

Current Provision for Pupils with Dyslexia at Primary Level

CURRENT PROVISION IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

A. Current Provision for Pupils with Dyslexia at Primary Level

Support by Class Teachers and Learning Support Teachers

The range of provision that is available at primary school level for pupils with dyslexia includes additional support from the class teacher, supplementary teaching from a learning-support teacher and special education provision for pupils with more significant difficulties.

The provisions outlined here are accurate at the time of production of "Understanding Dyslexia - a Guide for Schools". However, they are subject to change as a result of modifications in the method adopted by the Department of Education and Skills for allocating resources to schools. Details of any changes can be found on the website of the Department of Education and Skills, www.education.ie.

1. Additional Support from the Class Teacher

Schools should have in place whole-school prevention and early intervention programmes to meet the learning needs of pupils with dyslexia. Pupils with mild dyslexic difficulties can have their needs met

within class through differentiated support from their mainstream class teacher. The Primary School Curriculum offers breadth and flexibility as well as choices in the selection and sequencing of curriculum content. Mainstream class teachers should take account of individual differences by adapting the curriculum and differentiating their teaching approaches so as to meet the needs and differences of all pupils in their classes.

2. Supplementary Teaching from a Learning-Support Teacher

Pupils with specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia, whose difficulties are not severe enough to qualify for special education provision may receive supplementary teacher and/or other support from a learning support teacher, in line with the policies being implemented by the pupil's school. All primary schools are assigned a learning-support teacher, whose function is to provide additional learning support for pupils with low achievement. The *Learning-Support Guidelines* (2000) indicate that priority should be given to pupils who score at or below the 10th percentile on norm-referenced tests of literacy or numeracy. Learning-support teachers usually provide supplementary teaching to small groups of pupils or to individuals who are withdrawn to a learning-support room. In a minority of situations, supplementary teaching takes place in the mainstream classroom.

Provision of Special Education Support

Three forms of special education provision are made for pupils with dyslexia:

- enrolment in a regular class in a mainstream school with additional support from a resource teacher
- enrolment in a special class for pupils with specific learning disability in a designated mainstream school
- enrolment in a special school for pupils with specific learning disability.

1. Resource Teaching Support

Resource teachers are appointed to schools on an ex-quota basis to provide additional teaching support for pupils who have special educational needs arising from disabilities and are fully integrated into mainstream schools. The criteria for eligibility for resource teaching arising from a specific learning disability (including dyslexia) are outlined in a circular letter issued to schools in 2002 by the Department of Education and Skills. In the circular, it is stated that pupils with a specific learning disability are eligible for resource teaching if they have been assessed by a psychologist as:

- being of average intelligence or higher

- having a degree of learning disability, specific to basic skills in reading, writing or mathematics, which places them at or below the 2nd percentile on suitable, standardised norm-referenced tests

The caseload of a resource teacher is normally made up of pupils with a variety of special needs. Each pupil with a disability is given a weighting, determined by the nature and degree of disability and the current pupil-teacher ratio in special schools and special classes for that disability. A pupil with a specific learning disability currently counts for 1/11th of a teacher post and is normally allocated 2½ hours of resource teaching support each week.

2. Special Classes Attached to Designated Mainstream Schools

Special classes for pupils with specific learning disabilities (including dyslexia) have been established in designated mainstream schools where there is a sufficient number of pupils with such difficulties in the area to form a class. The pupil-teacher ratio for these classes is 11:1 and placement is for either one or two years. By June 2003, 20 special classes had been established – ten classes in Dublin, three in Limerick, two in both Clare and Wexford, and one each in Galway and Kerry.

In order to promote the inclusion of pupils with specific learning disability in mainstream classes, pupils who have been placed in a special class in a mainstream school are included in the mainstream enrolment figures for the school as well as for the special class. An enhanced capitation grant is payable to schools which have special classes for pupils with a specific learning disability.

The criteria for access to special classes and to special schools for specific learning disability are broadly similar to the criteria for allocation of resource teacher support. Pupils enrolling in a special school or special class for pupils with specific learning difficulties normally have completed Second Class in a primary school and are aged at least eight years.

3. Special Schools for Pupils with Specific Learning Disability

Four special primary schools for pupils with specific learning disability, including dyslexia have been established. Three of these schools are situated in Dublin and one in Cork. The four schools cater for approximately 250 pupils. The criteria for enrolment are the same as for special classes in designated ordinary schools. As is the case with special classes, these schools have a pupil-teacher ratio of 11:1. Placement of pupils in these schools is for one or two years, after which they return to mainstream education.

B. Current Provision for Pupils with Dyslexia at Post-Primary Level

Provision of Support by Subject, Learning-Support and Resource Teachers

Support for pupils with dyslexia attending post-primary schools is provided by subject teachers, learning-support teachers and resource teachers, while year heads, guidance counsellors, and other professionals may also provide input. Interventions may include the teaching of basic skills in reading and spelling, and extend to the development of self-regulated learning strategies, note taking skills, study skills, exam strategies, occupational exploration, accessing knowledge and skills, and obtaining reasonable accommodation in exams. For some pupils, the increased use of information and communication technologies is warranted.

1. Assistance from Learning-Support Teachers

There are 560 learning support teacher posts sanctioned at present in post-primary schools. Schools with more than 600 pupils are entitled to a 1.0 WTE (whole-time equivalent) post, while schools with fewer than 600 pupils are allocated a 0.5 WTE post. Each post is an ex-quota appointment covering 12 to 15 hours of instruction a week, and a further three hours for testing, diagnosis, contact with parents, and contact with fellow teachers.

2. Assistance from Resource Teachers

Resource teachers are allocated to post-primary schools to provide additional teaching support to pupils with disabilities including pupils with serious learning difficulties arising from dyslexia. Principal teachers of post-primary schools may apply to the Department of Education and Skills for resource teacher support for pupils with dyslexia, if it is considered that the school is unable from within existing resources to meet the needs of a pupil, or group of pupils. Application for additional resources on behalf of these is made to Teacher Section, Post-Primary Administration, Department of Education and Skills. Allocations are made by the Department of Education and Skills (with the SERC Report and the primary-level circulars as guidelines) following investigation by a psychologist, psychological assessment as required, and discussion with the principal and relevant teachers.

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