Dyslexia in our schools today: Progress, challenges and solutions
Dyslexia Still Matters: progress, challenges and solutions

This Dyslexia Action report looks at the situation for children with dyslexia and literacy difficulties in our schools today. It explores the progress that has been made and examines what still needs to be done to ensure school is positive and rewarding. In the light of planned reforms of the Special Educational Needs system and considering other key changes, we put forward positive suggestions and solutions, based on our review of what is currently working well in schools. This evidence of effective practice will be useful to all schools as they take on more responsibility for delivering effective interventions and support for children with dyslexia and literacy difficulties. The challenge of improving literacy standards in the UK is great, and we believe that our input can make a big contribution. We are calling for a National Dyslexia and Literacy Strategy to enable the best evidence and solutions to be brought forward to put an end to the negative and unrewarding experiences of school that are still being reported by the parents of dyslexic children.

Action is needed now


Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties. True to its name and purpose, ‘Dyslexia Action’ has consistently focused on responding directly to the challenge of supporting children who need to overcome the debilitating effects of dyslexia. As it is not a singular condition, dyslexia has to be tackled by skilled teaching designed to counter the different degrees of its severity that impact upon children’s learning.

In this timely report, Dyslexia Action rightly claims that good progress has been made to meet the needs of children in these respects. In reforming the Special Educational Needs system, the report therefore urges policymakers to sustain that momentum by making sure any new arrangements are sufficiently flexible, not only for children with the most severe and complex manifestations of dyslexia but that it is equally effective for children with ‘high-incidence, lower-severity’ needs. The Report provides valuable examples of effective practice in support of its recommendations; these are worthy of serious attention if we are to take further decisive action on dyslexia.

Jim Rose (June, 2012)

The need for this report

Kevin Geeson, Chief Executive of Dyslexia Action

Have we done dyslexia - been there and got the t-shirt? Are we ready to move on? Do we have all the answers and know exactly what dyslexia is and how to identify it? Do we know what we should be doing so everyone with dyslexia can enjoy school and succeed in life? Are we confident it is working?

Dyslexia Action has been around for 40 years and there is no doubt that progress has been made and dyslexia is now widely recognised. However, evidence tells us there is still a great deal to be done to ensure all dyslexic children in schools have a better chance to succeed. The level of understanding of dyslexia in schools...
varies considerably and we are a long way off embedding good practice in all parts of our education system. This report sets the scene for dyslexia and highlights that ‘Yes’, Dyslexia Still Matters, but there are still major challenges to address to ensure every child with dyslexia and other literacy difficulties can succeed. Dyslexia Action is calling for dyslexia to remain at the top of the agenda, otherwise we will fail many children year on year. We need to draw together the best expertise, materials and services to ensure what we know, as literacy and dyslexia specialists, can be transferred into consistently good practice to achieve the best outcomes for all. In this report, we give the findings of two surveys that look at the experiences of adults, and of parents with children, who have dyslexia. We also look at the experiences and views of teachers and what interventions they find successful. We examine the factors affecting children in the education system and how proposed changes provide a mix of hope and concern. We explore the current changes to exam access arrangements and why, we believe, special arrangements should remain in place to allow people to demonstrate what they are capable of achieving.

Kevin Geeson

A window of opportunity -
John Rack, Head of Research, Development and Policy for Dyslexia Action

The Government’s reform of the Special Educational Needs system presents a not-to-be-missed opportunity to build on the sound platform of evidence which shows how all kinds of schools deliver highly effective education for learners who suffer from various aspects of dyslexia and stubborn problems with learning to read and write. Much to their credit, work of high quality is being done in some local authorities, in some schools and in some projects but we are far from making such high quality practice universal.

The main focus of the proposed reforms is on children with the most severe and complex needs. Obviously, securing the best possible, affordable provision for these children is crucially important. However, the new system must also secure equally effective provision for children with high-incidence, lower-severity needs.

Because of time constraints the ‘SEN pathfinders’ are struggling to work out how to implement the reforms and there is a risk that reliable ways to improve existing provision may not be found, thus leaving all those with special needs considerably worse off than they would have been had the previous system been left in place.

In this report Dyslexia Action offers ways forward to help to overcome these difficulties. The need to wait for pathfinders is questioned on the grounds that a great deal is already known about how best to deliver effective support for children with dyslexia and literacy difficulties and those with other specific learning and language difficulties. We have given many examples of such practice in this report.

Dyslexia Action fully appreciates that the economic climate creates pressure to find low cost solutions for special educational needs and educational provision in general. The effective practice that we highlight in this report is not costly, especially in relation to the high, long-term costs of failing to get it right for those with literacy difficulties. We also question the value of ‘pathfinding’ routes that are already well-trodden.

Our main message to Government is that: we don’t have to wait - there are positive and affordable things that can be done now; so let’s work together and put an end to the suffering and sense of failure that is still felt by too many children with dyslexia and literacy difficulties in our schools today.

John Rack
Acknowledgements

Dyslexia Action would like to thank all the people who responded to the YouGov and Dyslexia Action surveys, everyone who assisted with the research and all the teachers and practitioners who provided case-study materials and information about effective interventions and support. Thanks also to the many people who have been involved in the writing and production of this report, especially to Stephanie Anderson, Kerry Bennett and John Rack.
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Report purpose</th>
<th>02</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dyslexia Still Matters - Summary of findings and recommendations</strong></td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive and negative findings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action needed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A call for action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A way forward</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 1: Dyslexia</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is dyslexia?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of dyslexia - Rose Review (2009)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyslexia and literacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The dyslexia journey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 2: Where are we now?</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The views of parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What parents think should be done</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The views of adults and young people with dyslexia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where are we now? Assessment and special arrangements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examination access arrangements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 1 phonics screening check</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statutory KS2 grammar, punctuation and spelling test</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 3: Literacy is a big issue for the UK</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy and dyslexia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The challenge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences of poor literacy - the figures speak volumes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We ‘could do better’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 4: Interventions and models of good practice</strong></td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What works: interventions and good practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFSTED (2010) ‘A Statement is Not Enough’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Models of good practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 5: Government reform</strong></td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The current SEN system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed reform</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathfinders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 6: Conclusions and recommendations</strong></td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations and Dyslexia Still Matters report</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appendices:</strong></td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/dyslexia-still-matters-appendices">http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/dyslexia-still-matters-appendices</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dyslexia Still Matters – Summary of findings and recommendations

The main findings of this Dyslexia Action report are both positive and negative.

**Positive findings Include:**
1. Good, effective provision exists in a wide range of schools enabling children with dyslexia and literacy difficulties to thrive and succeed. This provision can be seen in some mainstream schools as well as specialist and some independent settings.

2. Teachers in some schools and specialist dyslexia centres are doing a fantastic job for children with dyslexia. The characteristics of this ‘best practice’ are outlined in our report along with links to further sources of information and guidance.

3. The most effective practice involves a combination of the four key elements of support that we have identified from our survey of practice and from previous reports:
   a) A whole school ethos that respects individuals' differences, maintains high expectations for all and promotes good communication between teachers, parents and pupils.
   b) Knowledgeable and sensitive teachers who understand the processes of learning and the impact that specific difficulties can have on these.
   c) Creative adaptations to classroom practice enabling children with special needs to learn inclusively, but meaningfully, alongside their peers.
   d) Access to additional learning programmes and resources to support the development of key skills and strategies for independent learning.

4. Dyslexia is now clearly ‘on the map’. Although there are still teachers (and others) who do not like to use the term, there is no longer controversy about whether it exists and how to define it.

**Negative findings Include:**
1. Knowledge, understanding and expertise is patchy and Dyslexia Action too often still hears accounts of parents struggling to have their concerns recognised and addressed at school.

2. Parents continue to report that:
   a) Difficulties in their children’s learning are not picked up early enough.
   b) The possibility of dyslexia is usually raised by them and not the school.
   c) Expertise and resources in schools are hard to access.
   d) Dyslexic children’s experience of school is often negative.

3. Adults and young people with dyslexia confirm that:
   a) Accessing help at school is difficult.
   b) A lack of understanding of the nature of dyslexia leads to unhelpful and damaging comments from some teachers which have a long lasting detrimental effect.
4) The issue of dyslexia, as a disability, has not been fully grasped across education and changes to systems for assessment and examination are in danger of leaving those with dyslexia at a severe disadvantage. Dyslexia Action appreciates that no ‘reasonable adjustment’ can take away the difficulties that dyslexic people will have – to varying degrees – when they are required to read and write under time pressure. But this disability, just like a more obvious physical disability – should not condemn them to low achievement. Systems that are there to assess ability and understanding should be accessible to those with disabilities on equal terms but we haven’t got to this stage yet.

**National Dyslexia Strategy**

Proposed changes to the SEN system are welcome but we are concerned that the situation will get worse for learners with dyslexia as the current mechanisms to support learners and schools is changed or withdrawn.

Dyslexia Action believes that the focus of the SEN pathfinders is too narrow and the timescale too tight to work out the details needed for the SEN reforms. However, we have a solution for this which is to use the information we already have about what works for children with dyslexia and other high-incidence low-severity needs.

The knowledge and expertise is there, to develop, advise and deliver on, a National Dyslexia and Literacy Strategy to help roll out effective practice throughout the country. However, we cannot succeed with this unless we have the commitment and support of the Government.

---

**Action needed**

**Training**

All children with dyslexia need to have access to good teaching in all lessons. A co-ordinated plan is needed to improve awareness and understanding of dyslexia for people in all roles in education. This should include:

- A compulsory model on Special Educational Needs to include dyslexia as part of initial teacher training.
- A requirement for all teachers to access Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in the area of SEN to include dyslexia.
- Making special needs a higher priority in the training and professional development for those in leadership and governance roles.
- A plan, with resources behind it, to ensure that all schools have access to a specialist teacher who has a postgraduate diploma in dyslexia and literacy.
- A scheme to enable more teaching assistants to receive training in specific interventions and methods of support as well as a career structure allowing them to undertake more specialist roles as their skills and knowledge increase.
- Producing guidance and advice for use by inspectors in relation to effective support and interventions for those with dyslexia.
**Identification and assessment**

This is an area of practice where improvements are badly needed. More information needs to get to practitioners so they are more confident about making the first observations of children who may be having difficulties, assessing the nature of those difficulties and making an appropriate response. This could include determining the need for special arrangements for formal examinations. Current discussions around the use of the Phonics Check and exam access arrangements reveal worrying levels of ignorance about the use of assessment tools to support improved learning and achievement. There needs to be:

- Better tracking and monitoring of children as they progress from pre-school through to adulthood.
- A clear policy on where the responsibility for this monitoring and identification sits and better use and co-ordination of centrally-held data along with individual observations to avoid the unacceptable delays in identifying those who need extra help.
- Better advice and guidance around the Year 1 Phonics Check, especially about the actions that should follow from low scores.
- Better access to easily-administered screening assessments and a clearer policy about how information is shared with colleagues and parents.
- Training for all teachers, at all levels, so that they can identify signs of Dyslexia-SpLD and know what to do in terms of further assessment and advice.

**Sharing best practice**

Best practice can be delivered in practice (as highlighted in this report’s Intervention Table p.38-49), but this needs to be shared and communicated more widely. We need to:

- Develop and maintain forums for exchange of practice locally, nationally and virtually.
- Ensure that expertise from the voluntary sector and from those engaged in research is fully utilised.
- Develop and evaluate new intervention models in schools and specialist centres so they can learn what works.

**School improvement**

It is encouraging that OFSTED has been asked to focus now on what schools are doing for the pupils in the bottom 20% and that programs such as Achievement for All are being adopted more widely. However, the pace of change here must increase and further action and support is needed so that schools can produce credible Local Offers under the new SEN reforms.

- Schools need to demonstrate, through the local offer and in other ways, what they are doing to support children with dyslexia and literacy difficulties.
- Schools need to show that they have engaged with ‘best practice’ as highlighted in this report’s Intervention Table.
- Funding arrangements for schools need to reflect that developing an effective local offer is a priority and they should be encouraged to draw widely on expertise, including that from the voluntary sector to help develop and deliver these plans.
- OFSTED needs to require schools to include these plans and their success in implementing them as part of school inspections.
A call for action

Sharing knowledge
The proposed Children and Families Bill, building on the SEN Green Paper, provides the opportunity to deliver comprehensive improvements in literacy throughout the system. Intervention strategies to improve literacy skills are likely to fail however, unless the Government incorporates specific provisions for those with dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties.

Building on reports and reviews such as those of Lamb (2010), Rose (2009) and OFSTED (2010), the Government has signalled its intention to create a system which is:
• less adversarial
• less bureaucratic
• gives parents a greater say in decision making
• puts resources in the hands of practitioners

The goal is to find ways of sharing knowledge and spreading effective practice of systems that work.

Few would argue with the Government’s aspirations, but there is a very real danger that proposed reforms will, at best, miss an opportunity and at worst, make matters a great deal worse. The opportunity is there to build on the very solid platform of evidence that shows how all kinds of schools can deliver effective education for learners who have dyslexia and struggle with literacy. This is already being done in some authorities, in some schools and in some projects, but that effective practice is far from universal.

The very real risk that things will be made worse arises because the main focus of current reforms is on the smaller number of children with the most severe and complex needs and insufficient time has been given to developing the practical details here. At the same time, the SEN pathfinders appear not to be fully addressing the aspects of reform related to those with high-incidence, lower-severity needs. The danger is that the new system will leave all those with special needs considerably worse off than they would have been had the previous system been left in place.

A way forward

In this report, Dyslexia Action is offering a way forward that could help to avoid this disaster. We suggest that it is not necessary for pathfinders to work out how best to deliver effective support for those dyslexia, literacy difficulties and specific learning and language difficulties. We are talking here about the vast majority of those, with the high-incidence, low-severity needs, for special provision. Why do we say this? Simply, because we believe we already have the answers, as detailed in this report.

Making this good practice more widespread will require commitment and resources. In short, the Government must put muscle and money into this aspect of special needs provision. Dyslexia Action is calling for individuals and organisations to come together to help develop, advise on and deliver a National Dyslexia and Literacy Strategy.

We urge Government to take on board the recommendations of this report and to work with the NDLS team at this critical time - together we can improve the UK’s literacy standards.
Section 1: Dyslexia
What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia has now been clearly defined, reflecting a considerable growth in knowledge and understanding over the past 40 years. The definition was agreed by the Expert Advisory Group for Sir Jim Rose’s independent review commissioned by the Secretary of State for Education as detailed (right). All the dyslexia organisations in the UK have endorsed this definition.

Definition of dyslexia - Rose Review (2009)

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.

This definition reflects our understanding that dyslexia is a language-based difficulty which makes it harder to learn to read and spell. Other kinds of difficulties may accompany dyslexia, but it is the difficulty in dealing with word sounds (phonics) that hampers the acquisition of literacy skills. As has been known for some time, dyslexia is nothing to do with general intelligence although other abilities and difficulties affect the impact of dyslexia which contributes to its severity.

Appendix 1, associated with this report, provides more information about dyslexia and how it might affect someone living with it (See list of appendices available at www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk).
Dyslexia and literacy

The information in Appendix 1 (www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk) shows dyslexia is not just a problem with literacy. It can:

- Affect the ability to remember spoken information within the short term memory system
- Make it harder to retrieve words from long term memory
- Occur alongside other difficulties e.g. concentration, arithmetic and motor coordination

However, the biggest challenge that dyslexia causes in education and in working life is with reading and writing. It is therefore understandable that the primary focus of interventions and support for people with dyslexia is on reading and that we all agree such support is better provided as early as possible in a child’s education.

How important is it that those with dyslexia are identified from amongst those with general literacy-learning difficulties? This is an issue that has sparked much controversy with some educators arguing passionately that there is no need to make any distinctions and that all those with literacy difficulties will respond to the same kind of support. Others have argued that those with dyslexia must be identified because they need a different kind of support. Dyslexia Action’s view on this issue is as follows:

- Not all children with literacy difficulties respond to the same approaches equally well.
- The kind of literacy support that is effective for those with dyslexia is also likely to be effective for all children with literacy difficulties.
- When it comes to early reading support, it is therefore NOT critical to identify those who show characteristics of dyslexia, provided all receive the form of teaching which we know works for people with dyslexia.

The dyslexia journey

Dyslexia is a subject that has caused much debate over the years. The first descriptions – from over a hundred years ago – used the term ‘word blindness’, reflecting the view that difficulties in reading were caused by problems in visual perception. It was not until the 1970s that the role of language processing was recognised and only in the last 20 years has that been accepted as the primary feature of dyslexia.

While controversy and debate continued, it was easier for some in professional practice to ignore the issue and harder to argue for specific approaches and methods. Instead, those living with dyslexia were often wrongly labelled as ‘slow’, ‘thick’ and/or ‘lazy’, with school reports warning parents not to expect much from their son/daughter!

Controversy has also given fuel to the fires of alternative treatments and ‘miracle cures’. If mainstream/establishment services have nothing to offer, it is no surprise that people will turn to alternatives. Almost always, these alternatives are untested and often based on dubious theories and claims. Whilst elements of some may be effective for some people, on the whole, they do not prove worthwhile.
The Rose Report (2009) reflected a high point on the dyslexia journey and one motivation for Dyslexia Action’s report now, is to ensure we do not lose that ground.

Other significant milestones on the journey are when:

• Dyslexia was recognised under the Disability Discrimination Act in 1995 and is still specifically mentioned in the more recent Equalities Act (2010). This means that educational and workplace settings have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that those affected by dyslexia are not disadvantaged compared to their peers.
• Dyslexia became recognised as a Special Educational Need (SEN) and was mentioned as an example in the 1997 Code of Practice.
• Secretaries of State for Education, notably Kenneth Clarke, David Blunkett, Ed Balls and Michael Gove made public statements about the issue of dyslexia and its importance. In March this year (2012), Education Minister Michael Gove announced on Daybreak television that one in ten children are dyslexic.
Section 2:
Where are we now?
The views of parents

Dyslexia Action commissioned YouGov to conduct an independent survey of a representative sample of parents who had children with dyslexia (sample of 464). The field samples were collected from the 5th-30th April, 2012. More detail can be found in Appendix 3 (http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/dyslexia-still-matters-appendices) but some of the key findings from this independent survey are detailed in the sections below. Note that these results reflect a more optimistic view because they are based on a sample where dyslexia has been identified. We know that there are many more families where children are struggling with difficulties which have not been identified or have been mis-identified as a behaviour problem for example.

Identification
• 60% of parents surveyed said their child was diagnosed before secondary school
• 26% said the school was the first to identify a problem
• 55% said teachers failed to recognise a problem with their child’s development
• Almost two-thirds felt dyslexia was not recognised across the system

Recognition
The survey showed there still appears to be resistance to the concept of dyslexia and an apparent unwillingness to take the issue seriously. Parental quotes included:
• ‘Schools need to accept that children have dyslexia instead of trying to ignore it’
• ‘The school refused to recognise dyslexia’
• ‘My child was constantly expelled from school’
• ‘My son had to go to a special school because the school he went to would not help him or accept he had any difficulties’

Parental concerns
The responses from the YouGov survey typify comments that Dyslexia Action regularly receives from parents who come to us for support. For example, one told us that after making enquiries with the SENCO, the headteacher called the parents in to reprimand them for bullying the SENCO. Another parent in the YouGov survey said:

• ‘Schools need to take notice of parental concerns and not become defensive when parents do raise concerns. I had my child assessed privately and when I took the report to her primary school to discuss if any extra support could be given the headteacher said very sarcastically: ‘What do you want me to do with that and then proceeded to do nothing until my daughter’s KS3 SATs, when miraculously a teaching assistant read the questions for her. I’m sure this was only done to improve the school SAT results!’

Another parent said that the school did not want to admit they had ‘the problem’ (dyslexia) in their school. One parent commented:
• ‘They (the school) never listened to me when I expressed anxiety that my child had dyslexia and actually told me that he didn’t, on numerous occasions, until I had to get him diagnosed privately to prove it. I was told my son may have dyslexia but it was better not to get him tested as then he would be labelled for the rest of his life and he would be better off learning coping strategies. He has since been tested and given extra help such as readers and scribes and extra time in exams’.

In summary, parents today still report resistance to the concept of dyslexia and often their perception is that problems are acknowledged very late.

Help and support:
While parents did highlight positive aspects of practice, the overwhelming view is that schools offer ‘too little, too late’. Also:

• 61% of respondents said that their children did not receive any help and support until a whole year after they were diagnosed; with 14% of parents saying they are still waiting
• Some 50% of parents felt that the school did not recognise or develop individual pupil ability
• Only 40% said that their school had an appropriately trained teacher to support their child’s needs
• 64% felt that schools do not do enough to help children with dyslexia

There were positive comments from the survey however, that mentioned things such as:

• written text being given in advance of the lesson
• getting support when needed
• extra time in exams
• being given a laptop
• 58% said that their dyslexic child had received help and support with their dyslexia
• 52% reported their child had received extra help and made progress in reading and spelling
• 75% of parents reported their child does well and feels proud of their achievements in subjects and activities that don’t involve reading and writing
• 71% reported they had a good group of friends
• 75% said they had positive relationships with particular teachers

Parents’ views appeared strongest when they felt that schools and teachers failed to understand the problem including:

• ‘My stepdaughter still believes she is thick because of early experiences despite being quite the reverse!’
• ‘Sadly, as my son was not statemented, he received no help’
• ‘The school didn’t seem to understand that a child with ‘Above Average IQ’ could also have a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia’

A number of parents told YouGov that they had moved their child from state to private education because their child was not getting the right support. Others were financing additional support outside of school. One parent said: ‘Nobody was qualified to teach him. I then paid for an independent tutor to help him through school’.
Social impact
Dyslexia Action knows from its work with dyslexic adults, that it is the social and emotional impact of dyslexia which can be hardest to deal with. Sadly, the YouGov survey showed that children with dyslexia today are still having a hard time at school and sometimes feel isolated or bullied. Survey results showed:

- More than 50% of parents said there are times when their child does not want to go to school
- 57% of parents surveyed felt their child had a negative experience at school because of their dyslexia
- 53% reported their child felt different to their peers
- 47% said that their child had been bullied or picked on at some point
- 37% of parents reported teachers made unhelpful comments like ‘try harder’, which then had a negative impact on self-esteem
- 15% of parents said that a teacher had made public comments about their child’s difficulties and 11% said that a teacher had made fun of mistakes or wrong answers

While these unhelpful comments and reactions from teachers were not reported by all parents and clearly do not apply to all teachers, we regard it as unacceptable that any teacher should conduct themselves in this way, which can only be the result of a lack of understanding of the impact that a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia can have.

Other disturbing comments from respondents included that a teacher ripped up a piece of her child’s written work in front of the class and put it in the bin; a parent said that the teacher continued to make their child copy off the board when this was difficult for them and another said her child was shouted at by a teacher because they were unable to complete a task.

Case Study 1

Gavin (44) and Seanna (13)
Both Gavin and his daughter Seanna are dyslexic. Gavin was involved in a dyslexic intervention project in Hackney, London, when he was 14 years old but apart from this, due to financial constraints, the support he received was very patchy. He has therefore fought hard to get a Statement for his daughter to fund her specialist one-to-one support alongside her mainstream schooling.

Gavin talks about his dyslexia and the support he did receive: “Dyslexia isn’t just about learning, it’s a part of everything I do. In our society if you can’t read, you can’t thrive. When I was fourteen I was lucky enough to be part of a project that was funded by Hackney Council and I used to go to Dyslexia Action once a week for support. But the funding ran out once I started college. It was at this point that I lost my way. I knew I wasn’t stupid; I knew I wasn’t a low life; I loved education but education didn’t love me; it just didn’t soak in for some reason.

“I did lots of jobs earning the minimum wage but it was when my daughter Seanna was born that I had a wake-up call. My uncle is a cabbie and he said to me: ‘Gavin you can do anything you put your mind to’. He encouraged me to do ‘The Knowledge’ to become a London cabbie. This was not something that I thought I could do because of having to pass exams so I put it off.
“My mum never let me give up and in the end I got back in touch with Dyslexia Action. The teachers remembered me. Margaret assessed me and worked with me to make sure I got the support I needed to get me through ‘The Knowledge’.

“It took me longer to get there but my way of learning has now clicked in my head and I have found my gift. I officially achieved ‘The Knowledge’ in October 2010. I now have a London Cab. I have found my way; I am a successful man and I am happy.”

When Seanna was seven years old, Gavin was told at a parent’s evening that her reading age was very low. “I knew she was dyslexic but it took until she was ten before she got the right help,” said Gavin. “I took information into the school from Dyslexia Action and have fought to get the funding for Seanna. Her Statement now pays for one lesson per week at Dyslexia Action, which is great but I want her to have more, at least two lessons per week.”

Seanna said: “For me dyslexia is like I know what I want to say but I can’t write it down. I can see a word in my head and remember exactly what letters are in it but I just can’t say what that word is. When I used to write I used to find it hard as I could never spell the words I wanted to use, but now I am able to use what I am learning at Dyslexia Action to use any word I want. The support is helping me to understand how I learn and I am growing in confidence. It is so good to come somewhere where they get me.”

What parents think should be done?

- 92% of respondents said all schools should have access to a specialist in dyslexia
- 9 out of 10 parents of dyslexic children, who were independently surveyed by YouGov, said all teachers should have a basic level of training in dyslexia
- 81% of respondents were in favour of school improvements to include measures to track the progress a child is making in literacy throughout their time at school

From some of the additional comments made, respondents highlighted the transition of primary to secondary as being poor. One parent told YouGov that their child had more help in primary school than high school. Another said secondary school: ‘Never followed up reports from primary school and, when advised, still did nothing – I was advised that they could have brought this to the attention of the examining boards and as a result my child’s grades would have been adjusted accordingly’.

Many parents commented on the need for more 1:1 support or smaller group teaching. There were also many anecdotal comments referring to teachers needing improved levels of understanding.

Parents also commented that it was very important for them to be involved and there needed to be a much better level of communication between them and the school. Some said they felt ignored and that teachers needed to listen to parents and take their concerns seriously.
The views of adults and young people with dyslexia

Dyslexia Action conducted an online survey of people over the age of 16 with dyslexia which asked about their experiences of being dyslexic and of education. This was something that we asked our own specialist Dyslexia Action Centres to promote to their learners. The sample is therefore not an independent one, in contrast to the YouGov survey of parents which took a representative sample. While we are only talking of a relatively small sample of 128 respondents, the information reflects comments we hear from learners on a daily basis.

Like the parents of children with dyslexia, almost all the respondents believed that teachers should have much better training in dyslexia and that there should be better access to specialists and 1:1 support. Close behind in terms of priorities, the respondents felt there should be more measures in schools to build confidence (85%), good access to ICT (79%) and an understanding/sympathetic school environment (77%).

Among this sample of adults, 35% revealed dyslexia was not diagnosed until after the age of 21.

Among the comments relating to people’s feelings on finally being diagnosed were: ‘I was worried that I was different’; ‘I cried all day’; ‘I was ashamed’; ‘my mum knew from the age of 8 but the doctors said it was just immaturity’; ‘I was bullied by a teacher and was very confused’; ‘I already knew so it just confirmed what my parents had said since I was 6’; ‘I felt stupid, angry, upset. It really knocked my confidence’; ‘I felt mixed up; my emotions were all over the place’.

Most of the 16+ dyslexic respondents reported negative experiences from their time at school; with over half saying they found being dyslexic frustrating. This was compounded by unhelpful comments from their teachers such as:

• ‘try harder’ - reported by nearly 83% of respondents
• 40% said teachers only ever commented on spelling and never on the ideas and content
• 65% said teachers made them read aloud in front of the whole class despite their difficulties
• 38.2% said their teachers made public comments about their difficulties
• 30% said they made fun of mistakes or wrong answers

One respondent reported being bullied all the time; another was told by their teacher that they would never amount to anything in life, saying: ‘I was lazy and a troublemaker’. Another reported being told: ‘I was stupid and they [teachers] made me stand and tell my classmates I was stupid’. Others reported being accused of cheating and of being lazy.

When asked about their move to secondary school after primary, nearly 62% said they struggled with the work. Worryingly, when asked what positive experiences they remembered from their education, 20% of our respondents reported ‘none’.
Despite all their negative experiences, over half said the most positive thing about going through education with dyslexia was that they felt proud of what they had achieved despite it. More than half did say that dyslexia was better recognised now than 10 years ago but 22% believe much more should be done to ensure people with dyslexia can succeed at work. The majority (60%) believed they would have been more successful had they received better support at school. 62% believed they were able to get better jobs because of skills training or further education received after school and once their dyslexia was diagnosed.

Social media

Dyslexia Action is actively involved in various forums on the web through which people express their views and exchange information. The identification of dyslexia and getting the right support is a subject that generates very passionate opinions, particularly amongst parents of dyslexic children. While this evidence is not part of either of the surveys detailed in this section, there are a number of views and opinions that we feel are important to highlight.

The consensus view expressed in social media is that the system is bureaucratic and children are being failed because of the lack of identification and limited access to the right help and support. Some comments we have recorded from individuals posting on Dyslexia Action’s Facebook wall include:

- More support is needed at schools and colleges because when I was there, there was no support
- Teachers need to understand what it is like for a child with dyslexia
- Teachers need to actually spot when a child could be dyslexic at primary school age and act with support and knowledge
- All teachers need to know how to cope with dyslexic children, it should be part of their training
- Our head in our local super Ofsted school says: ‘it’s not a disability!’
- Recognition in all schools that this is a learning problem and with the right support and programs it could change the lives of many children/people who are suffering, myself and my two boys included
- If my son had been diagnosed and at the very least acknowledged more in his primary setting, things would of never got so bad, and the secondary school he entered would of not had to pick up the pieces
- Throughout my daughter’s junior school she felt stupid and would never ever put her hand up in class
- I have had to fight to get my son’s dyslexia recognised, more needs to be done by the teachers, they need to take more notice
- I think all children should be tested for dyslexia as part of the school curriculum and not wait until the child falls well behind in reading and writing
- School kills 99% of dyslexics - it killed me!
- Train all teachers so they can stop saying: ‘there is something not quite right with your child’
- I wish all teachers studied dyslexia as part of their credentialing
- The ‘wait to fail’ mentality is absurd
Where are we now? Assessment and special arrangements

Highlighted below are three keys areas which have had a significant impact on children with dyslexia.

**Examination access arrangements**

Under the Equality Act (2010), pupils with disabilities in England and Wales are entitled to apply for special arrangements in exams to give them the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding despite problems with reading the questions, or writing the answers, for example. For those with dyslexia and literacy difficulties, such arrangements typically mean extra time, but other support may be allowed such as someone reading the questions aloud or writing the answers, depending on the individual’s specific difficulties.

Changes to the current access arrangements for examinations were put forward last year by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) with the publication of the annual: ‘Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration – General and Vocational Qualifications’, which has caused considerable concern to students, schools and parents.

Confusion now exists as to whether candidates with dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties will still receive up to 25% in extra time, more in some cases, and be entitled to other support such as a scribe and/or a reader. Dyslexia Action is working with JCQ and with other stakeholders to resolve some key issues.

Dyslexia Action’s main concern is that the changes will only allow for students who have considerable difficulties, and adjustments will only be made for those who are way below
the average in absolute terms. We know that Dyslexia ranges in severity and that many people can develop compensatory skills and strategies so that they can achieve well. However, when under pressure of time, it is often the case that use of these strategies breaks down. It is also significant that a very able person with dyslexia may have their career options limited because they appear to be ‘within the average range’ in terms of literacy whereas without the impact of their dyslexia they could perform well above average. Should special arrangements be there to level the playing field, to compensate for disability and to allow people to demonstrate what they are capable of achieving? Or are they just to lift the lowest in literacy to the lowest level needed to get through the exam?

**Year 1 phonics screening check**

A new, statutory phonics screening check for all pupils will be introduced in 2012 for children aged six who are getting to the end of Year 1 in primary school. The purpose of the phonics screening is to determine whether individual pupils have mastered the basics of phonic decoding. Pupils who have not reached this standard at the end of Year 1 should then receive support from their school to ensure they can improve their phonic decoding skills and they will be checked again a year later.

The check involves reading words and non-words. If a child has developed good phonic decoding skills they will be able to work out how to pronounce the non-words because these words cannot be read ‘by sight’.

The introduction of the phonics screening has caused considerable debate with many teachers threatening to boycott it. Dyslexia Action has supported the use of the check because the difficulty in acquiring phonic decoding skills is almost the ‘hallmark of dyslexia’. It is therefore very helpful to identify children early who have such difficulties. However, we have some concerns about the way this check is being presented and about the actions that will result from its use.

Children who fail to reach the necessary level should not wait a whole year before the effects of additional actions are assessed - that will be too late.

Teachers should not rely only on the information in the check - they will have other information about what a child’s literacy levels are and should already be taking action to support those who have been identified as struggling much earlier than the end of Year 1.

The check may serve as a useful safety net to pick up children who appear to be progressing well but who lack the foundations in phonic skills. Teachers need to be reassured that action to support children who seem to be doing ‘ok’ is worthwhile in terms of longer-term gains.

**Not a ‘catch-all’ solution**

We are also concerned that the response to a low result on the check should not be ‘more of the same’. It is important that schools receive support on delivering additional intervention models, with the accompanying training for teaching staff and teaching materials.

Our main concern about this check is that it could be presented as a complete solution to the challenge of identifying those who have difficulties with literacy. Dyslexia Action believes that this is a step in the right direction but it is not a ‘catch all’ solution. Some children with dyslexia may do well enough to pass this check at this stage in their education, particularly those who are more able or have been taught exceptionally well. However, they may have difficulties later down the line. Similarly, decoding is central to reading but it is not the whole story so teachers need to be aware of possible difficulties in other aspects of literacy and take action to develop wider literacy skills instead of focusing just on phonics.
Statutory KS2 grammar, punctuation and spelling test
A new statutory test of grammar, punctuation and spelling will be introduced for children at the end of Key Stage 2 from May 2013. This follows the Government’s decision to improve the assessment of English writing. This decision was informed by Lord Bew’s recommendation (DfE, 2012) that writing composition should be subject to teacher assessment only, with the more ‘technical’ aspects of English - such as punctuation and spelling - assessed via an externally marked test. The introduction of this new test reflects the Government’s beliefs that children should have mastered these important aspects of English by the time they leave primary school and that appropriate recognition should be given to good use of English throughout their schooling.

As with the Phonics Screening Check for 6-year-olds, some have objected strongly, including the NUT (2012) which says the ‘pass/fail test for six year olds is wrong’ and the National Association of Head Teachers which believes the new tests were ‘a waste of taxpayers' money’ (Sellgren, 2012).

Dyslexia Action has a more neutral view on this. We would rather see an explicit test of spelling punctuation and grammar than have an assessment of other subjects ‘polluted’ by the requirement to mark down candidates in these subjects who have poor spelling and grammar. We regard it as totally unacceptable that someone who spells badly should be denied the chance to gain top marks in, for example, history or geography.

Summary
This short review on current issues in assessment highlights that the issue of dyslexia, as a disability, has not been fully grasped across education. Dyslexia Action appreciates that no ‘reasonable adjustment’ can take away the difficulties that dyslexic people will have – to varying degrees – when they are required to read and write under time pressure. But this disability, just like a more obvious physical disability – should not condemn them to low achievement. Systems that are there to assess ability and understanding should be accessible to those with disabilities on equal terms but we haven’t got to this stage yet.
Section 3: Literacy is a big issue for the UK
Literacy and dyslexia

Dyslexia may have only just got on the map in educational terms, but literacy has been there for a long time. Those who campaign for the importance of literacy may have some different perspectives and terminology but they tend to share the same overall goals as those who are concerned with dyslexia. Dyslexia Action has worked closely and productively with various organisations such as The National Literacy Trust (www.literacytrust.org.uk) and we have found much common ground on issues such as engaging boys in reading, home reading habits, mentoring and improving access to high quality resources for teachers.

Many, but not all, literacy organisations and specialists accept the issue of dyslexia and recognise that specific training support and adaptations are needed if the wider world of literature is to be opened for them. At a more fundamental level however, Dyslexia Action is arguing that no strategy to address the challenge of ‘universal literacy’ will succeed unless it acknowledges dyslexia and incorporates specific measures for people with dyslexia.

Getting it right for those with dyslexia will therefore do a great deal to lift overall standards in English language and could help lift the UK from its lowly position in the international comparison league-tables.

The challenge

Trends in literacy standards through SAT results (Jama & Dugdale, 2012) at the end of Key Stage 2 (KS2) show us that approximately one in five school aged children are still not meeting expected levels in literacy. This means that there are approximately 1.62 million children in English schools who are prevented from accessing the school curriculum because they are unable to read well enough. These children are at a huge disadvantage and are affectively excluded from engaging in classroom activities.

It is well documented (Stewart, 2005) that there are huge social and financial costs as a result of illiteracy. There are implications both for the individual that struggles to read and our economy as the result of underemployment, unemployment and crime. These are directly related to literacy problems as the result of poor academic achievement, vocational training and reduced employment opportunities.

Appendix 2 (http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/dyslexia-still-matters-appendices) details the trends in literacy standards across the UK over the last 5-10 years based on SAT results and GCSEs (DfE, 2011). On average there has been an improvement. In 1995 only 49% of children at KS2 were meeting expected levels in literacy (Level 4) but this has improved to 81% (KS2 results for 2011). But it is those with the poorest skills that remain static. Approximately 20% of children are still not meeting expected levels in reading.

According to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS, 2010) ‘Skills for Life Survey’ the number of people with relatively poor literacy skills has declined, whilst the number with the poorest skills has not changed significantly.

Figures from the European Commission’s Eurostat (2011) put the UK 19th out of 33 countries ranked according to the proportion of the population aged 25 - 64 with an ‘upper secondary education’ (equivalent to A-levels). Just 76.1% of Britons are educated to A-level standard compared to 92% in Lithuania for example.
Consequences of poor literacy – the figures speak volumes

**Department for Education**
The latest figures from the Department for Education (DfE, 2011) show that an estimated 5,740 children and young people are permanently excluded from primary, secondary and all special schools. Pupils with SEN statements are around eight times more likely to be permanently excluded than those pupils with no SEN. According to the DfE, 75% of all school exclusions, some 4,260 children are permanently excluded.

**National Foundation of Educational Research (NFER)**
The NFER (The Dyslexia Institute, 2006) noted that the additional cost of provision for a child that is permanently excluded is approximately £10,000 per annum. The cost of supporting children with SEN who are excluded is therefore over £50 million per year. This funding would have been better used to provide appropriate early support in school.

**Youth Justice Board**
As detailed in the Corporate and Business Plan 2011-12 to 2014-15 (D133) of the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (2011), the National Audit Office has estimated that the total cost to the UK economy of offending by young people could be up to £11 billion per year, and the proportion of young people who reoffend stands at around 37%.

**Ministry of Justice**
According to the Ministry of Justice (2011) the prison population at 31 March 2012 was 87,531 offenders in England. Dyslexia Action’s own research demonstrated that there is an overrepresentation within the prison population compared to the UK population as a whole of those with literacy difficulties and those who have dyslexia/SpLD. Around 50% of the prison population, which is 30% above the population norm, have poor literacy skills and 20% of offenders were found to be dyslexic, which is 10% above the population norm. According to the NOMS Annual Report and Accounts 2010-11 the cost on average per prisoner is just under £27,000 per year. The UK tax payer is therefore paying in excess of £710 million per annum just for the overrepresentation of those with poor literacy skills.

**Department for Work and Pensions**
According to the Department for Work and Pensions (2012) the benefit expenditure for England and Wales in 2009/10 on Income Support was £7,558 million and on Jobseekers Allowance was £4,276 million. In 2010/2011 it was £7,073 million for Income Support and £4,044 million for Jobseeker’s Allowance.
Institute of Economic Affairs

Professor Len Shackleton, a fellow of the Institute of Economic Affairs, comments: “Low levels of literacy are associated with a higher risk of unemployment in all countries. The number of unskilled jobs requiring little or no literacy (though still significant) has been falling sharply in the UK. Perhaps, as importantly, access to jobs increasingly depends on filling in forms and writing CVs - impossible without quite reasonable literacy. Another way in which illiteracy makes people difficult to employ is through prison experience. Of those in prison, illiteracy is shockingly high. It’s probably the case that prison sentences are themselves more likely if you are illiterate, for any given level of offence. Once incarcerated, your employability in future is dramatically reduced. Our literacy rates now compare rather badly with emerging Asian economies as well as some (though not all) European economies.”

We ‘could do better’

There are clear and well documented long-term and significant social and economic costs associated with not taking a strategic and comprehensive approach to educating children with dyslexia and literacy difficulties. Improvements in literacy standards have been made and we are making progress but we ‘could do better’ at providing good literacy education for all children and we need to do more to support those in the lowest 20%. We could do more for people like Peter - see case study 2 (right), if we help dyslexia sufferers when they are young.

Peter’s story

Case study 2:

Peter (an adult learner)

Peter is an example of someone who is getting his first chance of an education in his 50s. Here Peter discusses the impact of his difficulties on his career and how he tried to keep his dyslexia a secret from his employer.

“At 52 years old I burst into tears when I had to tell my boss I was dyslexic. There was pressure on me to get professional qualifications following a restructure. I went to pieces. I was on medication for depression and was seeing a counsellor. I was terrified I would lose my job now that my secret was out.

“I am now slowly coming to terms with my situation. I now realise that being dyslexic has nothing to do with my ability. I am good at my job. Thanks to the support I am now getting I am having my first opportunity at an education and qualifications. This has helped make me accept things and has given me a greater understanding about my dyslexia and about me. In time, I hope to be able to progress my career once I feel ready to sit those exams!”
Section 4: Interventions and models of good practice
What works: interventions and good practice

Recent reports such as Rose 2009 and OFSTED 2010 have highlighted those features of practice that promote successful outcomes. OFSTED’s report was concerned with good learning outcomes in general, but the points made are relevant to literacy and dyslexia.

**OFSTED (2010) ‘A Statement is Not Enough’:**

**Children and young people learnt best when:**
- Teachers presented information in different ways to ensure all children and young people understood
- Teachers adjusted the pace of the lesson to reflect how children and young people were learning
- The effectiveness of specific types of support was understood and the right support was put in place at the right time.
- Assessment was secure, continuous and acted upon
- Teachers’ subject knowledge was good, as was their understanding of pupils’ needs and how to help them
- The staff understood clearly the difference between ensuring children and young people were learning and keeping them occupied
- Respect for individuals was reflected in high expectations for their achievement
- Lesson structures were clear and familiar but allowed for adaptation and flexibility
- All aspects of a lesson were well thought out and any adaptations needed were made without fuss to ensure that everyone in class had access

**Children and young people’s learning was least successful when:**
- Expectations of disabled children and young people and those who had SEN were low
- Activities and additional interventions were inappropriate and were not evaluated in terms of their effect on children and young people’s learning
- Resources were poor, with too little thought having been given to their selection and use
- Teachers did not spend enough time finding out what children and young people already knew or had understood
- Teachers were not clear about what they expected children and young people to learn as opposed to what they expected them to do
- Communication was poor: teachers spent too much time talking, explanations were confusing, feedback was inconsistent, language was too complex for all children and young people to understand - the tone and even body language used by adults was confusing
- The roles of additional staff were not planned well or additional staff were not trained well and the support provided was not monitored sufficiently
- Children and young people had little engagement in what they were learning, usually as a result of the above features

See table 1.1 at the end of this section for examples of interventions and good practice.
Features of good practice

Sir Jim Rose’s review (2009) highlighted the importance of teachers having an understanding of the normal processes of development in reading and spelling and, in particular, the Simple Model of Reading. A survey of practitioners who were consulted for this review identified the following features of good practice as most important.

- Using multisensory methods for teaching & encouraging multisensory learning
- Planning and delivering lessons so that pupils/students experience success
- Planning and adapting the teaching programme to meet individual needs
- Teaching a structured programme of phonics
- Building in regular opportunities for consolidation & reinforcement of teaching points already covered
- Maintaining rapport with pupils/students
- Planning a purposeful and engaging balance of activities in lessons
- Teaching pupils/students to be aware of their own learning strategies
- Teaching pupils/students to develop effective learning strategies
- Showing sensitivity to the emotional needs of pupils/students
- Teaching pupils/students to improve their working memory
- Selecting appropriate resources to support particular learning needs

The features of good practice identified by OFSTED and by Rose show close agreement, and resonate well with the reports from parents about what they have found helpful or unhelpful. It is interesting to see that good practice for those with dyslexia is not just about individualised learning programmes and the specific content of these programs. The ethos and organisation of learning within the classroom and across the whole school also make a big difference.

Effective learning

In summary, effective learning for children with dyslexia depends on:

1. A whole school ethos that respects individuals’ differences, maintains high expectations for all and promotes good communication between teachers, parents and pupils
2. Knowledgeable and sensitive teachers who understand the processes of learning and the impact that specific difficulties can have
3. Creative adaptations to classroom practice enabling children with special needs to learn inclusively and meaningfully, alongside their peers
4. Access to additional learning programmes and resources to support development of key skills and strategies for independent learning

In the next section of this report we look at the realities of good practice in a selection of schools, local authorities and voluntary sector providers. We chose examples here simply to illustrate a range of practices in a range of settings and we do not attempt to give an exhaustive list. There are other useful sources of advice and information about good practice and we do not wish to duplicate what is found there. See for example the Dyslexia-SpLD Trust’s ‘Interventions for Literacy’ website: www.interventionsforliteracy.org.uk. The common thread in the examples chosen is that the best outcomes are achieved by provision that is not confined to one key area but encompasses many of the four features that were summarised above.
Models of good practice
See Table 1.1 (p38-49) for interventions, results and case studies for all of the following examples.

Achievement for All
Achievement for All is a tailored school improvement framework, delivered in partnership with leaders, teachers, parents, pupils and support professionals. It aims to raise the aspirations, access and achievement of pupils identified with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). A two-year pilot has demonstrated unprecedented impact for pupils with SEND, who progressed faster on average than all pupils nationally in English and maths. The programme is part of the charity Achievement for All 3As which is led by its Chair, Brian Lamb OBE, author of the influential Lamb (2010) review on SEN, and Professor Sonia Blandford, CEO and National Director. Achievement for All is about giving pupils opportunities to develop their strengths in other ways which gives them renewed confidence and self-esteem.

Cornwall Dyslexia Association
The Cornwall Dyslexia Association (CDA) was established in 1991 by a group of parents who were concerned about their own children because of the little support and provision available. With five years funding from the Government through the Parenting Fund, and three years from the Lottery, the CDA provided free support for dyslexic families in Cornwall. This included free screening and assessment for adult dyslexics and young people; a free drop-in advice centre; awareness training for businesses, organisations and education providers; support courses for parents and school training. Now government funding has ceased, schools have to pay for the service.

Cornwall was one of the first to pilot the British Dyslexia Association’s ‘Dyslexia Friendly Schools Quality Mark’ (2012). It was such a success that the CDA and the Local Authority decided to formulate its own accreditation process and quality mark. The purpose was to incentivise schools to get additional training for its staff, in return for the kudos of the quality mark.

Sarah Wright, CDA Chair, said: “We believe all qualified teachers should receive proper training in dyslexia and all schools should show their understanding of this specific learning difficulty by achieving a quality mark. Strategies that help dyslexics help all of the class. Training in dyslexia has to be compulsory and delivered by initial teacher training providers or local authorities. Our award is called the ‘Inclusive Dyslexia Friendly Schools (IDFS) Quality Mark’, so it highlights its commitment to a dyslexia-friendly approach in classrooms, which promotes inclusion of all children regardless of their learning style.”

Currently, schools in Cornwall apply to the LA if they want quality mark accreditation and undertake one-day training run by its dyslexia advisers in association with the CDA and an educational psychologist. So far IDFS Quality Mark awards have been given to 42 of 234 primary and 10 of 31 secondary schools in the county.

Croydon Literacy Centre
Croydon Literacy Centre teaches children with literacy difficulties including dyslexia. Children are referred by their schools and attend the Centre once or twice a week for 90 minute sessions. Schools or parents pay, sometimes the cost is shared. The Centre works closely with both parents and schools. They also carry out training for teachers and teaching assistants in schools and at the Centre to increase their skills in supporting children with literacy difficulties.
The Centre strongly believes that the children that are referred to them would not achieve in the same way if they had not received additional support. Normally they see a dramatic improvement in self-confidence and self-esteem because many of the children had already failed in their school and felt bad about themselves. Their work with parents and the child helps to change this perception over time. The Centre says that many of the children make such excellent progress that they are within the norms for their year group after having ‘support’ in school.

A Croydon Literacy Centre spokesperson said: “Teachers need special training in dyslexia. A combination of initial teacher training and local specialist courses would work best. Until you have experience in the classroom, the reality of the difficulty you might have moving a child on is unimaginable.”

**Dyslexia Action’s Centres**

Dyslexia Action (DA) has 26 main Centres, 47 teaching outposts and over 100 units in maintained and independent schools throughout the United Kingdom. We provide a comprehensive service for children and adults with dyslexia and literacy difficulties including diagnostic assessments, advice sessions for parents, workplace consultations and advice on adaptations and use of technology, as well as group and individual tutoring in teaching centres and partner schools and colleges. We also provide early intervention for primary aged children; study skills for teenagers; programmes for those with maths difficulties; workplace coaching for adults and tailor-made programmes for all. Much of our work focuses on developing the sound-symbol relationship in written and spoken language using highly-structured multisensory teaching programmes. It also involves a focus on the individual special needs of learners, whether that be with organisational and memory skills, developing vocabulary or practical skills such as interview preparation and writing applications. The specific aspects of the programme depend on the needs and priorities of the learner but will usually have a core of skills development with the aim of producing independent and confident learners.

Dyslexia Action also delivers training for teachers and teaching assistants from initial awareness sessions for classroom teachers and up to postgraduate qualifications for specialists.

Dyslexia Action has a track record of providing expert and effective support to individuals as shown in the twice-yearly progress testing that pupils are given when following the Dyslexia Institute Literacy Programme or its Units of Sound Programme. Typical gains by poor readers, in the 2010 results, were five standard score points on comprehension and three points on word identification over a six-month period. Improvements in standard scores indicate ‘catch up’ to the average level. These typical findings agree with the results of the SPELL-IT study (Rack 2005) where a sample of seven-year-olds with very poor reading skills made two standard score gains over a 24-week intervention using the DILP programme, whereas a comparison group monitored over the same time fell back by two standard score points.
**Dyslexia Action’s Partnership for Literacy (P4L) programme**

Whilst still providing services to individuals in our Centres, Dyslexia Action has developed its services to schools through our Partnership for Literacy (P4L) programme in order to try to make a greater and more sustained impact on the low literacy levels in schools. P4L provides whole-school training to school staff and skills-based training and support for teaching assistants and special needs teachers. The aim is to impart expert knowledge and provide teaching materials including our Active Literacy Kit of short, timed exercises, and our structured, multisensory computer-based Units of Sound programme that has been developed to teach reading and spelling.

Since 2006, Dyslexia Action has partnered with 91 primary and secondary schools. During this time, we reached 460 educators (180 of whom were TAs), which improved the educational outcomes of approximately 14,000 children. The full sample of 2,288 children across 14 partner primary schools from September 2008-09 made statistically significant progress in reading that was above expectation. For example, one child at a Peterborough school improved from a reading score of 61 SSP to 102 SSP in just two school terms.

**Lyndhurst Dyslexia Centre**

Lyndhurst Dyslexia Centre is attached to Lyndhurst Primary School, Camberwell, South East London. The specialist teachers use multisensory teaching methods and assistive technologies to help children who are not progressing and trains school staff to become specialist teachers for dyslexia.

Besides teaching the children, Lyndhurst shares its expertise with parents and the wider school community. They run workshops for them in aspects of literacy development and barriers to learning. The Centre blends general training in literacy with Dyslexia-SpLD training because they believe the methodology of teaching learners with dyslexia works for all children.

Lyndhurst is a wonderful example of how specialist teachers can work with a school to improve the learning of all children with literacy difficulties; as well as demonstrating how effectively sharing expertise with other teachers is increasing the reach of good teaching practices.

**Maple Hayes Hall School, Lichfield, Staffordshire**

Maple Hayes Hall School is approved under the 1996 Education Act as a co-educational day school especially for dyslexic children aged 7-17 years. It is designated by the DfE as an independent school specially organised to make provision for pupils with Specific Learning Difficulties. It caters for up to 120 children. Maple Hayes teaches literacy using a morphological approach to learning. It believes breaking words down into segments of meaning, which are then assigned pictorial icons, helps pupils to understand and read the words. In response to its intervention system (p.48), Ofsted (2011) noted: ‘The overwhelming majority of pupils and their parents and carers are very pleased with this approach and pupils say that they will always need and use this methodology. Numerous comments on inspection questionnaires say that Maple Hayes has transformed pupil’s lives and future prospects’. The school’s main aim is ‘...to give pupils a fresh start in the acquisition of literacy, so raising their self-esteem, self-confidence and expectation of academic success’. Other exceptional points, as highlighted by Ofsted (2011), include: ‘The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding overall’; ‘the success of the unique approach taken to help you improve your reading, spelling and writing skills; ‘...outstanding academic progress’; ‘the great improvement in...confidence and self-esteem’; ‘outstanding behaviour and application in lessons, and ... high attendance’; ‘the quality of
teaching and the commitment staff have to your progress and well-being. Most students go on to higher education at college or university.

**Moon Hall College**
Moon Hall College in Reigate, Surrey, specialises in teaching dyslexic children in a normal mainstream school environment. This school has teachers qualified and experienced in teaching dyslexic children. Classes are small (up to 14 children) and most of the specialist teaching is done in a class or group situation but some children are taken out for individual help when needed.

The school is a centre for GCSE examinations. All pupils are expected to take the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and ICT, plus other subjects of their choice to give them the opportunities that they need for college places and careers. The first cohort of pupils completed their GCSEs in 2011 and passed at the levels needed to go on to further education. The school states that they were very pleased with the students’ individual results and that almost all exceeded expectations.

Mrs Berry Baker, Founder and Principal of Moon Hall College, said: “Initial teacher training can only provide an introduction for most teachers but Early Years, KS1 teachers and English specialists should have much more extensive training as part of their course. They should then take further training as they gain experience in schools.”

**No to Failure**
The Dyslexia-SpLD Trust (DST) (2009) published the findings from a study called ‘No to Failure’. Funded by Government, this provided further evidence that specialist teaching works and that even a fairly modest amount of specialist teacher input can make a marked difference to the literacy skills of dyslexic/SpLD pupils (p.49). Just over half (56%) of pupils who had not achieved expected levels in KS2 SATS were found to be at risk of Dyslexia-SpLD, based on the screening results. Fewer than half (44.5%) of the pupils, who were found to be at risk, were already on the SEN Register prior to screening. A further 8% were placed on the SEN Register as a direct consequence of the screening results. Nevertheless, almost half (48.5%) of the ‘at-risk’ pupils were not on the SEN Register at any time during the project.

As with P4L (Dyslexia Action, 2010) the findings from this study clearly tell us that without good assessment a large number of children would have slipped through the net and would not have received the kind of literacy teaching they needed, delivered by an expert in dyslexia who worked with the SEN team. A significant number of these children were consequently seen to make above expected progress in one or more areas of literacy.

Interestingly, a large percentage of children who had the weakest literacy skills had been identified as having SEN. Therefore, by providing interventions for children with SpLD the schools were able to move those from the lower ability groups forward, which obviously improved the standards for the schools overall.

**St Vincent De Paul’s School, Westminster, London**
St Vincent De Paul’s is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic mixed primary school in Westminster, London. It was actually one of the schools that took part in the first evaluation done by The University of Durham’s Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring, as part of Partnership for Literacy, from September 2008 – 2009. The school has successfully embedded the P4L training and teaching materials into its timetable and curriculum.
**Suffolk Local Authority**

Suffolk has embraced the need to increase provision for children with SpLDs and focuses on encouraging teacher training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD). It has set up Dyslexia Centres within its region that have highly trained and qualified advisers to Level 7, Diploma or MA Level. It encourages its schools to take advice and use approaches recommended by specialist staff in the Centres. They pride themselves on having a countywide approach to being dyslexia friendly. There is a strong, regular CPD programme for teaching and non-teaching staff at all levels, including input into the National SENCO award in Suffolk. Suffolk has no longitudinal data because the Centres have only been open a few years and they are currently in the process of establishing a baseline. However, they strongly believe that children have already benefited from the service as the result of: greater awareness of mainstream staff; improvements in self-esteem for pupils; progress from initial starting points in literacy. In this LA there is a strong tradition of sharing expertise and delivering outreach from specialist centres which will include special schools.

Currently this region has one of the lowest KS2 SAT results. In 2011 78% and 81% of children achieved expected levels in English and reading respectively. This is below the national average so it will be interesting to see how the relatively new support Centres improve future SAT results.

---

**The Unicorn School, Abingdon**

This is an independent co-educational school in Abingdon, Oxfordshire, catering for 6-12 year olds who have severe dyslexia. Some pupils also have dyspraxia or dyscalculia, while others have speech and language difficulties. It provides specialist education for dyslexic children from both the independent and mainstream sectors, teaching strategies and skills to enable children to return to the mainstream classroom as soon as possible.

Specialist teachers teach pupils in small classes of 8-10, with a daily half-hour of individual tuition. Educational and emotional needs are met on an individual basis.

Ofsted (2012) stated that The Unicorn School provided an outstanding quality of education which fully meets its stated aim: ‘to help its pupils raise their self-esteem and learn the strategies they need to return to mainstream school successfully’.

Again this model shows that with intervention it is possible for dyslexic children to learn the strategies they need to progress affectively within mainstream education.
Waldegrave School for Girls, Richmond-upon-Thames, London
Waldegrave is a comprehensive school for girls aged 11 – 16 years in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames. It is classified as a dyslexia friendly school. Lesson plans specifically provide for students with SpLD. This school already has highly trained SEN staff and a good strategy in place to identify those at risk of a literacy problem or SpLD; they keep up to date with the latest in good teaching practices by tapping into the expertise of special schools and units within their borough.

The Wickhambrook Centre for Specific Learning Difficulties, Suffolk.
The Wickhambrook Centre for Specific Learning Differences caters for pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3 who have Specific Learning Difficulties such as Dyslexia. Schools in Suffolk can refer pupils with SpLD if they are on School Action Plus; attendance has been discussed thoroughly between pupil, parents and school; there is evidence of Wave 3 provision and outcomes. Teaching at the centre is systematic, individualised and cumulative; tailored to the individual’s needs. There are four groups of eight pupils taught by two TAs and two qualified teachers, including one who has completed a British Dyslexia Association’s (BDA) AMBDA accreditation.

To repeat, this list is not intended to be exhaustive; there are many other examples of effective practice and other sources of guidance.
Table 1.1 Models of good practice and examples of effective intervention

**Authority: Cornwall**

**Example of results from Year 1/2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
<th>Improvements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4x 30mins weekly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 56 lessons including worksheets + word banks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Intensive reading; some writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Phase 3 onwards: consonant digraphs, vowel digraphs; tricky words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Size of group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-test</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reading age Oct 09)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>+1.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>+1.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>+0.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>+1.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>+1.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Authority: Cornwall**

**Example of results from Year 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
<th>Improvements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30 minutes x 5 per week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Intensive reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 1:1 with specialist teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Engaging children’s enjoyment/book awareness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Challenge children to read slightly more complex language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Introduce range of text type and genre child would not readily choose</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Size of group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-test</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reading age Oct 09)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.05</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.06</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.03</td>
<td>+0.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.07</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.05</td>
<td>+0.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.07</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.01</td>
<td>+1.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.05</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.04</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.06</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.11</td>
<td>+0.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.06</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.01</td>
<td>+0.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Authority: Croydon**

**Croydon Dyslexia Centre**

The Croydon Literacy Centre believes the vital link between oral skills and literacy should be assessed along with early reading and writing skills, with children causing concern. They say that specialist literacy and speech and language intervention should be brought in for the 2-4% who would need it.

**Intervention**

• Individualised programme - range of strategies enable pupils to retain learning e.g. kinaesthetic approach
• Phonics sessions similar progression to Letters and Sounds
• High frequency words - reading and spelling

**Frequency**

90 minutes x2 per week
Size of group: 2 or 3.

**Overview**

Assessment to establish problems and how literacy skills are affected. Target sheet planned specific to the child and baseline assessment is done recording initial scores. Target sheets - produced termly and shared with school.
Teachers talk to child about what helps and how they remember particular sounds or words.
CPD provided for teachers.

**Resource examples**

IT used to support reading and writing, using programmes such as Lexia, Wordshark, Catch up, Rapid Reading Assistant, e-books that can be read to or by children independently, Write Out Loud - word processing, touch typing.
Dyslexia Action, June 2012

**Authority: Croydon**

Croydon Dyslexia Centre continued

- Language and comprehension skills
- Range of resources to cater for wide-ranging interests and needs of child
- Mutual support in groups adding to confidence building
- Relationships built with parents and school to create support network
- Reading heard daily in school
- Homework followed up if parents are unable to support the child at home

**Case study**

The Centre gives a Year 6 boy as an example that the impact of specialist support alongside mainstream can have. The boy had a reading age of five years and six months when he started at the Centre and when he left he was within the age appropriate reading level for his chronological age, which completely changed his life.

The Centre works with schools to develop skills and trains TAs to deliver intervention programme as detailed.

**Centre philosophy:**

Strongly believe if schools know how to assess, plan and deliver intervention they are in a better position to identify which children really need specialist teaching.

---

**Authority: Staffordshire**

4 Dyslexia Centres: Leek, Stafford, Cannock Lichfield

Since September 2011 there are four Dyslexia Centres in Staffordshire, based in schools in Leek, Stafford, Cannock and Lichfield.

**Dyslexia Centres**

For KS2 pupils at School Action Plus or above, who have been identified with dyslexia by SEN staff.

**Frequency**

- Attend the Centre - one session / week
- Or outreach support for school – Centre’s dyslexia teacher sets up and teaches structured teaching programme and advises school on appropriate resources, techniques, strategies to help pupils with dyslexia in the class situation

**Intervention**

- Individualised learning programmes, supported by schools through liaison and link books.
- Referrals to the Centres are made via the Central Dyslexia Panel.

**Comments about the Centres**

**Parents’ comments**

'Z’s progress socially and academically has been outstanding. It is difficult to put our thanks into words. We think the following word captures your work in Z’s progress: inspirational!'

'S has enjoyed every minute of her time at the centre… the most positive part of her education….She has grown in confidence thanks to your support and encouragement, she is full of excitement and optimism. It has been a pleasure to know you and to feel so well supported.'

'The centre has helped M in so many ways, spelling, reading, writing and also confidence to try new things. We are so very grateful for everything that you have helped M to achieve. A big thank you to you all. The link book is an excellent way for everyone to be involved.'

**Children’s comments**

'I now realise I am special and talented.'

'I now understand why I am different. I'm happy that I am different and I like the challenge. My confidence has grown because I know I'm better than some people at different things.'

'I don’t want to be dyslexic but I couldn’t not because I wouldn’t be myself. I want to be judged by the way I am. '
The Central Dyslexia Panel will look at evidence presented by the school and consider the most appropriate provision for the pupil.

Teachers' comments
'The centre is so supportive. B really enjoys attending and is happy to share what he has done at the centre with his classmates.'
'I have found being able to access the resources and advice offered by the centre to be invaluable.'

Overview Kedington Primary
The School has worked hard to increase its knowledge of dyslexia and increase dyslexia friendliness of classrooms. They have consulted with the Centre on concerns and assessments of children who may have specific learning difficulties, which they have found to be invaluable. Consequently, in 2011 Ofsted said Kedington Primary was an outstanding school and noted its rapid improvements since its previous inspection.

This is a good example where a mainstream school can work with a specialist unit to get 1:1 support for children with SpLDs. However, it also demonstrates how effective it is for school teaching staff to have access to experts who can give them advice and guidance that informs their teaching practices.

Frequency: x2 days per week for three terms
Size of group: 4 groups of 8 pupils

Case study example: Kedington Primary School
Pre-intervention
Year 2: P8 / 1C
Post-intervention
Predicted to reach Level 4 in Year 6

Intervention: Achievement for All
Tailored school improvement framework for pupils with SEND, delivered in partnership with leaders, teachers, parents, pupils and support professionals. It aims to raise the aspirations, access and achievement of pupils identified with SEND. A two-year pilot has demonstrated unprecedented impact for pupils with SEND, who progressed faster on average than all pupils nationally in English and maths.
Organisation: Charity  
Achievement 4 All 3As

Beeston Fields Primary, Nottinghamshire

Overview
Many pupils had difficulties with literacy at School Action Plus so school felt it needed to review its interventions to support pupils more effectively, with a specific focus on appropriate interventions for individuals and setting more aspirational targets.

Approach
Targets and actions were agreed between the teacher and parents. Consequently, parents felt the school was more interested. Following a review of needs, the teacher was able to put an appropriate range of interventions in place to support pupils more effectively. This range of new interventions is now rigorously planned and monitored.

Outcomes
The success the pupils have had within reading/writing and maths has raised their self-esteem as demonstrated by improved relationships, attitude to work and general increased confidence.

Summary
Achievement for All has led to school recognising culture change was necessary regarding targets for pupils with SEND. Teachers now set increased aspirational targets for all pupils. Achievement for All has led to a whole school expectation that all pupils should make three sub-levels progress. Monitoring and reviewing processes now support development of aspirational target setting. This is built into the whole-school target as part of teachers’ Performance Management.

Frederick Bird Primary School, Coventry

Overview
Frederick Bird Primary School serves a diverse and disadvantaged area of Coventry, with 700 pupils speaking 46 languages – a truly multicultural environment. Approximately 40% of pupils have SEN.

Key challenges
The school wanted to provide Strand 3 wider outcomes for 15 pupils in Year 5 at ‘school action plus’ with a variety of SEND. Many had attendance issues and struggled to show their capabilities on in-school tasks. There was also little opportunity for them to attend after-school clubs or sporting activities in the community. The complex issues that this presented included: communication problems, learning difficulties, attachment disorders, mental health difficulties and poor behaviour.

Interventions
- Improving attitudes to learning and adults
- Team building
- A variety of challenging and highly motivating sporting activities helped to keep children engaged, and weekly personal feedback helped build on previous learning
- Keys to success were consistency, close relationships and confidence building, with a ‘you can do it’ atmosphere

Summary
The children involved in the project learnt new skills and achieved certificates in the sports they took part in. By giving these children different opportunities also helped to improve their participation and attitudes to learning.

Achievement for All 3As Ltd, 2012, Case Studies, Accessible from: http://www.afa3as.org.uk/programme/case-studies
Dyslexia Action (DA) is a national organisation with Centres in England, Wales and Scotland. Its Head Office and National Training and Resource Centre are based in Egham, Surrey. DA has 26 main Centres, 47 teaching outposts and over 100 units in maintained and independent schools throughout the United Kingdom.

Example: The Bath Centre, open Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm, was established 25 years ago. It now has over 100 students. The Centre offers the following services:

- Psychological assessments for children and adults by independent consulting psychologists who are registered with the Health Professions Council
- Educational assessments by specially trained teachers
- Surgeries and advice for children and adults
- Post assessment consultations
- Workplace consultations
- Coaching for adults in the workplace
- Dyslexia awareness training
- Dyslexia screening training
- INSET training
- Study skills for school children
- Exam access arrangements

Case study A
Kimberley Ward, now 16, was diagnosed with dyslexia at the Bath Centre when she was 14 which meant she was allowed extra time in her GCSEs. As a result she achieved 11 GCSEs including four As. Kimberley is now preparing for her A’ levels. She will be in a separate room to her peers as she will have a reader and a scribe. She hopes to go on to study medicine. Kimberley said: “I knew I struggled but I didn’t know why. I was good at talking to people but when it came to writing, my thoughts became scrambled.” Her mother Elaine, 47, said: “I knew there was something wrong with Kimberley from an early age. She wasn’t reading what she saw. What she said wasn’t what was in front of her.”

The DA assessment cost £400. Elaine said: “I was lucky enough to save up the money but many parents can’t afford it. This is where many children are being let down.

“The staff at Dyslexia Action made Kimberley realise she’s not stupid and gave her back her confidence. I think schools need to do more. Teachers are supposed to have SEN as part of their training but they don’t fully understand what dyslexia is. It would be better if specialist Dyslexia Action teachers went into schools to work with these children, advise the teachers or do inset training.

“The Government needs to invest money in supporting these youngsters as it would save them money in the long-term. They would stand a better chance of getting jobs.” Pam Smith, senior teacher at Dyslexia Action’s Bath centre, helped give Kimberley back her confidence. She said: “Kimberley always sets herself very high standards. She is a happy and hard-working girl and I am very proud of her.”
Intervention - Partnership 4 Literacy (P4L)
P4L consists of 2 phases: an apprentice training period over two school terms, followed by a period of consultancy for one term. The specialist screening and teaching methods, and practical resources, are based on long-term evidence-based research.

The package for each school includes:
- An initial set-up meeting
- The Active Literacy Kit (ALK)
- One day hands-on ALK training
- Units of Sound (UoS) software
- Units of Sound Pupil Books and Exercises
- One day hands-on Units of Sound training
- 3.5 days of specialist training from a Dyslexia Action teacher working with staff and pupils
- Final sustainability consultancy meeting

Case study B:
St Vincent De Paul RC Primary School, Westminster, London

2007: Before intervention
KS2 SATs results for English were below the national average of 80% with only 77% of its Year 7 children achieving expected levels. However, this school has shown a continued improvement since then because of its dedicated focus on providing the right literacy support for all of its learners.

2009 and 2010: After intervention
97% and 96% respectively of Year 7 children gained expected levels in literacy, which for both years is significantly way above the national average.

Results
University of Durham’s Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (CEM) independent evaluation of:

21 primary schools from January 06-July 08
• 2,511 children at 21 primary schools, lowest 20% of children made significant gains in reading.
• 504 children who had the most severe difficulties made progress, 42% moved from below average to average in two terms.

14 primary schools from September 08 – 09
• 466 children in the lowest 20% across all 14 schools made, on average, gains of 8.00 standard score points in reading.
• Whole school improvement

Analysis of training – 2006-08 using Likert Scale.
Headteachers scored training as 5.3 (where 1 is least helpful and 6 is most helpful). The mean score was the same for the sustainability of the project.

Summary
P4L is a cost effective model because it is sustainable and because the resources and the skills and expertise are left with the school which enables them to cascade their learning to others. The flexibility of the programme allows the school to embed what they have learnt into the school timetable. The adaptability of the teaching materials and exercises allows TAs to fill even short periods of time with learners of differing ages.
Case study C
Needs Identified:
Speech, Language and Communication
Maths
Literacy interventions used – 3x weekly
Active Literacy Kit
Sound Discovery
Read Write Inc synthetic phonics (2009)

Case study D
Speech, Language and Communication
Maths
ADHD
Literacy interventions used – 3x weekly
Active Literacy Kit
Sound Discovery
Read Write Inc synthetic phonics

After P4L intervention: the children improved, on average, by 8.55 SSP over two school terms.

Pre-intervention:
Poor levels of literacy to more specific learning difficulties.
Average score – lowest 20% in reading was in the ‘Low’ category (72.67 SSP).

Post-intervention:
Intervention for 36 children in the lowest 20%. Much closer to the ‘Average’ range (81.22 SSP) when the children were re-tested.

Case study E:
St Teresa’s Catholic Junior School, Liverpool
Voluntary aided two form Catholic school for boys and girls, aged 7–11 years (Years 3–6). Almost half have free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is more than twice the national average, with 1/3 of the children on the SEN register, largely as a result of literacy-based difficulties.
50% of children starting in Year 3 were reported to be below the national average in literacy and were starting KS2 with bad habits. Staff were having to deliver 60 individual literacy programmes for their Year 3 children; basically re-teaching them before they could go forward.

David O’Brien, Headteacher at the time of the partnership, said: “Staff response has been very positive; they like the clear structure, which has the uniqueness of being very prescriptive but allows flexibility. It is so refreshing to have a programme that encourages integration between the TAs and the teachers. As a result we were able to develop an excellent team who have increased their skills and knowledge base on how to better help those children with extreme low literacy.
“There is no doubt of the impact P4L has had on St Teresa’s; the evidence is so strong that our recent Ofsted report noted ‘the rapid and significant progress being made’.”
Amanda Philip, SENCO at St Teresa’s said: “We were desperate to find something that would really help with the individual literacy difficulties our children have. We had some children who could not read; one child could only recognise four letters of the alphabet! The impact P4L has had on our children has just been fantastic and it is the children that this is all about. We now have a detailed step by step intervention for children who struggle with literacy and we see this as a sustainable programme of intervention.”

Thanks to ALK, a child begun Year 3 with level 1A in reading and writing but by February had achieved a 2c in writing and a 2B in reading when tested in June.
P4L is sustainable
A specialist teacher worked with the children and trained the SENCO and TAs: St Teresa’s continues to use the materials gained through P4L and incorporates the skills and knowledge gained into its literacy curriculum.
Gail Railton, TA at St Teresa’s said: “I have learnt so much about phonics and how important it is for the children to have good sound knowledge. I really feel that P4L has helped me to build a better relationship with the children, because we are working together and they can see themselves improving. I love doing it; the kids love doing it!”

Case study F:
P4L also benefits children who are not dyslexic. Brothers Harry, 9 and Charley, 11, were identified as needing additional support - neither are dyslexic but both have difficulties with language and literacy. Before P4L Charley lacked confidence in reading and writing, hated it and really struggled but now he loves both! Harry had difficulties with sounds and his speech was consequently affected. Like Charley he hated reading and lacked a huge amount of confidence. However, since P4L, Harry now has self-belief and no longer worries.

School
Bursted Wood Primary (mainstream), Bexleyheath

Interventions
• Touch typing 2x weekly for 20 minutes on-going until they are proficient at typing
• Rapid Reading 3x weekly for 20 minutes for a 12 week block of intervention.
• Jump Ahead (if needed) 2x weekly for 20 minutes on-going
• Handwriting support (if needed) 2x weekly for 20 minutes on-going until no longer needed
• Guided writing/numeracy with teacher x1 weekly for 1 hour - every child in the school has this
• Alpha to Omega (phonics) x2 weekly for 20 minutes on-going through KS2
• TA support x2 weekly for 1 hour at a time (each literacy/numeracy lesson) on-going

Case study – Pupil A
Before Literacy Intervention
End of Year 2: L1A - writing; L2A – reading; L1A – maths; handwriting difficulties, poor spelling & concentration (but was a good reader), slow writing speed, letter reversals, visual difficulties(e.g. tracking, writing drifting away from the margin) which lead to referral/assessment and diagnosis of dyslexia in Year 3. Behaviour was never an issue.

Following Intervention – significant improvement
End of Year 6: L4B - writing; L5B - reading; L3A - maths.

Summary
The use of a laptop/AlphaSmart keyboard to type work has been the most noticeable intervention to boost self-esteem as it allows them to produce work which they are proud of and edit work more easily. This gives them confidence that their work is as good as other children’s. Bursted upped its game on tackling dyslexia about five years ago when children’s literacy levels were causing concern. It has since been awarded the BDA Quality Mark and in 2011, Ofsted deemed it had managed to sustain its ‘outstanding’ performance in an interim assessment.
### School
**Ellesmere College, North Shropshire**

**Interventions**
- Specific and targeted support for dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia
- Booster sessions for pupils experiencing temporary difficulty in a subject area
- Assistance in developing organisational skills
- Develop particular strength or talent in other areas through its Gifted and Talented programme
- Intensive reading work
- Training in touch typing/using Dragon Naturally Speaking
- Help with planning and preparation for controlled assessments
- Study skills: memory techniques, mind mapping, revision approaches, use of time, approaching and managing examination questions (marks, times, reading the question).
- Maximising the use of a laptop for study.
- Practical support involved in helping the child to manage readers and scribes and examination access arrangements

**Group**
One to one or shared (2/3 students) support lessons with a specialist teacher

**Frequency**
35 mins, up to 4 per week

**Summary**
Ellesmere College is a 7 to 18 coeducational school which has been a recognised national centre of excellence for the education of dyslexic students within a mainstream school for over 40 years, with support for dyslexic pupils being introduced in 1963. Its expertise is now available as booster lessons for any pupil, if requested by parents. The College is a member of Crested (Council for Registration of Schools Teaching Dyslexic Pupils). Ellesmere keeps abreast of the latest research and initiatives in dyslexia by hosting an annual Education Conference.

Finally there is a lot of ‘TLC’ or love involved, that is to say the teachers are entirely committed to the students, so they will ensure all is done in terms of communication with other teachers and parents to ease the way for the student. Supporting parents in supporting their child is an important part of the role.

**Results**
Out of the 21 children who were attached to the Learning Support Centre, over 95% achieved A*-C in English Language; 85% in literacy and maths; 9 achieved 8 GCSEs or more and 100% achieved 5 or more GCSEs.

---

### School
**Lisbellaw Primary School Enniskillen, County Fermanagh**

**Overview**
This outstanding school is only one of 6 schools in Northern Ireland to have been accredited as a Dyslexia Friendly School by the BDA; it has gained a gold standard in the Health Promoting School Award. As a Dyslexic Friendly school teachers use a number of dyslexic friendly strategies each day.

**Frequency**
Children with dyslexic tendencies receive two 15 minute sessions per week of linguistic phonics. In class they take part in Guided Reading three times each week for at least 10 minutes.
Interventions

- Use of different colours on whiteboard - green helps dyslexia children remember things.
- All worksheets photocopied on cream paper.
- Use of whiteboards for children - minimal copying from board.
- Use of reading rulers for Dyslexic children.
- Choice of presentation for work - use of mind maps, rich pictures, storyboards
- Varied Teaching strategies - use of drama, group work, talking partners, use of ICT, use of brain gym.
- Use of stile trays, smart chutes - great hands on activities linked to Literacy and Numeracy that interest dyslexic children.
- Word Shark and number shark on individual computers

Case study example:

Student A
Poor reading, spelling and handwriting. Short attention span but very willing worker.

Before intervention
Year 5 Reading age - 7.03

After intervention
Year 7 Reading Age - 8.10

Before intervention
Year 5 English Standardised score - 82

After intervention
Year 7 English Standardised score - 91

Results

- 90% of children sitting their KS2 SATS achieved a Level 4 in English in 2010
- 95% achieved Level 4 in 2011, which is way above the national average

Overview

Mark Sherin, Lyndhurst Dyslexia Centre Manager, said: “Children with dyslexia in a mainstream class often need longer to process information. Without specific help they get further and further behind and become disillusioned and disheartened. We first find out what works for our pupils and we then help them to understand why they find some aspects of learning difficult.

“We make sure we have graphic evidence of progress so they can see they are learning. It helps the children to believe they are making progress and that they can be successful. This changes how they see themselves as learners; a lot of it is about raising self-esteem and confidence and evidencing their successes.”
School (specialist independent)
Maple Hayes Hall, Lichfield

Co-educational day school for children aged 7-17 years. It prefers to teach reading and spelling using a morphological approach instead of phonics.

Interventions include:
- Pictorial approach for small words
- Learning of rudimentary morphological structures
- Handwriting programme designed to commit spelling patterns to kinaesthetic memory for automatic, efficient output
- 1:1 specialist tuition for reading, spelling and writing: 3 hours a week in sessions of up to 30 minutes to suit poor auditory short-term memory
- One hour a week with specialist teacher in two half-hour sessions to address poor arithmetic skills
- Specialist support in class – 10 hours weekly from HLTA to check understanding of tasks set to ensure understanding of work set by specialist and class teachers
- HLTA, specialist and class teachers to meet to discuss consistency and continuity for differentiated planning

Case study
A Year 4 boy was given an assessment of learning to read and spell long, complex words, years ahead of his level on the tests, by a morphological as opposed to the conventional rote-phonic and multi-sensory method. This proved successful as it directed his attention to the meanings of parts of words in a way he could understand, prior to allocating a context for application of the words. This precision teaching approach, with the involvement of meaning, has been found to be appropriate for children with problems of comprehension of language in general as well as of dyslexic tendency.

Summary
Maple Hayes believes it offers a solid, safe and secure intervention programme to help dyslexic children that have been failed by mainstream schooling. Its effective intervention programme ensures all children can achieve 5 GCSEs and go on to higher education at college or university.

School
The Unicorn School, Abingdon, Oxfordshire

Interventions
- 1:1 in Dragon Naturally Speaking software (which writes what you say)
- 1:1 teaching for a half hour daily by dyslexia trained teachers in reading and spelling; mind mapping and maths
- No copying from the board
- One half of a class go to 1:1 while the other half do maths so teachers can focus on high flyers and those who need more support
- Speech and language therapist pre-teaches vocabulary that children need for lessons
- Parental involvement considered vital for joined-up working to help children progress

Case study – Pupil A
Aged 8 years 4 months but with reading age of 6 years 8 months.
Following 19 months of intervention: reading aged had progressed a staggering 53 months.

Summary
Due to Unicorn’s small class sizes and focused 1:1, children overcome difficult odds for various reasons. Most are funded by parents although Buckinghamshire Local Authority find funding for those with complex needs in addition to dyslexia such as Speech and Language and occupational therapy.
School
Waldegrave School for Girls, Twickenham

Waldegrave School believes that intervention workshops and individual attention ensures students make progress against their individual targets.

Interventions
• In-class support
• Workshops and clubs
• Individualized programmes including Wordshark, Numbershark and Successmaker
• Child taken out of class for 1:1

Study – Intervention Programme

Overview
‘No to Failure’ (2009) study by The Dyslexia- SpLD Trust (DST). Funded by Government, the intervention programme involved:
• 19 schools; three Local Authorities; 1,164 pupils (417 pupils from Year 3 and 747 pupils for Year 7)

Those identified as having difficulties through the screening were divided into two groups. The Intervention Group was provided with support from specialist teachers, working with TAs and SENCOs, and a Comparison Group received no intervention

Screening
Just over half (56%) of pupils who had not achieved expected levels in KS2 SATS were found to be at risk of Dyslexia-SpLD, based on the screening results.
Fewer than half (44.5%) of the pupils who were found to be at risk were already on the SEN Register prior to screening. A further 8% were placed on the SEN Register as a consequence of the screening results.

Results
In 2011, 96% achieved 5 A* - C GCSE passes, above the national average.
90% of Year 6 pupils achieved Level 4 in English and 92% achieved the same expected level in reading.

Study – Intervention Programme

Overview
‘No To Failure’ (2009) study by The Dyslexia- SpLD Trust (DST). Funded by Government, the intervention programme involved:
• 19 schools; three Local Authorities; 1,164 pupils (417 pupils from Year 3 and 747 pupils for Year 7)

Those identified as having difficulties through the screening were divided into two groups. The Intervention Group was provided with support from specialist teachers, working with TAs and SENCOs, and a Comparison Group received no intervention

Screening
Just over half (56%) of pupils who had not achieved expected levels in KS2 SATS were found to be at risk of Dyslexia-SpLD, based on the screening results.
Fewer than half (44.5%) of the pupils who were found to be at risk were already on the SEN Register prior to screening. A further 8% were placed on the SEN Register as a consequence of the screening results.

Results
Study proved specialist teaching works - even modest amount can make a marked difference to literacy skills of dyslexic/SpLD pupils.
The Intervention Group:
Showed significant improvement in phonemic or phonological decoding efficiency compared with the Comparison Group. Two-thirds of Year 3 Intervention Group and half of Year 7 Intervention Group made good progress in reading accuracy:
• Gains of five or more standard score points
• Five months or more on the New Macmillan Reading Assessment [NMRA])
• Over 70% of Intervention Group pupils made good progress in reading comprehension. Significant improvements in reading ability were found on NMRA
• Spelling improved by more than eight standard score points

For further information and contact details on all these Models of Good Practice and Effective Interventions (and more) please refer to the Dyslexia Action website at http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/dyslexia-still-matters-appendices
Anyone who would like to share their model of good practice/effective intervention please email: Policy Research Officer: Stephanie Anderson at sanderson@dyslexiaaction.org.uk.
Thank you.
Section 5: Government reform
The current SEN system

The concerns that have been highlighted in our surveys are not new, but it is significant that they are still being reported despite many efforts to improve things. For example, in January 2010 Brian Lamb (Lamb, 2010) published a report on parental confidence in the Special Needs system and many of the same frustrations were highlighted. OFSTED (2010) published its review of SEN provision based on the inspection of 345 cases in over 200 schools, colleges and nurseries. The OFSTED report highlighted the fact that almost 20% of the school population were identified as having special needs.

**School Action:**
If schools are concerned about a child’s progress, or parents raising concerns, the decision may be taken for some measures to be put in place using the staff and resources that are already in place in the school. This might involve working in a small group with a teaching assistant, working on different materials in class (perhaps with support for some of the reading demands of the task) or even some extra work at home.

**School Action Plus:**
If progress remains a concern, despite the measures a school is able to use from its own resources, then they may seek advice from learning or literacy support teachers, educational psychologists or others from outside the school. External specialists may put in place programmes that the school staff can deliver or provide support directly.

**Statement:**
Where a child’s needs cannot be met without additional external resources or where it is necessary for them to attend a specialist school, then they are likely to be given a Statement of SEN.

One of the main problems with the current system is that parents are confused by the terminology. Comments that Dyslexia Action has received show that some parents think of a Statement as simply a report which sets out what should be done. Others, however, are fearful that it could give powers to the Local Authority to make decisions against their wishes.

Dyslexia Action has agreed with the common policy and practice that a Statement should not usually be necessary in order to meet the needs of children with dyslexia. In some cases, where there are additional needs and other factors to take into account, a specialist placement may be required, but this is very clearly the exception.
Proposed reform

The Coalition Government has announced plans to radically overhaul the education and health support for children with SEND. Following a Green Paper consultation, it intends to publish a draft Bill in the summer (2012) for consultation and pre-legislative scrutiny. Children and Families Minister Sarah Teather MP has said the DfE will consider carefully any proposals which are suggested as part of that process and remain committed to introducing a Bill to Parliament during the current session.

The latest statement on the Government’s plans was published in May 2012 in the Green Paper: Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability – progress and next steps (DfE, 2012). As a result of the consultation, proposals have been refined and focus on the following four key measures:

- A single assessment system which should be more streamlined, quicker to process and better involve children and young people from 0–25 and their families.
- An education health and care plan (EHC Plan) to replace the Statement of Special Needs, which will ensure that services work together and come with a personal budget for families who want it.
- A requirement on local authorities to publish a ‘Local Offer’ indicating the support available to those with special educational needs and disabilities and their families.
- The introduction of mediation opportunities for disputes and a trial giving children the right to appeal if they are unhappy with their support.

In relation to dyslexia, provision is most likely to be made available through the Local Offer (DfE, 2012). In this, local authorities will be required to set out information for parents which helps them to understand what services they and their family can expect from a range of local agencies. A key feature of the Local Offer is that it should make clear what provision is normally available from early years settings, schools, colleges and other services, including health and social care.

As stated, the Government plans to replace the two levels for special needs provision: school action and school action plus with a single category. Dyslexia Action can see the sense in this action, but only if the kinds of support previously provided still remain. Comments received by us suggest that some have interpreted this to mean that ‘the Government wants to get rid of School Action and School Action Plus’ to mean it wants to abolish the special needs support that was previously delivered under these headings.

Pathfinders

The Government is piloting the main proposals in the Green Paper through a ‘Pathfinder’ scheme (DfE, 2012). Some 20 pathfinders, covering 31 local authorities and their Primary Care Trust (PCT) partners, are testing certain aspects to see how the proposed changes will effectively work in reality.

Dyslexia Action’s view is that the proposed reforms have the potential to bring about significant improvements, but we have a number of concerns. According to information on the progress of the pathfinders, not all have started work with their case study families and this will make it harder to learn important lessons about the best ways to implement the reforms. The Government wants to publish a draft bill this summer but the reports of the pathfinders will not be available until 2013.
Pathfinder comments

**Cornwall**
Sandra Page, one of Cornwall’s Dyslexia Advisers, also leads on the Cornwall Council SEN Pathfinder Project which is focussing on the development of a single statutory assessment and plan. Sandra is determined dyslexia assessment and provision will remain integrated into Cornwall’s SEN system. She said: “As the statutory assessment and plan will be for the children and young people with the most complex needs, the project will also be ensuring that those children and young people on the dyslexic spectrum (currently at school action and school action plus) will continue to have their needs identified and met. As more funding is devolved to schools this will become more challenging, but through the well established, ‘Cornwall Inclusive, Dyslexia Friendly Schools Quality Mark’, staff training and the development of a child and family centred assessment and planning tool (based on the Early Support protocols and model) the local authority will continue to support schools in proactively ensuring that effective provision is in place.

“Cornwall is also ensuring that the ‘Local Offer’ for children and young people is made clear to parents and carers through the development of their Family Information Service. Cornwall Council work in partnership with the Cornwall Dyslexia Association and together they will work hard to ensure that children and young people on the dyslexic spectrum will have successful life outcomes.”

**Hampshire**
Hampshire County Council’s Service Manager for SEN and Specialist Teacher Adviser Fliss Dickinson said: “There has been a high level of interest and commitment to the pathfinder in Hampshire but we all realise the extent of the challenge that has been set in such a short timescale.”
Section 6:
Conclusions and recommendations
Conclusions

Our surveys of dyslexic learners highlight that significant problems remain in the school system today. We undertook this exercise to assess how much progress has been made over the last 40 years. Despite the improved understanding of dyslexia and the techniques that work we were shocked to learn that so many parents report their schools are still unwilling to recognise dyslexia and take action to support dyslexic children. While the Government may recognise dyslexia as a genuine condition, and if unaddressed, as a significant contributor to poor academic progress, it is a tragedy that this knowledge is not more widely shared amongst individual schools and teachers. Children have only one main chance to receive a good education and every year lost can never be recovered. We cannot simply sit back and wait for things to improve gradually, urgent action is needed so that what we know works can be made available to everyone.

On the positive side, our research has found many examples of effective provision in a wide range of schools enabling children with dyslexia and literacy difficulties to thrive and succeed. This provision is not just in the private sector or in specialist schools, but can be seen in mainstream primary and secondary schools and often reflects an authority-wide approach.

Early diagnosis needed

Reports from parents of dyslexic children and from adults with dyslexia show that if dyslexia and literacy difficulties are not diagnosed early and a pattern of reading failure has set in, children become frustrated and depressed and are often labelled as ‘lazy’, ‘stupid’ or both. Many children lose confidence in their abilities and frequently become school failures. A lack of skills for education and employment, combined with a loss of self-esteem, results in individuals with dyslexia and literacy difficulties being over represented in all areas of poverty and disadvantage. It is less costly, both for the individual and society, to provide appropriate help at the earliest possible time. The current cost to the economy of underemployment, unemployment and crime is billions of pounds every year.

Effective practice

The most effective practice involves a combination of the four key elements of support that we have identified from our survey of practice and from previous reports:

1. A whole school ethos that respects individuals’ differences maintains high expectations for all and promotes good communication between teachers, parents and pupils.

2. Knowledgeable and sensitive teachers who understand the processes of learning and the impact that specific difficulties can have on these.

3. Creative adaptations to classroom practice enabling children with special needs learn inclusively, but meaningfully, alongside their peers.

4. Access to additional learning programmes and resources to support development of key skills and strategies for independent learning.

We have argued in this report that it is absolutely essential that we get it right for those with dyslexia and do so more consistently. If we fail to do this then many tens of thousands of individual children will struggle and suffer when they could be thriving and succeeding. Consequently, the overall standards of literacy in our schools and our workforce will remain in the lower divisions of international comparisons.
**Interventions work**

The schools that are accessing specialist intervention programmes, like the ones we have highlighted, are demonstrating successful outcomes for people with dyslexia, who would otherwise have failed significantly or underperformed. The evidence presented shows that by up-skilling the teaching staff, sharing expertise and providing access to specialists in dyslexia and literacy, schools can make a considerable difference to the literacy attainment levels of children with SEN.

Examples such as Partnership for Literacy (Dyslexia Action, 2010) and the work of No to Failure (Dyslexia-SpLD Trust, 2009) demonstrate how a specialist teacher can impact on the literacy levels of the whole school, particularly the lowest performing children, by giving all teaching staff the training they need and the tools and teaching materials to support differing learning needs.

**What needs to be done**

**Better identification and monitoring**

The overriding theme throughout these surveys, cases studies and discussions, is that much more needs to be done to ensure teachers can identify children at risk and provide them with the correct help and support and that this needs to be done with understanding.

While some schools are good at identifying children with learning needs and ensuring they get support, many children are slipping through the net. The irony is that some children are penalised for having developed coping strategies and managing to perform within the average boundaries but they could, with support, do much better and may also struggle later in their education when the demands of learning change.

A number of parents have highlighted the transition from primary to secondary school as particularly difficult. Those completing our 16 Plus questionnaire agreed that the transition put more pressure on their difficulties and that coping strategies often broke down at this time. It is important to take early action, but also to be aware that difficulties can arise later in schooling, when demands on skills and strategies may increase and new challenges arise.

**Teacher awareness and training**

There was also a strong consensus from the parents responding to the YouGov survey that every school should have access to a specialist teacher and all teachers should have a basic level of awareness and understanding of dyslexia and SpLD. This is something that is echoed in social media, other online discussion boards and from parents face to face or on the telephone. The strong conclusion from people with dyslexia is that it would have been much better had their dyslexia been identified at the beginning of their education.

Teaching Assistants are often assigned to give children with dyslexia-SpLD help with reading and writing in class. However, if they were given better training and more effective teaching materials they could provide more support to a larger percentage of children. This is something Dyslexia Action has seen working extremely well in the P4L partner schools.

**Sharing good practice**

To give children with dyslexia and thus the whole school community the best possible education, we need to bring together knowledge about best practice along with up-to-date research in order to inform and shape the UK’s strategy for dealing with dyslexia and literacy difficulties. As shown in this report, there is a wealth of evidence that demonstrates why and how dyslexia interventions could improve the UK’s literacy standards.
## Recommendations of the Dyslexia Still Matters Report

We have argued in this report that solutions exist and we have shown examples where these solutions are working in practice. Dyslexia Action, with its partners in the Dyslexia-SpLD Trust and elsewhere, is bringing forward a clear message about what needs to be done, with a call that we work together to find the best way to make it happen. Here, we repeat our main recommendations.

### Training

All children with dyslexia need to have access to good teaching in all lessons. A co-ordinated plan is needed to improve awareness and understanding of dyslexia for people in all roles in education.

This should include:
- A compulsory module on dyslexia and special needs as part of their Initial Teacher Training.
- A requirement for all teachers to access Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in the area of dyslexia and special needs.
- Making special needs a higher priority in the training and professional development for those in leadership and governance roles.
- A plan, with resources behind it, to ensure that all schools have access to a specialist teacher who has a postgraduate diploma in dyslexia and literacy.
- A scheme to enable more teaching assistants to receive training in specific interventions and methods of support as well as a career structure allowing them to undertake more specialist roles as their skills and knowledge increase.
- Producing guidance and advice for use by inspectors in relation to effective support and interventions for those with dyslexia.

### Identification and Assessment

Early identification remains the key to successful outcomes as well as avoiding the stresses and frustrations that are still widely reported by parents today.

There needs to be:
- Better tracking and monitoring of children as they progress from pre-school through to adulthood.
- A clear policy on where the responsibility for tracking sits and better use and co-ordination of centrally-held data along with individual observations, to avoid the unacceptable delays in identifying those who need extra help.
- Better advice and guidance around the Year 1 Phonics Check, especially about the actions that should follow from low scores.
- Better access to easily-administered ‘screening’ assessments and a clearer policy about how information is shared with colleagues and parents.
- Training for all teachers, at all levels, so that they can identify signs of dyslexia-SpLD and know what to do in terms of further assessment and advice.
### Sharing Best Practice

Knowledge of effective practice needs to be shared and communicated more widely.

Support needs to be given, to:
- Develop and maintain forums for exchange of practice locally, nationally and virtually.
- Ensure that expertise from the voluntary sector and from those engaged in research is fully utilised.
- Develop and evaluate new intervention models in schools and specialist centres so they can learn what works.

### School Improvement

The pace of change in our schools needs to increase. Further action and support is needed so that schools can produce credible Local Offers under the new SEN reforms.

Schools need to:
- Schools need to demonstrate, through the Local Offer and in other ways, what they are doing to support children with dyslexia and literacy difficulties.
- Schools need to show evidence that they have engaged with ‘best practice’ as highlighted in this report’s Intervention Table.
- Funding arrangements for schools need to reflect that developing an effective Local Offer is a priority and they should be encouraged to draw widely on expertise, including that from the voluntary sector to help develop and deliver these plans.
- OFSTED needs to require schools to include these plans and their success in implementing them as part of school inspections.

The proposed Children and Families Bill, building on the SEN Green Paper, provides the opportunity to deliver comprehensive improvements in literacy throughout the system. Intervention strategies to improve literacy skills will continue to fail however, unless the Government incorporates specific provisions for those with dyslexia and other SpLD. We urge Government to take on board the recommendations that Dyslexia Action and other experts in the field of SpLD and literacy are making. Together we can improve the UK’s literacy standards and put an end to the suffering and sense of failure that is still felt by too many children with dyslexia and literacy difficulties in our schools today.
References


The Dyslexia Institute (2005), *The incidence of hidden disabilities in the prison population*: Yorkshire and Humberside Research. Surrey


Dyslexia Action

Dyslexia Action is a national charity that takes action to change lives of people with dyslexia and literacy difficulties. We have 25 centres and 97 teaching locations around the UK.

We take action by:

1. Offering help and support direct to individuals living with dyslexia and literacy difficulties by offering:
   - Assessment services
   - KS1 Services
   - Support for children
   - Support for adults
   - Specialist tuition
   - Workplace consultancy services

2. Empowering others so they can help individuals living with dyslexia and literacy difficulties through:
   - Training and consultancy
   - Project work
   - Helping the probation and prison services
   - Providing information and advice to parents and carers
   - Developing and selling teaching, home support and psychology materials (The Dyslexia Action Shop Limited)

3. Influencing change to help individuals living with dyslexia and literacy difficulties:
Dyslexia Action has 40 years experience and knowledge of how best to help and support those affected by dyslexia and literacy difficulties. We therefore prioritise working with decision and policy makers to improve the opportunities for those with hidden disabilities across the UK.

For more information about dyslexia, Dyslexia Action and the work we do please visit our website (www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk) or call 01784 222 300.

All comments and third party endorsements are genuine but in order to respect anonymity not all real names are used. All images are the copyright of Dyslexia Action.
Dyslexia Action is the working name for Dyslexia Institute Limited, a charity registered in England and Wales (No. 268502) and Scotland (No. SC039177) and registered in England as company number 01179975.

Dyslexia Action, Park House, Wick Road, Egham, Surrey, TW20 0HH
T 01784 222300
F 01784 770484
E info@dyslexiaaction.org.uk

Dyslexia Action is the working name for Dyslexia Institute Limited, a charity registered in England and Wales (No. 268502) and Scotland (No. SC039177) and registered in England as company number 01179975.