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The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Developing a

Dyslexia-Friendly
Learning Environment

FOREWORD

In recent years, there has been increasing recognition of the importance of self evaluation in contributing to improvement in education. Through rigorous self evaluation a school or college can recognise its strengths and put in place processes to ensure that those areas identified as strengths continue to flourish, while other areas in need of improvement are prioritised and developed.

The Inspectorate and the Department of Education (DE) have collaborated with others to produce many resources, electronic and paper-based, to help promote improvement in education in general and in the provision for special needs, in particular.

In 2002, a report by the Task Group on Dyslexia highlighted, as a concern, that support for dyslexia was underdeveloped in the majority of schools and other educational settings. The report also identified the need for training and support for classroom teachers and lecturers in identifying and providing additional help for those learners with dyslexia.

One of the Task Group's recommendations (5.1) was that guidance materials should be developed for circulation to schools and parents. This document was compiled in response to that recommendation and should be used in conjunction with the Dyslexia CD ROM and DVD, which have been produced by the Department of Education and Science in the Republic of Ireland.

Our thanks are due to all those who helped to compile this valuable publication, particularly the members of the Dyslexia Working Group[1], chaired by Mrs Marleen Collins. We hope that those who use this guidance find it to be both useful and practical in promoting improvement in the provision and support for learners with dyslexia.

Chief Inspector

**Permanent Secretary
Department of Education**

[1] *Listed on page 57*

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NOTE

It is recommended that you read this document in its entirety, as a pupil's difficulties may not be limited to either the relevant age group or educational phase and may be highlighted or discussed in a section related to another age group.

WHAT IS DYSLEXIA?

The Report of the Northern Ireland Task Group on Dyslexia (2002) (which can be accessed on the DE Website at - http://www.deni.gov.uk/parents/special_ed_needs/dyslexia/dyslexia.pdf) states that:

> "Dyslexia is manifested in a continuum of difficulties related to the acquisition of basic skills in reading, spelling, writing and/or number, such difficulties being unexpected in relation to an individual's other abilities. Dyslexia can be characterised at the neurological, cognitive and behavioural levels. It is typically described by inefficient information processing, including difficulties in phonological processing, working memory, rapid naming and automaticity of basic skills. Difficulties in organisation, sequencing, and motor skills may also be present."

Under the direction of the Regional Strategy Group for Special Education a working group of Educational Psychologists was asked to try to "operationalise" this definition – in other words to translate it into terms, which would be useful to Educational Psychologists working in the field and understandable to teachers and parents. This working group has produced the following definition.

Dyslexia is best described as a continuum of difficulties in learning to read, spell or write, which persist despite appropriate learning opportunities. These difficulties are not typical of performance in most other cognitive and academic areas.

There may be associated difficulties in such areas as:

- **phonological processing;**

- **short-term memory;**

- **sequencing;**

- **number skills;**

- **motor function;**

- **organisational ability.**

At its most basic and, therefore, at its most simple level, the definition requires that three conditions are met:

1. that there is evidence of significant difficulties in reading, writing or spelling using tests which are recently standardised and psychometrically robust;

2. that there is evidence that these difficulties are not typical of performance in other areas such as thinking skills/oral ability and other areas of the curriculum or are unexpected given the teacher's or parents' knowledge of the child's ability in these areas;

3. that there is evidence that the difficulties are persistent despite appropriate learning opportunities.

These are the so-called, **"hard signs"**, which establish the basis on which a definitive diagnosis can be made. They are referred to as "hard signs" because they **must** be present in every case otherwise the diagnosis is inappropriate. There are other so-called, **"soft signs"**, which are often characteristic of individuals with dyslexia. Many of these are set out below. They are referred to as "soft signs" because some (and in some cases, many) of them are present in individuals with dyslexia, but some individuals with dyslexia show very few, or sometimes none, of these signs. Conversely, some individuals showing such signs are fluent readers and spellers and have no history of literacy difficulty. These soft signs cannot therefore be used alone for diagnostic purposes. For a teacher in a classroom they are signs, which indicate that the child may be **"at risk"**. Commonly reported, "soft signs", are included amongst the indicators set out in the following sections.

A number of suggestions and strategies are offered throughout this booklet – both general and specific to particular stages – to help children and students with dyslexia. The strategies fall into three main categories:

- Skills teaching

- Motivational strategies

- By-pass strategies

There is a tendency for teachers (and parents) to concentrate on the need for skills teaching and, while this is essential at all levels, concentrating solely on skills teaching can lead to the assumption that it is only specially trained teachers who can teach children with dyslexia. It is also important to remember that the nature of the skills to be taught or fostered changes as the children get older. It is equally important to focus on the other two strategies and all teachers, irrespective of the age of children they teach or the nature of their subject specialism, need to plan their programmes to include motivational strategies and by-pass strategies.

Skills teaching

An individual needs to develop a wide range of skills to become fluent in literacy. At the initial stages of learning to read the obvious skills are:

- letter recognition;

- phonological awareness;

- letter-sound correspondence;

- recognition of familiar letter strings, eg 'ing';

- letter formation etc.

These skills are ordinarily a central part of the educational experience of children in their first few years at school. As they grow older they will need to develop skills such as:

- skimming;

- scanning;

- reading for information;

- dictionary skills etc.

These are not necessarily new skills since literacy acquisition is recursive, ie development is charted not so much by the acquisition of new skills, but by a more sophisticated ability to handle familiar ones. These higher-level skills are

particularly important in helping the individual to develop **research skills**. Research skills aim to empower the individual to find information for himself/herself and organise it into meaningful and easily handled units. As well as reading skills, research skills involve note-taking skills (highlighting, summarising, abbreviating, paraphrasing etc). They also involve learning strategies to summarise and reduce information such as charts, flow diagrams, mind maps etc. As a parallel process, children need to develop skills associated with writing from being able to spell simple words, through to the complex skills involved in essay writing.

Motivational strategies

Children who have dyslexia frequently develop negative attitudes to reading and writing activities and sometimes to the whole process of learning. They can often display difficulty in concentrating, difficulty in organising themselves, and sometimes they can develop skills in distracting the class and the teacher. These are invariably manifestations of motivational difficulties. They try to avoid the task because they are afraid of failure.

A teaching programme therefore has to:

- ■   try to guarantee a high level of success (at least in the early stages);

- ■   use personalised, high interest materials;

- ■   use positive reinforcement strategies;

- ■   adopt realistic and realisable targets.

The need to allow the child to experience success, particularly in the early stages of an educational programme, means that the work expected of him/her and the small-step progression, which is necessary, creates an anomaly. Teachers may have to present work which may be regarded as "easy" or "babyish" to a child who, in terms of his/her oral/intellectual skills is able to cope with much higher levels of work. It requires very careful management of the child's confidence and motivation to persuade him or her that the level of work, the repetition and the over-learning involved will eventually pay dividends. It is also critical that the material presented, as far as is possible, is of high interest and low readability.

By-pass strategies

By-pass strategies are strategies, which are devised to minimise or "by-pass" the child's difficulties. They are essentially devices to help the child access the curriculum in spite of the problems, which he or she experiences. Examples of such strategies would include:

- personal word books/dictionaries;

- personalised lists of key subject vocabulary;

- information technology such as laptops;

- special assessment/examination arrangements;

- special arrangements for note taking etc.

When pupils make significant use of laptop computers or class PCs using word processing packages, they need to receive specific teaching and be given opportunities to practise keyboard skill to improve their speed and accuracy.

These general strategies are reflected and detailed in the suggestions which are contained in the following sections of the booklet.

GENERAL INDICATORS AND STRATEGIES

A pupil may display any of the following characteristics. The presence of a number of these characteristics may indicate that the child is developing dyslexic learning difficulties. When considering these characteristics, it is important to remain mindful of the following:

a.   No child will have all these characteristics.

b.   Some characteristics are more common than others.

c.   The number of symptoms seen in a particular child does not give an indication as to whether the dyslexia is mild or severe. It is important to consider if the behaviours are chronic and appear in clusters.

General Indicators

- Appears bright and able but can't get thoughts down on paper.

- Reading achievement is below expectation.

- Can be clumsy.

- May become withdrawn and isolated.

- Memory problems:

  - Has difficulty following instructions.

  - Has difficulty remembering anything in a sequential order, eg tables, days of the week, the alphabet, multiplication.

  - Has difficulty processing information.

- Poor time concepts, planning and organisational skills.

- An apparent lack of concentration.

- Excessive tiredness due to the amount of concentration and effort required.

- Remembers best when <u>shown</u> what to do rather than when <u>told</u> what to do.

- Will have a preferred learning style such as:-

  Read the work - *this is the visual channel*
  Read aloud onto tape.

  Write it - *this is the kinaesthetic channel*
  Writing down the main points helps commit them to memory.

  Say it - *this is the auditory channel*
  Auditory learners like to hear information. Reading notes aloud helps to reinforce memory, check it again, this is using the thinking channel.

  Reduce it - *this requires thinking skills*
  Highlight the key words and note the associated ideas, try mind mapping, use coloured pens to list the key facts and number them.

- May have narrow, restricted written work in contrast to rich expressive language.

- Performs unevenly day to day.

- May have sensitivity to glare.

- Family history is significant as dyslexia is often inherited. But remember that parents may not be aware of their own dyslexia.

For a teacher in the classroom, the indicators listed above should raise the possibility that the pupil has dyslexia.

Where there is a strong likelihood that a pupil may have dyslexia, even if a formal "diagnosis" has not been made, the pupil's teaching programme

should be drawn up, based on the suggestions and guidelines for good practice contained in this booklet.

Some general strategies

- Foster pupil positive self-esteem.

- Make expectations high for intellectual stimulation but reasonable for written responses.

- Be prepared to explain things many times and in a variety of ways.

- When giving instructions be slow, quiet and deliberate in your instruction, allowing time for the meaning of the words to 'sink in'.

- Practice and over learning are vital for success.

- Where possible use multi-sensory methods of teaching; these integrate the visual, aural, oral and kinaesthetic senses to consolidate the learning experience.

- Be aware of different learning styles and be flexible in your teaching style.

- Use coloured paper instead of white.

- Modify teaching materials, control readability, print and presentation.

- Modify homework format and expectations.

Other possible indicators and strategies have been recorded for different age groups and phases in the following sections.

INDICATORS IN THE EARLY YEARS (3-5 YRS)

Talking and Listening

- Is later than most children in learning to speak.

- Has difficulty pronouncing some, especially multi-syllabic, words.

- Has difficulty separating spoken words into sounds and blending (ie has difficulty with phonological awareness).

- Experiences auditory discrimination problems.

- Is prone to spoonerisms (eg chish and fips for fish and chips).

Early Literacy Skills

- Is slow to add new words to own vocabulary.

- Exhibits delays in acquiring emergent literacy skills (eg understanding that written language progresses from left to right, discriminating between letters, words and sentences).

Memory

- Is unable to follow multi-step directions or routines.

- Experiences problems learning the alphabet.

- Has trouble learning numbers, days of the week, colours and shapes.

- Has trouble learning to write and spell his/her own name.

Motor Control

- Is developing fine motor skills more slowly than other children.

- May experience difficulty learning to use a knife and fork.

- May experience difficulty learning to dress, eg what goes on first?

- Has difficulty in copying shapes with pencil or in colouring within lines.

- May have difficultly in doing simple jigsaws.

- Experiences difficulties with poor co-ordination, difficulties with buttons, laces, etc.

Behaviour

- Has poor concentration, is easily distracted, doesn't settle to tasks.

A strong focus on prevention of learning problems between ages 3 and 5 may result in the identification of some 'false positives' – children who may be identified as being at risk of developing learning difficulties arising from dyslexia and who may not develop such difficulties over time. Nevertheless, it is possible to prevent or at least minimise the effects of learning difficulties by providing appropriate interventions at this stage.

The main approach should be 'when in doubt, act'.

STRATEGIES FOR THE EARLY YEARS (3-5YRS)

Talking and Listening

- Develop the awareness of sounds (phonological awareness), for example, play 'I Spy' and 'odd-man-out' activities.

- Work on alliteration, for example, ask the child to say which word is the odd man out, eg sap/sun/pig/sad.

- Play musical instruments and get children to identify the instruments.

- Play 'Simple Simon Says' and other listening games.

- Use activities aimed at developing an awareness of sounds eg things to bang, blow or shake.

Early Literacy Skills

- Develop awareness of words and letters by playing games such as lotto/snap.

- Use taped stories - children follow the story in a book as they listen to the story from the tape.

- Use big books, which are visually attractive and have large print.

- Provide a range of printed material to help develop the notion that, "I am a reader".

Memory

- Ensure you have the child's full attention before speaking, for example, call the child by their name at the beginning of a sentence.

- Simplify instructions – pause between each part of an instruction, for example, 'Before going out to play (pause) tidy up the jigsaws (pause) and go to the toilet'.

- Use non-verbal gestures, for example, pointing, facial cues to support verbal instructions.

- Make important words which convey understanding stand out, for example, pronounce slightly louder eg TIDY up the JIGSAWS.

- Link seasons and events, sequence days and months of year through visual cues and pictures.

Motor Control

- Colour code shoes on the sole or inside with a bright symbol to help distinguish left from right.

- Mark the toes of socks with bright cotton to prevent the child from fumbling while attempting to put his toe into the heel of the sock.

- Make use of commercially available aids or cardboard cut-outs to help the child learn to tie shoe laces.

- When teaching a child to button a coat or a cardigan, teach him to always begin at the bottom where he can easily see what he is doing.

- Stand behind the child to teach him to do a tie or bow. (If the child is left handed and the teacher right handed, face the child.) Get him to begin with the wide end, which should be twice as long as the narrow end.

- Use Velcro fastening shoes and trainers whenever possible.

Behaviour

- Involve the children in short tasks.

- Provide immediate praise.

- Use multi-sensory activities eg hands on activities and visually stimulating materials.

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- Get the pupil to repeat an instruction to ensure complete understanding of task has occurred before allowing the child to begin activity.

- Use self-esteem enhancement exercises, for example, praising positive compliant behaviour, tactfully ignoring inappropriate behaviour.

PRIMARY SCHOOL INDICATORS (5-11YRS)

Talking and Listening

- Has difficulty learning the connection between letters and sounds.

- Has difficulty separating words into sounds and blending sounds to form words.

- Has difficulty repeating multi-syllabic words (eg emeny for enemy, pasghetti for spaghetti).

- Has word retrieval difficulties, unable to 'find the word', to pull it out of long-term memory.

Reading

- Has difficulty decoding single words (reading single words in isolation).

- Has poor word attack skills, especially for new words.

- Confuses small or 'easy' words: at/to; said/and.

- May make constant reading errors such as:

  - Letter reversals (eg b/d as in dog for bog).

  - Letter inversions (eg m/w).

  - Letter transpositions (eg felt and left).

  - Word reversals (eg tip for pit).

  - Word substitutions (eg house for home).

- Reads slowly with little expression or fluency.

- Is slow at discerning and learning prefixes, suffixes, root words and other morphemes as part of reading and spelling strategies.

- Reading comprehension is better than single-word reading.

- Listening comprehension is better than reading comprehension.

Spelling

- Spelling is inappropriate for age and general ability (eg spelling the same word differently on the same page, use of bizarre spelling patterns, frequent letter omissions, additions and transpositions).

- Poor spelling contributes to poor written expression.

- Confusion of similar letters, eg b/d, p/q.

- Frequently transposes letters within words.

- Uses phonetic 'alternative' spellings (ate for eight).

Writing

- Has difficulty in copying accurately, especially from the blackboard.

- Poor handwriting – inconsistent spacing, poor formation of letters, untidiness of presentation.

- An inappropriate or inefficient pencil grip often with a high degree of tension.

- Interspersing of upper and lower case letters.

Memory

- An apparent lack of concentration or attention.

- Forgetfulness/ absentmindedness.

- Difficulty remembering oral directions or instructions (particularly a sequence of instructions).

- Remembers better when shown what to do rather than when told what to do.

- Problems with rote memory, eg tables or learning poetry.

- Difficulty remembering anything in a sequential order (days of the week, alphabet).

Behaviour

- Lacks self-confidence, particularly around reading and writing tasks.

- Uses avoidance tactics when asked to read orally or write.

- Poor motivation.

- Poor self-esteem.

PRIMARY SCHOOL STRATEGIES (5-11YRS)

Talking and Listening

■ Provide phonic, structured, cumulative, multi-sensory tuition.

■ Use practical activities/games that make phonemes more concrete.

■ Provide training in listening skills.

■ Encourage the child to seek clarification.

Reading

■ Use visual, aural, oral and kinaesthetic senses. LOOK, SAY/HEAR, TRACE, COVER, WRITE, CHECK.

■ Build on what has been securely taught leaving nothing to chance.

■ Teach for automaticity – shared reading and repeated reading are useful techniques for developing fluency.

■ Provide daily opportunities to read and write for real purposes.

■ Select material to match current ability and interest level.

■ Use personalised high interest materials to aid motivation.

■ Develop a paired reading programme with parents or peers to maximise exposure to language, promote fluency and expression and boost confidence.

■ Never ask the pupil to read aloud in class. Reserve this for a quiet time away from the rest of the class.

■ Emphasise comprehension and develop it by reading each word or sentence twice, rewriting text using simplified language, and using procedures such as cloze.

- Use ICT aids such as text-reading software.

Spelling

- Choose a structured multi-sensory spelling programme.

- Support independent writing with word walls.

- Encourage the child to use spelling resources to check the 'I'm not sure' words, eg personalised dictionary, spellchecker, ask a spelling buddy etc.

- Accept oral responses.

Writing

- Introduce joined writing at an early stage.

- Experiment with pencil grips and different types and sizes of writing implements.

- Make sure that words on the blackboard are printed clearly.

- Write alternative lines in different colours.

- Allow plenty of time for copying from the board.

- Leave notes on the blackboard as long as possible.

- Notes or handouts are much more useful to the pupil with dyslexia.

- Use scaffolding such as writing frames and plans.

- Reduce writing demands by the use of mind maps, flow diagrams etc.

- Use voice recording to a Dictaphone.

- Use a scribe.

- Mark written work on content, tick what is correct rather than draw attention to errors.

Memory

- Ensure the pupil has understood and remembered instructions.

- Ask pupil to repeat back any instructions given.

- Back up oral instructions with visual cues.

- Present information in graphical as well as verbal form, eg tables, flow charts, graphs, mind maps, spider diagrams.

- Use rhythm and music to facilitate retention of tables etc.

- Explore the use of mnemonics, eg **F**ather **A**nd **M**other **I** **L**ove **Y**ou = family.

Behaviour

- Praise whenever possible.

- Acknowledge the pupil's strengths, focus on achievement, encourage outside interests.

- Set realistic targets and expect success. Discuss difficulties with the child, reassuring him that you understand the problems are not linked with stupidity, laziness, carelessness etc.

- Incorporate self-esteem enhancement exercises in your teaching.

POST-PRIMARY INDICATORS (12+ YRS)

Speaking and Listening

- Still mispronounces or misuses some words.

- Word finding can be difficult.

- Difficulty following instructions.

Reading

- Is still reading slowly and dysfluently with many inaccuracies.

- Misreads words, eg hysterical for historical.

- Poor reading accuracy, fluency or speed interferes with reading comprehension.

Spelling

- Continues to experience serious spelling difficulties – use of bizarre spelling patterns, letter omissions, additions and transpositions.

Writing

- Has better oral skills than written skills.

- Uses avoidance tactics when asked to read orally or write.

- Has difficulty planning, sequencing and organising written text.

- Has difficulty with written syntax or punctuation.

- Has difficulty skimming, scanning and/or proof-reading written text.

- Has trouble summarising or outlining.

- Has problems in taking notes and copying from the board.

Memory

- Has poor retention skills.

- Has problems recalling the names of some words or objects.

Reasoning – difficulty in organising and integrating thoughts

- Has poor planning and organisational skills.

- Has poor time management skills.

- Has trouble with non-literal or figurative language, eg idioms, proverbs.

Motor co-ordination – difficulty co-ordinating eye and hand

- Has slow, dysfluent and/or illegible handwriting.

- Still uses awkward pen/pencil grip.

- Presentation of work is poor.

Behaviour

- Procrastinates and/or avoids reading and writing tasks.

- Does not complete assignments or class work or does not hand them in.

- Is slow in answering questions, especially open-ended questions.

- Has more difficulty in language-based subjects, eg English and history, than in more practically based subjects.

- Lacks self-confidence in own ability to achieve and improve.

- Erratic performance from day to day.

POST-PRIMARY STRATEGIES

Speaking

- Encourage pupil to sub vocalise while working independently.

- Speak slowly and distinctly as many pupils have difficulty following and processing fast speech.

- Cue a pupil quietly to bring them back on task.

Reading

- Never expect a pupil to read aloud. If absolutely necessary, allow preparation time beforehand.

- Where possible, provide alternatives to reading text, eg audiotapes, drama, debates, CD ROMS to support or replace text etc.

- When producing worksheets, control readability and simplify language. Reduce extraneous information and highlight important facts.

- Use a multi-sensory teaching approach – LOOK, SAY/HEAR, TRACE, COVER, WRITE, CHECK.

Spelling

- Work towards logical spelling.

- Games/ICT aids are very useful and motivational to reinforce learning.

- Present spellings in various formats to inject novelty and motivation, eg mnemonics, visual format, tape recorder etc.

- Develop lists of subject vocabulary in a personal word book.

- Highlight/underline difficult vocabulary or spellings in longer passages of text.

■   Help pupils to use a dictionary, thesaurus, encyclopaedia.

Writing

■   Write in language that is easily read and understood. Always check the readability of the exercise.

■   Use short sentences and simple sentence structure.

■   Train pupils to answer written questions and plan written work.

■   Avoid lengthy copying and unnecessary dictation. Provide photocopies where possible.

■   Encourage pupils to proof read their writing.

Memory

■   Teach efficient strategies, eg rehearsing and chunking, to support memory.

■   Avoid unnecessary rote learning.

■   Give direct and explicit instructions to increase the chance of retention, recall and understanding.

Learning

■   Link prior knowledge with new information when teaching.

■   Break down learning into small sequential steps.

■   At the end of a lesson provide a written or oral summary with headings and subheadings to help with organisational skills.

Behaviour

■   Build confidence through the development of areas of strength or particular interest, eg sport, music, art.

- Be constructive and positive in order to maintain motivation.

- Rewards should be frequent and deserved. Reward effort as well as success.

- Show empathy, concern and understanding.

- Use discrete cues to keep a pupil on task.

- Teach positive 'self-talk', eg 'I did that well'.

- Use routine, clear directions and accessible goals to help pupils feel more secure.

Evaluation

- Allow credit for hands-on activities and areas of strength.

- Encourage self-correction to increase learning and self-awareness.

- Always mark positively and whenever possible, with the pupil present.

- Allow extra time for taking tests, where appropriate.

- Make allowances for tiredness with some dyslexic pupils.

- Use alternatives to written tests.

- Provide detailed guidelines for revision.

- Teach study skills, eg use of time, mind mapping, reading the questions, use of reference materials and general organisational skills.

- Modify homework format and expectations.

- Encourage parental support.

THIRD LEVEL EDUCATION

When students move into third level education they move into a different learning environment from school. Teaching is mostly delivered in a lecture format and the remainder of the learning has to be done independently by the student him/herself. Such independent learning means they often need to acquire different reading, research, learning and revision strategies, exam and study techniques, time management and organisational skills.

Previously, each third level institution was required by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) to have a disability statement setting out their policy for supporting students with disabilities, including specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia. Such a policy is even more important in the light of the Special Education Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005 (SENDO), which will require each educational institution to make 'reasonable adjustments' to the physical learning environment and curriculum, so that such students are not disadvantaged. For students with dyslexia this may include special exam arrangements, photocopying of lecture notes, extended library loan facilities, the provision of readers and scribes, sympathetic consideration for spelling and grammar errors in written work, and referral to adult literacy specialists and study support tutors.

If the student suspects that he/she has dyslexia or if the lecturer suspects that this might be the case, he/she should seek out the Disability Adviser in the institution for a confidential assessment by a psychologist or dyslexia specialist of possible specific learning difficulties. There is often a computer-screening test on the network, which students can take independently as a preliminary stage in the proceedings. Once formally identified as dyslexic then the appropriate internal and external support will be put into place.

If the student has already been identified as having a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, they should declare this on their UCAS form or on any application forms required to be completed by the institution. This will ensure that the Disability Adviser or Learning Support Co-coordinator in the institution can meet them, carry out a Needs Assessment and organise appropriate support for their learning.

If the student is in Further Education, the institution is given additional money through the Department of Education's Additional Support Fund to purchase tutorial support and equipment to meet the student's needs. If the student is in Higher

Education, he/she will be given assistance with applications for the Disabled Students' Allowance, a special financial allowance available from either the Education and Library Boards, Department of Health or Social Services Inspectorate. This enables him/her to purchase equipment to support learning such as dictaphones, speaking spellcheckers and dictionaries, computers, printers, scanners and sound-assisted dyslexia specific software which is theirs to keep, together with payment for support tutors such as dyslexia teachers, IT and maths tutors, note takers, readers and library helpers.

STRATEGIES FOR LECTURERS IN THIRD LEVEL EDUCATION

If you recognise that a student is having literacy difficulties please ensure that you refer them to the Disability Adviser for a confidential psychometric assessment and specialised help.

You may help in the following ways:

- In lectures, present material in a variety of ways, eg from the general to the specific as well as specific to general and use visual cues where possible.

- Begin each lecture by reviewing the previous one and giving an overview of the topics and structure of the current one.

- Provide skeleton notes at the start of a lecture with section headings, main points and important details, as an example of concrete note-taking.

- Provide a handout of the worked examples or the references which are to be written on the board.

- Ensure that lecture notes are available on disk, from the Internet or from an Intranet.

- Pause and sum up frequently when giving instructions or explanations.

- Give out the plan and the reading for the following lecture in advance.

- Allow more time to see students with dyslexia who may be confused over simple points while understanding more complex ones.

- Allow students with dyslexia more time for reading and writing.

- Offer to check their notes and encourage non-linear types.

- Help with analysis and plan of essays, mark one for content only and the other for transcription errors.

- Offer auditory-visual sources on subject matter, eg Open University (OU) programmes and TV documentaries.

- Offer samples of written work, essays, reports, projects.

- Make sure instructions are clear and written down for the student to check.

- Be explicit in expectations and communications.

- Stress self-checking and give opportunities for self-assessment.

- When there is an error in a sequence, retrace all the steps rather than point out the mistake.

- Be aware of extra time, effort and concentration the student with dyslexia has to bring to a task involving written language.

LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS

If you experience persistent difficulties with note-taking, writing essays, reading for research purposes, writing under time pressure, numeracy or time management, please talk to the Disability Adviser about a confidential assessment for dyslexia. Recommendations for academic study needs will then be implemented, appropriate equipment ordered through the Disabled Students Allowance and referral made to suitably qualified support tutors.

An effective learning programme needs to be individualised, based on a structured, multi-sensory approach. You should learn in smaller chunks and give yourself more opportunities for repetition and over learning. You should also make it meaningful, relying on your understanding rather than memory and you should use right-brained skills like imagination, patterns, colour and visualisation.

You should:

- tape record lectures and only write summarising words, copy main points and terminology from overhead;

- ask lecturers for lecture notes on disk or for them to be made available on an Intranet or on the Internet;

- ask to photocopy a fellow student's lecture notes or request a note taker if the lecture can not taped or if no handouts are available;

- scan texts into computer, with different coloured backgrounds and text, and have dyslexia specific software read them aloud;

- use transparent coloured acetates to lay over printed texts to stabilise print and ease reading;

- have support tutor read and/or tape important chapters in textbooks to avoid mistakes in interpretation;

- colour code notes, folders, books and files to help organise work into different topics;

- for essays use spider plans, mind maps or structuring software to organise ideas;

- try to find a model laboratory project/report to use as a format;

- use word processors with sound based spellchecker to write essays even at drafting stage;

- write draft in numbered sentences to help order and structure;

- try taping an early essay draft before the transcription stage or else employ voice recognition software;

- always proof read several times to help spot mistakes and recognise misspelled words, or ask someone else to proof read for you;

- proof read by having the sound based software read the essay draft aloud;

- talk over previously marked fellow students' essays in a group, discussing the ideas first and then grammar, spelling and structure;

- use electronic dictionary to aid spelling if access to a computer is not possible and build up your own alphabetised technical spelling dictionary;

- use spatial ways of recording information such as flow charts, blocks, graphs and family trees;

- use mnemonics such as acronyms, rhythm and music to help store and retrieve facts;

- visualise the locations where facts have been learnt, or mentally put separate facts into linked places, such as rooms of a house, ie method of loci;

- draw pictures and diagrams of information and use experiential methods of learning;

- for revision, make colour coded glossary cards with key names, theories, vocabulary and formulae to help check spelling;

- make topic index cards with summaries of key theories, experiments, and ideas with authors, dates and references.

DEVELOPING A DYSLEXIA-FRIENDLY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

One of the challenges to schools presented by the Special Educational Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005 (SENDO) to schools is that they will be expected to become 'inclusive' in the sense that they will be able to offer meaningful educational programmes to pupils with a wide range of disabilities. Making provision for pupils with dyslexia who will represent a large proportion (possibly as much as 10%) of pupils with special educational needs will be a necessary first step in this process, as these measures will benefit not only the pupils who are dyslexic but other pupils who have other learning difficulties.

i. Conducting an Audit of Current Provision

It would be a useful exercise for any school to 'audit' its current practice with a view to assessing how far its policies and procedures are consistent with the concept of 'dyslexia friendliness' and, specifically, to add to or amend its school development plan to ensure that 'dyslexia friendliness' is given prominence. Appendix 1 sets out a framework by which schools can carry out an audit of its policy, provision and practices in relation to dyslexia.

ii. Developing a School Policy for Pupils with Dyslexia

Some parents still report that schools do not appear to take the problem of dyslexia seriously, while some do not accept that there is such a condition. Amongst the persistent frustrations reported by parents of pupils with dyslexia is that their attempts to communicate the difficulty to their child's school are often met with comments such as:

■ we don't know enough about the condition;

■ we do not have the resources to deal with such problems;

■ the staff are not trained or do not have sufficient expertise to deal with such children.

Apart from the effect of such thinking on the pupils concerned, it is worrying that some schools do not yet appreciate that they are, at best, very vulnerable to complaints that they are not meeting the needs of pupils with dyslexia and, at worst, leaving themselves open to legal action for negligence. In such circumstances there is no defence of "ignorance" or "lack of training".

It would undoubtedly be held to be reasonable, given the prevalence of dyslexia and the amount of publicity it has received, that any teacher irrespective of the type of school in which he/she teaches, his/her subject specialism, or the career stage which he/she is at, should have an appreciation of the main issues relating to dyslexia and a basic knowledge of teaching strategies to employ in the classroom with dyslexic pupils. There is no obligation to be an "expert".

Each school should produce and implement a policy statement on dyslexia. This is a positive way to establish that it is seeking to develop as a "dyslexia friendly" school.[2] The essential features of a dyslexia friendly school are that:

- it recognises the problem;

- it has a strategy to identify pupils who may be affected;

- it has a commitment to raising the awareness of all staff to the needs of such pupils and a commitment to training specialist staff to support colleagues;

- it has a commitment to putting in place arrangements to support the pupils concerned.

The policy statement will reflect these points and will clarify the role and responsibilities of the class teacher and other staff in managing the needs of pupils with dyslexia. Specifically, it will detail agreed policies and practices on, for example:

- marking work;

- assessment arrangements;

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[2] *See "Dyslexia-Successful Inclusion in the Secondary School ed. Peer and Reid - B.D.A./Fulton 2001*

- homework policy;

- policy on note-taking/handouts.

It is also likely to make a statement that the school has a commitment to helping pupils develop self-help skills and strategies and to develop efficient study skills and learning strategies.

Appendix 2 is an example of a simple policy statement which the members of staff in a school may develop to "signal" that they recognise that some of their pupils have difficulties associated with dyslexia and that they are taking active steps to address these and to make life easier for the pupils concerned.

Framework for Conducting a Whole-School Dyslexia Audit

Overall Policy

Does our school have a written dyslexia policy?

Has the policy been agreed by all members of staff?

Has the policy been effectively disseminated to pupils, parents and Board of Governors?

Have we included in our school development plan the time required to review the operation and effectiveness of our dyslexia policy?

Practical Policies

Does the policy establish whole-school agreement on:

- marking practices in relation to written work, eg dealing with spelling errors; emphasising, where appropriate, content rather than spelling accuracy?

- providing pupils with notes, handouts, subject-specific vocabulary, personal dictionaries etc?

- setting of homework and the amount of time a pupil should be expected to spend on a particular homework?

- asking vulnerable pupils to read aloud in class?

- making special arrangements for assessing pupils' work by means other than written tests and examinations?

- marking and assessment practices in internal school examinations?

Identification / Monitoring

Does our school have effective strategies for identifying pupils who are dyslexic or likely to be at risk?

- What are these strategies?

Does our school have effective strategies for monitoring the progress of dyslexic pupils?

- What are these strategies?

Parental participation

Does our school communicate effectively with parents in jargon-free language and are our written communications likely to be understood by pupils with dyslexia and parents who themselves may have reading difficulties?

Does our school offer practical guidance to parents of pupils with dyslexia in helping their children?

Training/Consultation

Does our school have a member of staff (eg SENCO) who is familiar with the key issues in relation to dyslexia and who has attended appropriate in-service courses in dyslexia?

Does this member of staff have an allocation of time to support colleagues in planning and managing the needs of pupils with dyslexia?

Has regular in-service time been set aside for whole-staff discussion and/or training in issues related to and problems commonly associated with dyslexia?

When planning lessons, do all staff in this school take into account the special needs of pupils with dyslexia?

Additional Support

Does our school seek advice and support from the services of our Education and Library Board (ELB) and allow staff the time to consult with them?

In those classes where we have classroom assistants to assist pupils with dyslexia:

- has the role of the classroom assistant been clearly specified?

- are all members of staff aware of the role and responsibilities of the classroom assistant?

- is the classroom assistant being used to maximum effect for the benefit of the pupil(s)?

In addition:

- do we make effective use of support provision provided by the ELB?

- is this ELB support co-ordinated with the teaching programmes in our classes?

Sample School Policy

PUPILS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES (DYSLEXIA)

Sample School Policy Statement

We recognise that some pupils, despite often having average or above average intellectual ability and good oral skills, have unusual difficulty learning to read or to spell and write fluently. These pupils may be described as having specific learning difficulties or dyslexia.

We recognise that these pupils have special educational needs and that these needs have to be met to the best of our ability and resources; we recognise that these pupils have skills and talents which need to be nurtured and developed and that they have the same right of access to the NI curriculum and to all the activities of the school as all other pupils.

We will therefore make the following arrangements to try to ensure that their needs are met.

- We will operate a screening and monitoring programme to try to ensure that all pupils who are experiencing difficulties with aspects of literacy are identified as early in their school career as possible.

- We will assess and make provision for the pupil's difficulties within the framework of the Stages of the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs. We will prepare appropriate education plans, setting out the provision we propose to make for the pupil and the objectives for that provision. This provision will be discussed with the pupil's parents, who will be kept informed of progress.

- If, despite our efforts to ameliorate the pupil's difficulties, it is felt that there is still a noticeable mismatch between the pupil's oral skills (talking and listening) and his/her attainment in literacy skills and that he/she may need more specialist help than we are able to provide from within our resources, we may, following consultation with parents, refer the pupil for assessment by the Psychology Service of the Education and Library Board. This assessment will address the need for specialist support provided by the Board.

- Following discussion with the psychologist we will formulate a revised education plan.

- The revised plan will set out the provision that we can make within our own resources, and the strategies which class teachers can adopt to help the pupil access the curriculum. All teachers who teach the pupil will be made aware of his/her difficulties, will be made aware of the agreed plan and the agreed strategies to help give him/her access to the curriculum.

- These strategies may, depending on the needs of the pupil, include the use of word banks, personal (illustrated) dictionaries, the use of spellcheckers and other spelling aids. We may try, within the limits of our resources, to allow the pupil to produce work using a word processor so that he/she should be able to correct it more easily. This will be considered, especially, in cases where the pupil has major difficulty with the technical aspects of handwriting or with speed of handwriting.

- All staff will try to be as sensitive as possible to sources of anxiety and embarrassment, eg being asked to read aloud in class, being asked to copy large amounts of written material from the board.

- Teachers will take account of the pupil's difficulties when marking work by, for example, concentrating on content rather than absolute spelling or grammatical accuracy. They will also be aware of the need to find alternative ways of assessing progress rather than always through written tests and examinations.

- Teachers will take account of the pupil's difficulties when setting homework assignments. They will consult with parents and set homeworks which should be capable of completion within a reasonable period of time (??   minutes). Teachers will also try to ensure that assignments set by different teachers (eg class teacher and special needs teacher) are coordinated and do not impose an unfair burden on the pupil.

- We are aware that pupils with Specific Learning Difficulties (dyslexia) have experienced "failure" and that often their motivation for work involving literacy is low. We are conscious of the need to try to make these tasks as stimulating as possible and of the need to find ways of raising the pupil's motivation generally. This is particularly important since the nature of their difficulties means that there will need to be a good deal of repetition of basic work to ensure that reading vocabulary, spellings etc. are learned and retained.

- We will try to suggest ways in which parents can help us help their child. We believe that parents can contribute a great deal to an educational programme. Depending on the age and stage of the pupil, they may contribute by, for example, making and illustrating personal dictionaries and word banks; reading to their child on a regular basis; participating in paired reading schemes; hearing their child read every day; helping their child with study and revision.

Specific to Post-Primary Schools

- We will try, as far as is possible within our resources, to make appropriate arrangements for pupils to undertake tests or examinations so that their knowledge, skills and understanding can be fairly assessed. This may involve giving the pupil additional time; allowing the questions to be read to him/her; allowing the pupil to use ICT equipment etc. We will apply for these special arrangements for pupils sitting GCSE and 'A' Level examinations if, following consultation with the Education and Library Board's Psychology Service, it is established that the pupil meets the criteria for special arrangements.

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How to Make Documents and Worksheets Dyslexia Friendly

"Information is power" and is therefore key to empowering individuals to form a greater understanding of the world around them. The style in which this information is produced is key to facilitating comprehension for the reader.

Presenting information in a format which makes it easily accessible is vital, if the information it contains is to be understood by everyone.

Every individual has a different perception of what they see and reading is no exception. The shape and size of words can appear different to each reader. For some dyslexic readers there can be barriers to overcome.

People often talk about 'tuning in' to text and 'focussing' on what they are looking at. This describes concentrating on content as well as the simple decoding exercise that occurs when we read. For many people, reading becomes an automatic skill that requires little conscious effort. When decoding occurs unconsciously, the reader is able to concentrate on comprehension.

For some dyslexic readers, decoding the words is not always an automatic or unconscious skill. Anyone with a history of reading difficulties may have to concentrate harder to interpret text and remember what they have read.

Suggestions included in this document are aimed at improving accessibility to information, thus allowing the dyslexic reader more time to comprehend the information.

Everyone is susceptible to eye strain and tiredness when working. When a person concentrates for a long period on a particular piece of text the words may go blurry, though this is only temporary. Dyslexic people frequently experience visual discomfort when reading. Some dyslexic people focus on the spaces rather than on

the words. This is often described as seeing 'rivers' moving down the page. The words and text can appear to be moving around the page or wobbling.

Anything that disturbs concentration, such as visual discomfort, makes the problem worse. With a few small alterations, however, it is possible to alleviate the pressures of visual discomfort.

Adopting some simple strategies can help children/pupils with dyslexia to get the most from their reading of documents and worksheets, for example, use typed rather than hand-written text.

i. **Font Style**

Fonts should be rounded, allow for space between letters, reflect ordinary cursive writing and be 'easy on the eye'. Look for a font that spaces letters rather than running them closely together. Bear in mind that fonts that have unusual shaped letters can create difficulties.

- Select sans serif fonts such as Arial or Comic Sans.

- Use a minimum of size 12pt or 14pt.

- Where possible use lower case letters rather than capitals. Using capital letters for emphasis can make text harder to read.

- Don't write sentences entirely in capitals; this infers that the reader is being shouted at.

- Larger text can give the reader the feel of moving swiftly through a page or a book.

ii. **Paper**

- Avoid light text on a dark background.

- Use coloured paper instead of white. Cream or off-white provides a good alternative.

- Matt paper is preferable to glossy paper, as this reduces glare.

- Ensure the paper is heavy enough to prevent text glaring through from the back. Good quality 80 or 90 gms is effective.

### iii. Presentation Style

- Limit lines to 60 to 70 characters. Lines that are too long or short can put strain on eyes.

- Use wide margins and headings.

- Use diagrams, pictures, flow charts to break up the text.

- Use of boxes for emphasis, or to highlight important text, can be effective.

- Avoid dense blocks of text by using short paragraphs.

- Use bold to highlight. Italics, or underlining, can make the words run together.

- Keep lines left justified, with a ragged right edge.

- Use bullets or numbers rather than continuous prose.

- Don't hyphenate words, that are not usually split, in order to fill up line ends, for example, oper-
ation

- The space between lines is important. Recommendations suggest a leading (space) of 1.5 to 2 times the space

(Adapted from BDA Dyslexia Style Guide)

Visual Planning Using ICT

The implementation of a formalised study skills programme becomes increasingly important as the pupil/student with dyslexic difficulties becomes more independent in his/her learning. Visual planning, a learned skill, includes linear planning, mind mapping, concept/spider webs, flow charts etc, and is a vital part of that study skills programme. It is an effective and efficient system for helping the pupil organise his/her thoughts and ideas and works to the advantage of visual thinkers, in particular.
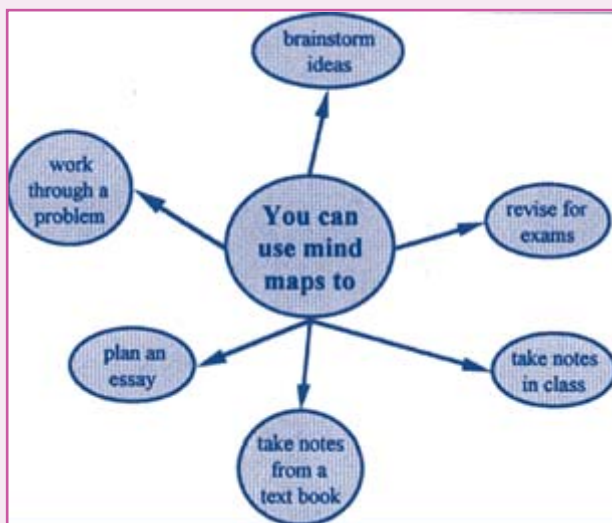
An example of mind – mapping
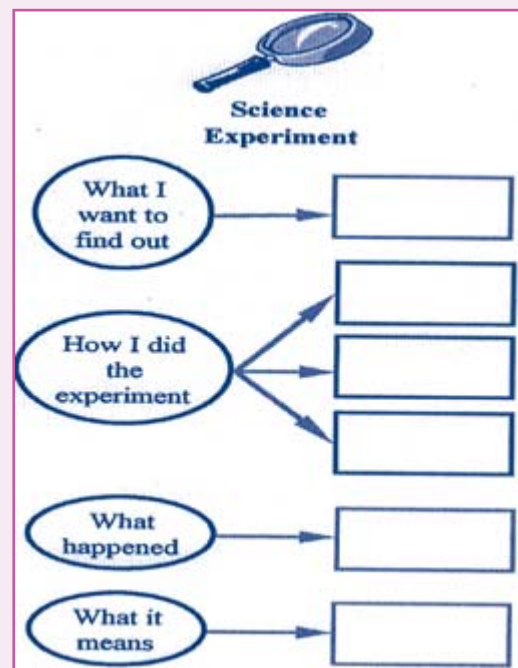
An example of linear planning

Visual planning is versatile.

It:

- can be used with all ages and at all stages of development;

- is a useful tool for all learners but especially for students who have organisational, sequential or memory difficulties;#

- is useful in all subject areas; style of visual diagramming can be chosen to match the activity and personal preferences.

**Visual planning has many advantages for the individual learner.**

It:

- helps him/her organise thoughts, sequence ideas and events, to clarify his/her thinking;

- encourages active learning and therefore improves concentration;

- aids memory retention and recall, provides a ready reference, a revision aid;

- provides a means of ensuring that the structure and balance of an essay/project/report is appropriate and that all necessary content is included;

- encourages independence, organisation and creativity;

- offers flexibility; student doesn't have to worry about getting it right first time or having forgotten something;

- other aspects of IT can be incorporated, eg spellchecker, audio facilities, import of images, etc;

- choice of preferred font style/size, background colour, etc. can be used to personal advantage;

- end product emphasises clarity and is 'pleasing to the eye'.

It is useful for the teacher as well as for the learner.

It can be used for:

- the preparation of writing frames, grouping and sequential activities;

- for group brainstorming activities.
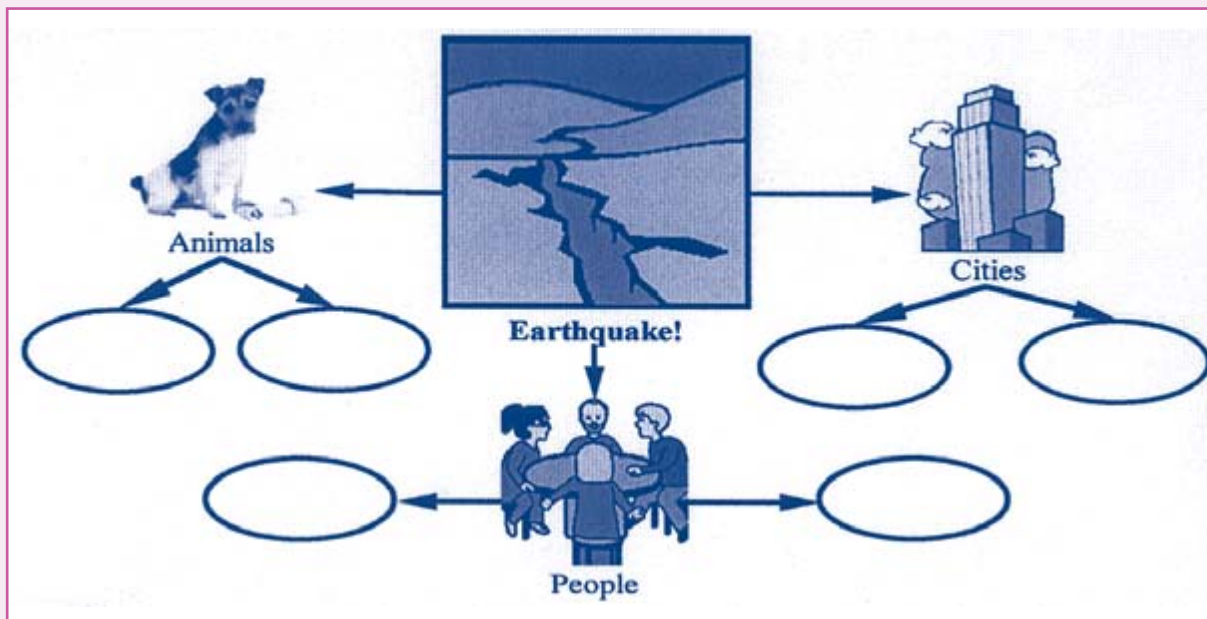
An example of concept/spider web

Examples of appropriate programmes:

Kidspiration	KS1&2
Inspiration	KS 2&3
MindGenius	KS3 & Level 4

Appendix 5

Special Arrangements for Pupils/Students Sitting External Examinations

The Joint Council for General Qualifications provides information to schools on guidance relating to pupils with Special Educational Needs. Under the arrangements there are those that:

a.   are delegated to Centres;

b.   require prior application to the awarding body.

It is essential that schools discuss their needs for assistance from the educational psychologist early in the school year. It is advisable that the examinations officer informs the examination board when the pupil begins the examination course.

Delegated to Centres

The Joint Council has empowered Centres to grant additional time of up to 25%, and/or rest or breaks, to examination candidates. Centres need not apply to the awarding body in advance, but must report all cases where additional time has been awarded.

Candidates who may be awarded time are those:

- with permanent physical disabilities;

- with temporary physical disabilities;

- with learning difficulties.

In the case of learning difficulties the guidance states that:

- there must be evidence of need;

- there must be a history of provision during the course;

- the school must be satisfied that the candidate can cope with the subject content of the syllabus involved.

The evidence required, which **need not** be submitted to the awarding body, is as follows:

- a statement of Special Educational Needs relating to post-primary education;

OR

- a relevant report confirming a learning disability produced by an educational psychologist or suitably qualified teacher. (List of accepted qualifications available on www.jcgq.org.uk).

The report must relate to the candidate during his/her post-primary education and may not be more than two years old.

Where there is no current report available or statement of educational needs the educational psychologist will have to examine a centre's evidence and provide a letter/report confirming that the evidence is appropriate and that the candidate has a learning difficulty. The evidence required is:

- evidence of need eg internal test results, education plans, placement on the SEN register;

- history of provision eg records of additional help being provided and/or arrangements being put in place during internal examinations;

- the school is satisfied that the pupil can cope with the subject content of the syllabus.

(B)   Special arrangements that require prior application to the awarding body eg Use of a reader or amanuensis (scribe)

In the case of learning difficulty the evidence required is as follows:

- there must be evidence of need;

- there must be a history of provision;

- there must be a report from a suitably qualified teacher within 2 years of the examination.

and/or

- a report from a qualified psychologist within 2 years of the examination series. This must be made using one of the JCGQ proformas.

It is essential that pupils have had experience of and practice in the use of any special arrangements, which are being requested. The reader or scribe should have worked with the pupil before the examination.

Detailed information on special arrangements is available from:

www.jcgq.org.uk

www.ccea.org.uk

Third Level Academic Study Needs And Exam Recommendations

Depending on the severity of the dyslexia, and on the recommendation of the Disability Adviser who has carried out an assessment based on an up-to-date psychologist's report, support for students in examinations may also be extended to include:

- Sitting the exam in a separate room.

- Exam paper word-processed after exam.

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- Use of a computer during the examination.

- Examination paper pre-recorded on tape.

- Examination paper read out on request.

- Examination paper printed on coloured paper.

- Examination script written on coloured paper.

- Sympathetic consideration for spelling and grammar mistakes.

- An electronic dictionary permitted in the examination room.

- *Viva voce* used as well as/or instead of a written examination.

- Other less frequent supports, including having breaks within the examination timeframe or an alternative method of assessment

Useful Information Sources

Further Reading

Crisfield, J (ed) (1996)	'The Dyslexia Handbook', BDA Reading
Department of Education (NI) (2002)	Report of the Task Group on Dyslexia
Ott, P. (1997)	'How to Detect and Manage Dyslexia', Heinemann
Pumfrey, P & Reason, R (1991)	'Specific Learning Difficulties – Challenges and Responses, NFER-Nelson, Windsor
Peer, L (1998)	'Winning with Dyslexia, a Guide for Secondary Schools', British Dyslexia Association, Reading
Pollock, J & Waller, E (1994)	'Day to Day Dyslexia in the Classroom'
Smith, D (1996)	'Spotlight on SEN, Specific Learning Difficulties', NASEN Publications

Websites

Dyslexia Association of Ireland	www.dyslexia.ie
Dyslexia Institute	http://www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk
Bristol Dyslexia Centre	www.dyslexiacentre.co.uk
Hornsby Centre	www.hornsby.co.uk
Helen Arkell Centre	www.arkellcentre.org.uk
Northern Ireland Dyslexia Association	www.nida.org.uk
Reid, Gavin	www.gavinreid.co.uk
The Dyslexia Institute	www.dyslexia-inst.org.uk

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Organisations

The British Dyslexia Association (BDA)
98 London Road
Reading
Berkshire RG1 5AU

Hornsby International Dyslexia Centre
261 Trinity Road
London
SW18 3SN

The Dyslexia Institute
133 Gresham Road
Staines
Middlesex

Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre
Frensham
Farnham
Surrey
GU10 3BW

Software for people with reading and writing difficulties

www.texthelp.com

www.brighteye.com

www.spellwell.co.uk

www.wordshark.co.uk

www.numbershark.co.uk

www.nextup.com

Appendix 7

Membership of the Dyslexia Working Group

Marleen Collins	Chair, Education and Training Inspectorate, Department of Education
Fiona Crookes	Assistant Advisory Officer, Special Education, Southern Education and Library Board
Valerie Haugh	Head of Peripatetic Support Service, Belfast Education and Library Board, Ulidia Centre, Belfast
Syd Irvine	Principal Educational Psychologist, South-Eastern Education and Library Board
Dr Joan McQuoid	University Psychologist, Student Support, University of Ulster at Jordanstown
Colin Millar	Vice-Principal, The Model Primary School, Newtownards
Maria Phillips	Educational Psychologist, Western Education and Library Board
Margaret N Robinson	Special Education Consultant
Joan-Ann Wilson	English Adviser, North-Eastern Library Board