 10 What specific intervention programmes are carried out in school? (These may include specific programmes such as Alpha to Omega, AcceleRead/ AcceleWrite, Hickey, etc, or software programmes such as WordShark/ NumberShark, Smart Phonics 1, 2, 3 and Clicker Phonics.) There are many resources available. It is possible to do some research using the internet, which does have critical evaluations of some programmes. There is no 'one size fits all' and the SpLD specialist and/ or psychologist should advise on what is suitable for an individual child.
- 11 Do these specific intervention programmes focus on both literacy and numeracy and do they use structured multi-sensory teaching?
- 12 Who supervises the programmes (this is particularly important if the programmes are predominantly carried out by learning support assistants rather than specialist teachers)?
- 13 What access to and training for ICT do dyslexic children have over and beyond the usual facilities available for all children?
- 14 How rigid is the school in their policies with regard to following a foreign language or minimising GCSEs which a typical dyslexic child may take?
- 15 In addition to support in subjects such as English, is there further additional support available for other subjects? Does the school have a Quality Mark registration from the BDA for a dyslexia-friendly school? Is the school registered with CReSTeD?
- 16 Ask to see how homework is given and supported (this will be particularly important if the child has difficulty in copying things down at speed from the whiteboard into a homework diary) and also ask to see a typical Individual Education Plan (IEP) for a dyslexic child at the school.
- 17 Dyslexic children often have difficulties with self-esteem, confidence, organisational skills etc. How does the school address these aspects? Does the school feel that the resources, which are currently available, are adequate and if not, what else is required and where could these be obtained?
- 18 Is inclusion seen as a priority area and if so, how will the dyslexic child be included in all areas of the curriculum?
- 19 Who would a parent contact, in the first instance, to discuss any concerns?
- 20 What adjustments are currently being made for dyslexic children in the school and how is the curriculum being differentiated? It is always helpful to ask for specific examples, perhaps by identifying children (not by name) who are currently in the school. If a child has slow or poor written skills, what time allowances are made by teachers during lessons, homework and in examinations?
- 21 What further training is needed by the school and is this already organised?
- 22 How does the school ensure that there are adequate opportunities for dyslexic children to work with other children with similar cognitive ability or with an appropriate level of cognitive challenge, despite their literacy or numeracy problems?
- 23 What other evidence can the school provide to demonstrate that their inclusive practice is being effective and having a positive impact?
- 24 How does the marking and assessment policy ensure that the child is assessed on the basis of their knowledge (rather than poor spelling)?
- 25 How does the school measure its effectiveness with dyslexic children? Is there qualitative evidence, eg increase in self-esteem and also, quantitative evidence, eg reaching expectations through the different key stages?