

From The Report of the Task Group on Dyslexia (2002)

Chapter 5 - Indicators of Good Practice for Teachers and Parents

5.1 The following indicators give a brief overview of what can be considered to be good practice in this area. The aim is to promote inclusive education, and many of the indicators are relevant to a wide range of special educational needs, not just dyslexia.

5.2 They will need to be supported by a programme of training for teachers, SENCOs, Senior Management, Principal and all relevant support staff in schools.

5.3 It is considered essential that steps are taken to ensure that these principles of good practice are actually implemented throughout the school, rather than remain within a written school policy.

5.4 Practice is seen to be good when teachers recognise and make provision for:

- The existence of dyslexia in its varying degrees of severity.
- The *different* learning styles/strengths of individual pupils.
- The likelihood of associated difficulties (also presenting in varying degrees of severity); these include deficits in working memory, organisational difficulties, dyspraxic and dysgraphic tendencies, attention deficit/hyperactivity, scotopic sensitivity.
- The emotional and pastoral needs of the dyslexic child at risk in an environment where he may often see himself as under-achieving/failing.

5.5 School Ethos/Pastoral Issues

The Task Group endorses the following as good practice:

- Children's differences/difficulties are identified and addressed at an early stage to avoid the consequences of frustration and failure.
- They understand their learning differences/difficulties and feel supported by adults who understand them.
- They are catered for in a pastoral care system which is proactive in ensuring their emotional well-being.
- They feel free to discuss their differences/difficulties with understanding teachers/support staff.
- Their peers are understanding of their learning differences and are sympathetic towards them.
- They have opportunity to share mutual support with other children who have similar difficulties.
- Their parents are informed partners with the school in supporting their child emotionally and educationally.
- They have opportunities to build self-esteem and self-confidence through success and achievement in a well-managed and well-balanced curricular programme.
- They are encouraged to play a full part in the life of the school.

5.6 The Quality Of Teaching And Learning

The Task Group endorses the following as good practice:

- The learning and management problems of children with dyslexia are clearly identified and understood and all staff are fully aware of how these needs should be addressed.
- There is informed partnership between the teachers, outside support agencies, parents and pupil helping maintain consistency of approach.
- The children are taught, where possible, using a multi-sensory approach ie using visual, auditory and motor/kinaesthetic means and where teaching is structured, sequential and cumulative.
- They have clearly defined goals.
- They are helped to discover and utilise their learning strengths and are given structured support to practice in areas of weakness.
- They are encouraged to use compensatory strategies.
- The environment in which they learn is modified to limit potential distractions.
- They have regular access to the use of appropriate ICT resources to develop word processing (including word finding and spell-check facilities), research and filing/organisational skills.
- To compensate for poor memory, they are given sufficient opportunity to 'over-learn' to automaticity level those skills that require automatic response.
- They are helped increasingly towards greater independence in learning through practical guidance in organisational strategies.
- They are given/encouraged to develop their own coping strategies for areas of difficulty.
- They are given guidance and practice in developing a comfortable, consistent handwriting style and strategies for improving presentation of work.
- Formal teaching of writing skills is given ie planning, drafting, editing, re-editing.
- Advice and practice in skimming and scanning text is given to develop higher level literacy skills.
- They are encouraged to use mind maps as a means of organising their thinking.
- According to age and stage, they are given help to improve their study/revision skills taking full advantage of their learning strengths.
- Regular opportunities are given to develop their independence and self-responsibility.
- Pupils are guided increasingly, according to age and stage, to play their part in self-checking, proof-reading and in so doing develop discriminatory and independence skills.
- The school's marking policy is sensitively adapted to take account of the dyslexic pupil's effort and progress and to encourage him or her in future learning and achievement.
- At post-primary level, pupils are advised as to alternative ways of coping with note-taking.

5.7 School Management Issues

Many potential problems may be averted with early intervention and good management.

The Task Group therefore recommends that practice is efficient and effective in schools where:

- Emphasis is placed on developing educational strategies to accommodate a wide range of learners with different aptitudes and achievements rather than targeting intervention which focuses on the individual - this tends to promote a greater sense of inclusiveness.
- All teachers and support staff have a good general understanding of the nature of dyslexia and of the difficulties that a dyslexic child may have when coping in the school environment.

- All staff are fully aware of the school's policy for dealing with children with dyslexic difficulties and they implement these policies sensitively and thoroughly.
- All staff have regard for the academic, social and emotional development of each pupil.
- All teachers are responsible for recognising the early signs of dyslexic difficulties and pupil underachievement.
- All teachers are able to match teaching and learning styles, and are flexible and resourceful in providing differentiated activities in the classroom.
- There is a teacher(s) available within the school who, with a greater level of expertise, can advise teachers regarding those pupils with a moderate degree of dyslexic difficulty and who can facilitate further advice and resources from support services when necessary.
- In cases of more severe dyslexic difficulty, pupils have access to support by teachers who are experienced in the teaching of dyslexic pupils.
- The school involves parents as partners in education of their child through
 - the resources and facilities available at different levels for dealing with these difficulties;
 - practical sessions eg supporting their child in the completion of homework;
 - the provision of information regarding the nature of dyslexia and the difficulties which the child might experience both in and out of school.

5.8 The Task Group recommends the development of further guidance materials for circulation to schools and parents, e.g. a "Good Practice Guide", the development of a CD -Rom etc.

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