Schools and Families Specialist Services
Cognition & Learning Team

Creating a Dyslexia Friendly Classroom

Seating
When seating pupils, try to ensure they are….

- At the front, facing the board
- Near to the class teacher where possible (so help can be offered readily)
- Seated to minimise disruption and concentration maximised
- not 'crowding out' (left handers clashing with right handers)
- Sitting with good posture, request footrest/writing slope/seat wedge if posture is poor
- Seated in well-lit areas

Equipment
Have readily available:

- Triangular pens/pencils or pencil 'grips'
- Line trackers, bookmarks, overlays as appropriate
- Handwriting paper and 'guidelines'
- Resources to support multi-sensory teaching
- Spelling aids: dictionaries, word cards, personal spelling logs, electronic spelling checkers, hints, and cards/booklet

Desktop baskets/individual packs should include:
Literacy:

- Alphabet strips/arcs, with vowels shown in red (showing both upper and lower case)
- Cue cards re; spelling rules, tips, possible cues
- Laminated memo cards (for date, key words, reminders…)
- Most frequently needed equipment (pencil, pen, ruler, workbook)

Numeracy:

- Most frequently needed equipment (number line, 100 square…)

Classroom routines
- State clear purpose for each lesson
- Display class timetable – provide visual timetables for pupils to use at school and home
- Organise equipment effectively, label with visual/colour cues where possible
- Have an agreed location for finished work to be placed

Language
- Avoid sarcasm and rhetorical questions
- Speak slowly and clearly, using short sentences – repeat key words
- Vary tone of voice
- Pre-teach subject specific vocabulary

Giving Instructions
- Give verbal instructions clearly and one at a time – ask pupil to repeat back to check understanding
- Stress key words
- Back up instructions visually – written/visual reminders displayed on class board or own memo card
- Print homework instructions to give out. Check they are glued in planner, stored safely
- Give homework instructions in the first part of the lesson if possible
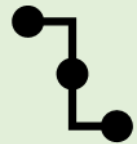
Display boards
- Display most commonly needed information
- Key word lists: high frequency words, word 'families', topic vocabulary
- Only display current topic vocabulary
- Times table charts
- Number/hundred square
- Useful lists: days of the week, months of the year

Worksheets
- Use bold headings and clear print – well spaced, not too small
- Use text boxes and bullet points
- Make sure they are at an appropriate reading level
- Use less writing, more diagrams and/or pictures
- Cut out unnecessary detail
- Consider use of coloured paper

Writing on the board
- Read aloud as you write
- Use coloured pens, vary colours used for lines/sections (to ease tracking difficulties)
- Do not stand where obstructing view

- Give typed photocopies – pupils can highlight key words/facts rather than copying
- Give pupils a copy of what is on the board – copying/reading close work is easier
- Try to avoid pupils copying from the board where possible - Think about the purpose of the copying, does it link to lesson objective?
- Allow plenty of time to complete

Writing

- Consider alternative means of preparing and presenting written work (a scribe, paired/collaborative work, video, laptop, illustrated diagrams/charts, voice typing
- Provide framework/scaffold for writing, with headings, sentence beginnings etc.
- Encourage pupil to record ideas initially, without worrying excessively about spelling
- Attach lists of useful words to exercise books
- Encourage use of own spelling log/word cards
- Develop use of mnemonics for 'tricky' words
- Have key words displayed in classroom
- Allow more time and expect less in terms of quantity

Reading

- Check suitability of texts – may need to simplify
- Do not ask pupil to read aloud (unless she/he wants to)
- Read instructions to the pupil
- Pre-reading text
- Encourage paired reading with a more confident, supportive reader
- Encourage the use of audio books

ICT

- Encourage the use of word processing, with built in spell checker, use of predictive programmes
- Teach toolbar options, how to save, email and print work
- Reading pens
- Encourage own portable, electronic spell checkers
- Speech to text and text to speech programmes
- Teach and practice keyboard skills
- Alternatives to recording in literacy tasks
- Talking calculator

Marking work

- Mark pupils work with him/her wherever possible (sit on same side of the desk)
- Return marked work as soon as possible (if collected in)
- Written comments should be clearly printed and legible
- Avoid excessive use of ink!
- POSITIVE MARKING - Balance positive comments with points for development
- Be specific about focus of marking (are you judging ''authorial or 'secretarial' skills?)
- Do not correct ALL spelling errors – target specific errors which pupils can reasonably address
- Judge content separately from presentation
- Try to judge oral responses to some tasks (rather than written ones) – you may be surprised at the level of understanding that the child is unable to portray in their work!

Additional Adults

- Should NOT be a substitute for well-scaffolded tasks
- Focus on task understanding not task completion
- I do, we do, you do
- Beware of 'learned helplessness' – the pupil who relies too heavily on the Class Teacher/TA
- Avoid dwelling with a pupil. Move around, visit a range of pupils. This removes stigma and encourages independent work

Key Points

- Create an uncritical atmosphere
- Give opportunities to succeed
- Avoid sarcasm
- Reward content, ideas and effort
- Praise success and give rewards frequently
- Remember, dyslexic children have to put far more effort into completing tasks – be mindful of this when looking at work completed
- Match tasks to concentration span – allow breaks/time out to run errands, clean board etc. Use a combination of auditory and visual 'channels' for **giving** information
- All tasks planned should be achievable
- Begin each lesson by stating clear objectives, make desired outcomes clear and finish with a plenary, recapping on what has been taught and giving the pupil time to reflect on what, and how, they have learnt
- Ensure all adults in the class are aware of children's strengths, weaknesses and current targets