



The Levels Academy Trust

Raising Aspirations, Realising Potential TOGETHER

Dyslexia Friendly Policy

Date adopted: _____ 4/7/18
Signature: _____
Review date: _____ July 2020

The Levels Academy comprises four schools, namely:

- Hambridge Primary School
- Huish Episcopi Primary School
- Middlezoy Primary School
- Othery Village School

This policy has been reviewed to cover each of the above schools.

Being an effective school and being dyslexia friendly are two sides of the same coin. Effective schools enjoy strong leadership, value staff development and pay close attention to the quality of teaching and learning. These are schools in which all pupils are important, regardless of ability, or difficulty. Crucially, more children are successful when taught using 'dyslexia friendly teaching' methods – and while dyslexia friendly techniques can be successfully applied to children who are not dyslexic, this does not work the other way round." - Achieving Dyslexia Friendly Schools DFES publication

The Levels Academy Trust fully subscribe to the guiding philosophy of the Dyslexia Institute, who state that:

'If a pupil can't learn the way we teach, then we must teach in the way that he or she can learn

We also recognise that a child's self-esteem and confidence is central to happiness and success in school.

What is dyslexia?

There are many different definitions of dyslexia. In 2009 Sir Jim Rose's Report on 'Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties' gave the following description of dyslexia:

'Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling.

- *Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed.*
- *Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities.*
- *It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points.*
- *Co-occurring difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organisation, but these are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia.*

A good indication of the severity and persistence of dyslexic difficulties can be gained by examining how the individual responds or has responded to well-founded intervention.'

Whilst problems with reading and spelling are easy to detect it is essential to remember that dyslexic children will usually have underlying difficulties that affect the way they learn, such as weaknesses with:

- Short term memory
- Long term memory
- Processing and retrieving words and information

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- Phonological awareness
- Sequencing or rote learning
- Auditory memory
- Spatial awareness
- Direction – left and right

As no two dyslexic pupils will have the same profile of difficulties it is important to assess each child to truly understand how they learn. And of course each dyslexic pupil will also have a range of unique strengths that can be built on. In the Levels Academy Trust schools, we strive to recognise a child's individual strengths and weaknesses and tailor a specific teaching programme to ensure we are addressing 'hidden' difficulties as well as reading and spelling.

Who is responsible for identifying dyslexic tendencies?

All teachers have responsibility for dyslexic children; they have all received training on dyslexia and have access to the resources of the Inclusion Development Programme. Further, all teachers use the schools assessment systems to monitor children's progress. If this shows concerns with reading, spelling, writing or numeracy the class teacher will implement the following procedure:

- Ask parents for their views
- Implement additional support or strategies tailored to the pupil's needs based on suggestions in the Early Identification Booklet (KS1 or KS2)
- If there is insufficient progress despite interventions, teacher will complete the Early Identification Booklet (KS1 or KS2) and consult the SENCo using the Early Identification form as a basis for showing what has already been tried and the outcomes. The teacher or Teaching Assistant can then use the Dyslexia Wheel or equivalent checklist.
- Teacher will meet with the SENCo to discuss and set out next steps as needed.

Teaching strategies

Everyone has an individual learning style. Dyslexic children seem to process information differently. Understanding how they learn best, and being flexible enough to adapt teaching approaches are vital factors in enabling dyslexic children to learn effectively in the classroom. Therefore, The Levels Academy schools employ the following teaching strategies supportive of dyslexic children.

- Make older children aware of their preferred learning styles
- Make expectations high for intellectual stimulation, but reasonable for written responses
- Be prepared to explain things many times in a variety of ways, individually if necessary
- When looking at a child's work, we try to understand the reason for their mistakes and give them a chance to explain their difficulties
- Ensure that written materials are accessible
- Be slow, quiet and deliberate when giving instructions, allowing time for the meaning of the words to be absorbed and questions to be asked.

- Where possible, we use multisensory methods of learning, including over learning
- Use visual prompts and mnemonics
- Enable dyslexic children to show their interest, knowledge and skills, despite their difficulties with writing
- Give guidance about how to tackle tasks systematically – flow charts, grids, bullet points, paragraph starts, writing frames
- Watch out for signs of tiredness and fatigue and provide movement breaks or sensory breaks as needed.
- Watch out for signs of falling confidence and self-esteem and find ways to promote and highlight a child's skills.

Additionally, we try to employ the following dyslexia friendly methods to help dyslexic children with reading and writing:

- Presenting new words in small batches
- Consistent handwriting programme – Nelson or Cursive (school dependent)
- Use of ICT when appropriate
- Check that children are keeping up, and not just sitting passively during shared reading and writing activities
- Provide alternative forms of recording
- Use a structured phonic programme – initially Jolly Phonics

Dyslexia Friendly Classrooms

In The Levels Academy schools we recognise that the working environment can be 'make or break' for a dyslexic child. Already they may be having difficulties with listening, hearing, looking, sitting still, concentrating, writing and finding things they need. If their classroom environment works against them, no matter how hard they try, they may not succeed. Therefore, our classrooms are:

- Arranged so that during class lessons, the dyslexic child can sit near the front
- Adapted so that wherever possible, dyslexic children sit alongside well-motivated children or a 'study buddy' who they can ask to clarify instructions for them
- Organised so that, when it is appropriate, there is little movement around the room and it as quiet as possible, as some dyslexic children find background noise and visual movement distracting
- Equipped with clearly marked and neatly arranged resources so that they can be found easily – toolboxes.
- Water is readily available throughout the day
- Teachers use coloured whiteboard pens and some are also available for children
- Learning prompts are clearly displayed, e.g. alphabet arcs, b/d/p/q, how to spell tips (mnemonics), useful words and phrases.

Partnership with Parents

As the Code of Practice on the identification and assessment of Special Educational Needs clearly states:

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'Professional help can seldom be wholly effective unless it builds upon parents' capacity to be involved'

We strongly believe that maximum participation by parents/carers is essential in engendering positive attitudes in dyslexic learners. Indeed, even the best planned and resourced interventions may have little impact if parents feel confused, anxious or hostile. We will help to allay parents' fears for their child's education by understanding their concerns and pursuing strategies to help. Concerns identified by the school will be discussed with the parents at the outset.

It is agreed that this policy will be reviewed every 2 years.

