

Teaching Children with Reading Difficulties in Different Language Systems

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Developmental Dyslexia & Compulsory Education in the UK

Over the years developmental dyslexia has become increasingly recognised in the UK as an important type of *learning difficulty* that can give rise to *special educational needs*. This gradual acceptance of the term dyslexia has occurred simultaneously in the law (Chasty & Friel, 1991) and in government policy (**DfEE** - Department for Education and Employment, 1994; 1997).

Because of the formal recognition of dyslexia as a learning difficulty, the following detailed provisions from Key Stage-1 to Key Stage-5 are prescribed to all the primary and secondary schools in the UK in order to support children with special educational needs including dyslexia during their education. The Key Stages were first defined in the 1988 Education Reform Act to accompany the first introduction of the National Curriculum in the UK. A Key Stage is a stage of the curriculum, setting out the educational knowledge expected of pupils at various ages with six stages, i.e., KS-0 (aged 3-5), KS-1 (aged 5-7), KS-2 (aged 7-11), KS-3 (aged 11-14), KS-4 (aged 14-16) and KS-5 (aged 16-19).

Key Stages (KS) 1 to 5

Stage-1: Children in Reception Class (aged 4.5 and 5)

All the children are screened for the following skills:

(i) **Number Knowledge**

(ii) **Independency**

(iii) **Phoneme Awareness (PA)** which includes the following tests:

- Rhyming (e.g., does /book/ rhyme with /look/?)
- Word Fluency (e.g., name as many words starting with /b/)
- Oddity Out (e.g., /butter/, /bat/, /house/?)

Children with possible LD such as Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, etc. are monitored continuously on their development.

At this stage parents themselves often raise concerns about their children to Class Teachers.

Stage-1: Children aged 5 (continue to 11 ~ 16)

“**Literacy Hour**” is incorporated into the curriculum, as reading and writing skills are regarded as very important.

At this stage, a few children emerge as having LD, which includes Short-Term Memory deficit, Difficulty in finding directions, Left-Right confusion, Difficulty in organising things, etc.

Based on the “**Code of Practice**” (DfEE) appropriate provisions are developed which address “*Special Needs*” including dyslexia.

At the end of every term (i.e., three terms per year), the development of these children with LD is assessed and monitored.

When a concern over a child’s LD is raised either by his/her parent(s) or class teacher, an **IEP (Individual Educational Plan)** is determined at school including *setting achievable targets*, and how to achieve these targets.

Note:

Parents are also encouraged to join in the Discussion meetings.

Stage-2: Children aged 5 (continue to 11 ~ 16)

*Parents have an obligation to see/understand their child’s **IEP (Individual Educational Plan)**.*

A Teaching Assistant (unqualified teaching support) helps the child with LD in the classes.

Notes:

The frequency of this support is determined by the severity of the LD (e.g., once a week, 5-Hrs per week, etc.).

*Each school, i.e., headmaster/mistress has **complete autonomy** as to how to support the children with LD at his/her school.*

Stage-3: Children aged greater than 5 (continue to 11 ~ 16)

When a child’s LD (including dyslexia) persists, a **SENCO (Special Educational Need Coordinator)** is brought in to assess formally the child’s educational need.

Often an **Educational Psychologist** who works for a local authority is involved in the assessment. Together a **revised IEP** is made.

Note:

Parents’ involvement in revising the IEP is strongly encouraged.

Stages 4 ~ 5: Children aged greater than 5 (continue to 11 ~ 16)

After Stage-3, a child’s LD still persists, and the performance of age-appropriate reading/writing tests falls in the bottom 2%, the child’s educational needs are further investigated.

Once these needs are identified, the **Statementing Panel** at the Local Educational Authority issues a “**Statement**” to the child.

Notes:

The Statement also indicates *a level of financial support per Statemented Child* from the local authority to the school, e.g., for an older child at secondary school, a computer can be purchased.

When the child's educational needs are greater than what have been provided thus far (e.g., communication disorders), annually a specific fund to address ***these special educational needs*** of this child is given to his/her school *to employ a trained part-time Teaching Assistant (TA)*.

Note:

The headmaster/mistress has autonomy here too, e.g., the TA can support other similarly affected children in the same school, if the headmaster/headmistress decides to do.

Monitoring Progress & Communicating Findings

It is vitally important to be aware with whom the findings should be shared and how these findings are disseminated, so that the educational needs of each child with LD can continuously be monitored and appropriately addressed in order for the child with LD to be given appropriate support/provision.

For Primary School Children:

SENCOs, LA (Local Authority) Dyslexia Advisers & Statementing Panels, Educational Psychologists & Senior Advisory Teachers might be kept informed.

For Secondary School Children:

There is more emphasis on communicating findings within the School with Heads of Year, SENCOs, and teachers kept informed, and individual IEPs (Individual Education Plans) are shared.

Local Authorities are informed through the Annual Review, with findings also being communicated to the LA (local Authority) Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) Team, and exam boards.

Teachers' Perspectives: Key Features of Specialist Dyslexia Teaching identified by Teachers

In implementing the above provisions/support, school teachers themselves identified the following key features of specialist teaching for children with dyslexia with reference to the Key Stages.

KS (Key Stage) - 1 & 2:

Children aged between 5-7 & 7-11

- (i) Multi-Sensory Teaching and Learning was most highly rated feature.
- (ii) Planning and Delivering Lessons so that pupils experience success.
- (iii) Planning and Adapting Programmes to meet individual needs.
- (iv) Teaching a structured programme of phonics.
- (v) Building in regular opportunities for ***Consolidation & Reinforcement of Teaching Points already covered.***

KS (Key Stage) - 3 & 4

Children aged between 11-14 & 14-16

- (i) Teaching pupils effective learning strategies
- (ii) Multi-Sensory Teaching and Learning
- (iii) Planning and Adapting Programmes to meet individual needs.
- (iv) Teaching pupils/students to be aware of their own learning strategies
- (v) Showing sensitivity to the emotional needs of pupils/students
- (vi) Promoting the ability of pupils/students to plan & use their time effectively in different learning contexts

Good Practice for Identifying/Monitoring children with LD/Special Educational Needs, and Providing Appropriate Support for these Children

The following Figure-1 depicts a flowchart from identifying children with LD to providing necessary support for them, which was devised by an inclusion manager at a primary school in the UK. This chart shows how these necessary procedures take place at this particular school. Because of the educational policies/legislations for children with SEN/SEND discussed above, all the primary schools in the UK more or less follow similar procedures in order to identify/monitor/provide provisions to children with SEN/SEND.

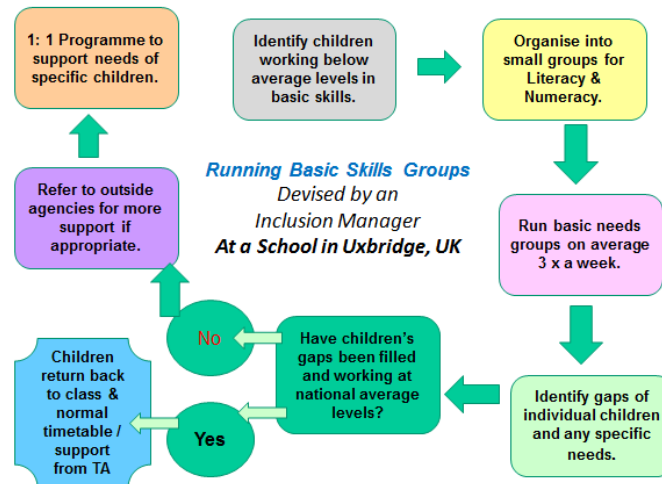


Figure-1 A Flowchart for Identifying/Monitoring Children with LD & for Providing Support for these children

Diagnostic Test of Word Reading Processes (DTWRP) (Forum for Research in Literacy and Language (FRILL), 2012)

“The Diagnostic Test of Word Reading Processes makes available for the first time to teachers in the UK a diagnostic tool that has long been used in research studies, and that enables precise specification of the areas of difficulty experienced by individual children in developing fluent and automatic word reading processes” (p.vii).

The characteristics of the DTWRP which no other diagnostic reading tests include:

- (i) **Matched regular words** (e.g., made, gave) and **nonwords** (e.g., mave) by compiling nonwords from segments of regular words.
- (ii) **Matched regular words** (mouse) and **exception words** (ghost) according to their **frequency of occurrence** in books read by schoolchildren in the UK.
- (iii) **First to provide normative data** obtained from a large and representative sample of school children in England.
- (iv) **The first test available to teachers in the UK to make precise specification of the areas of difficulty** experienced by individual children in developing fluent and automatic word reading processes.

The DTWRP can also help ‘**school teachers**’ to design a focussed intervention in English.

Based on the Dual Route Cascaded (DRC) model of reading in English (a computer-simulation model) developed by Coltheart and his colleagues (2001), the DRWRP can identify three types of reading difficulties, i.e., *Phonological, Lexical-Semantic, and Mixed-*

Pattern Reading Difficulties, offering the following interventions appropriate for each type of difficulty.

A. Phonological Reading Difficulties:

Intervention to tackle (1) inadequate knowledge of GPC Rules, and (2) inadequate phoneme blending skills.

B. Lexical-Semantic Reading Difficulties:

Intervention to tackle (1) inadequately developed oral vocabulary, (2) inefficient paired-association learning, and (3) lack of exposure to print (i.e., little time spent in reading).

C. Mixed-Pattern of Reading Difficulties:

Intervention to tackle both (A) and (B). By definition, these pupils are experiencing difficulty in developing both lexical-semantic and phonological processes for reading.

It is clear from the above, **any support/remediation** for those with reading difficulties/dyslexia has to be **evidence based**, i.e., informed by research findings. It appears to be still the case that practitioners who are unaware of these research findings might give children with dyslexia inappropriate/ineffective remediation programmes.

Also, these support and **remediation programmes** will have to be sensitive to the characteristics of different orthographies (see Uno, Haruhara, Kaneko & Wydell (2006-2016) the Screening Test of Reading and Writing for Japanese Primary School Children (STRAW) for Japanese).

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