St. Godric’s RC Primary
Specific Learning Difficulties Policy

‘We love, value and respect each other.

‘The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all things that affect them’.


Introduction

This policy has been developed within the context of the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Pupils with Special Educational Needs. It was revised and updated in March 2006 in light of ‘Every Child Matters’ and other recent guidance from the DfES.

It clarifies the respective roles and responsibilities of schools, governors and the Local Authority (LA).

Specific Learning Difficulties

Some children and young people experience difficulties in reading, writing, spelling, number or in other areas, which would not be expected given their age and other abilities. The significance of these difficulties may vary, may persist or change over time and may affect all levels of ability.

Specific Learning Difficulties are brain based disorders with consequences that may persist from the pre-school years through to adulthood.

Durham LA recognises that for some children and young people Specific Learning Difficulties may impact upon a number of areas of functioning. Whilst it acknowledges that there are a number of Specific Learning Difficulties, Dyslexia and Dyspraxia are the subjects of this policy.

**DYSLEXIA**

Dyslexia is a Specific Learning Difficulty characterized by problems in the acquisition of literacy and related skills.

**DYSPRAXIA**

Dyspraxia is a Specific Learning Difficulty characterised by an impairment or immaturity in the organization of movement and associated problems of language, perception and thought.
Context

This policy on Specific Learning Difficulties should be seen within the context of national legislation and guidance on strategies in addition to the Local Authority’s Special Educational Needs and Equal Opportunities Policies.

Principles

Children with Specific Learning Difficulties may have special educational needs. These principles are derived from St. Godric’s Special Educational Needs Policy:

- children with Specific Learning Difficulties should be educated in mainstream schools wherever possible and appropriate
- all partners, including the LA, parents/carers, schools and children, have a responsibility to work together to promote the five ‘Every Child Matters’ outcomes
- all pupils, including those with Specific Learning Difficulties, have a right to access a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, including the National Curriculum, which is appropriately differentiated according to their individual needs
- the school SEND policy should inform planning and provision which includes the effective use of resources for pupils with Specific Learning Difficulties
- most children with Specific Learning Difficulties will have their needs met through effective classroom practice and flexible use of available resources including those which are school based
- within school, provision should be planned to enable pupils to develop strategies in order to become independent learners
- Schools and its partners need to be aware of the impact of Specific Learning Difficulties on children’s development
- early identification, assessment and intervention are crucial in adequately meeting pupils’ needs and raising standards
• it is the responsibility of all teachers within St. Godric’s School to continue to develop their knowledge and skills in relation to Specific Learning Difficulties

• children should be enabled to recognise their abilities and understand the implications of their Specific Learning Difficulties

• St. Godric’s School and its Governors should continue to review and evaluate policy, practice and provision for addressing Specific Learning Difficulties in order to ensure high quality education for all

The Role of St. Godric’s Primary School

This policy takes account of:
and DfES guidance such as ‘Learning and Teaching for Dyslexic Children (DfES, 2005).

Most pupils experiencing specific learning difficulties will have their needs met by the class or subject teacher, using the resources and strategies available in the classroom.

It is the responsibility of the school and governors to:

• provide strong leadership and a commitment to inclusion

• produce and publish a SEND policy which should include approaches to and provision for pupils with Specific Learning Difficulties.

• take steps to involve parents/carers as partners by listening to and responding positively and supportively to parental concerns, taking into account information they provide

• work closely and positively with parents/carers, involving them and their child in his/her education programme

• ensure parents/carers are aware of the services which may be provided by school, the LA and other agencies

• make provision for the early identification of pupils with Specific Learning Difficulties through on-going ‘assessment for learning’ within the context of national strategies for literacy and numeracy
establish effective systems for tracking pupils’ progress and identifying those who need additional targeted support (for example, within the context of Wave 1-3 provision in primary schools)

ensure that all staff are aware of the needs of pupils with Specific Learning Difficulties. It is desirable for the SENCo to have additional knowledge in order to guide and support staff in making their assessment and developing appropriate and timely responses

provide opportunities for appropriate training for staff

use Provision Mapping, Group Education Plans or Individual Education Plans for pupils with Specific Learning Difficulties in accordance with the Code of Practice and DfES guidance.

ensure that staff have knowledge of the range of teaching and learning styles, strategies and resources most appropriate for pupils with Specific Learning Difficulties so that immediate action can be taken when there are concerns

ensure that, where appropriate, staff have the skills to deliver high quality, effective interventions that match pupil’s needs

facilitate access to the curriculum by appropriate differentiation of teaching approaches, tasks and materials; for example as described by the British Dyslexia Association’s Dyslexia Friendly Schools initiative and DfES guidance.

provide access to appropriate ICT, for example word processing facilities with speech feedback and spell checkers

make applications and provide evidence for pupils requiring special arrangements for SATs

ensure that all staff have high expectations of pupils with Specific Learning Difficulties to raise achievement. All staff should be able to identify ways in which their everyday teaching can enable pupils with SpLD to succeed. Staff should be aware of the need to raise pupils’ confidence and self-esteem and celebrate pupils’ successes.

listen carefully to pupils and encourage them to understand the implications of their Specific Learning Difficulties and involve them in planning and monitoring their own progress

ensure that within school provision is organised to enable pupils to develop strategies in order to become independent learners

facilitate effective communication and record keeping within and between schools and key stages
• access LA support services in accordance with The Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Pupils with Special Educational Needs

• routinely monitor, review and evaluate school-based provision for pupils with Specific Learning Difficulties, including the impact of targeted interventions.

**Identification and Assessment of Specific Learning Difficulties**

Children with Specific Learning Difficulties may have special educational needs which will be identified by the school within the Code of Practice procedures. The provision required will depend upon the nature and severity of the learning difficulty.

School will use a wide range of information and guidance to determine whether a child may have Specific Learning Difficulties. Guidance on the nature of Specific Learning Difficulties may be found in the following pages of this policy. Additional information is available from:

- Learning and Teaching for Dyslexic Children (DfES 1184-2005 CD1)
- Dyslexia: Your Questions Answered (DCC leaflet)
- Parent Partnership website

School may use information from:

- pupils
- parents/carers
- school staff
- other professionals (e.g. health professionals)

Assessment may include:

- a baseline assessment
- Foundation Stage Profile
- National Curriculum attainment levels and on-going curriculum assessment
- checklists
- standardised tests
- diagnostic assessment measures

Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia) are particular to acquiring skills in reading, writing and sometimes mathematics. The characteristics of Dyslexia are difficulties that are persistent and resistant to classroom interventions. Each pupil will exhibit an individual pattern of difficulty and the nature of this will vary as will the impact of each individual’s different educational experiences. The pupil’s level of difficulty may change over time and may appear to vary from day to day.
The following two sections of this document describe a number of characteristics that children and young people with Specific Learning Difficulties may present. It should be stressed that there is considerable variation between individuals and not all of the features described may be expected to be present in each particular case. Individuals with Specific Learning Difficulties may have characteristics of both Dyslexia and Dyspraxia and may show a range of associated problems such as:

- poor memory
- poor concentration
- frustration
- low self-esteem
- low motivation

Some of the above features may result in emotional and/or behavioural problems. These could include work avoidance strategies, being either disruptive or withdrawn in class as well as excessive tiredness, due to the amount of concentration and effort required.

**Identification and Assessment of Dyslexia**

Dyslexia may affect those of all levels of ability. Some children and young people may also display abilities in areas such as creativity and/or understanding of mathematical concepts. They may have relatively well developed verbal skills, comprehension, thinking and conceptual skills. There may be other members of the pupil’s family circle who are dyslexic.

**Early Developmental Descriptors may include:**

- delayed speech and language, e.g. learning to speak clearly later than expected
- difficulty repeating nonsense words especially if two or more syllables
- persistent jumbled phrases e.g. ‘cobbler’s club’ for ‘toddlers’ club’
- inability to remember the name of known objects e.g. table, chair
- difficulties with symbolic labelling such as matching colours to their names
- difficulty learning nursery rhymes and rhyming words and playing rhyming games e.g. finding the odd one out from ‘cat’ ‘dog’ ‘hat’
- lack of awareness of alliteration
- visual and/or auditory perception difficulties
- enjoys being read to but shows no interest in letters or words
- problems with sequential tasks e.g. putting on clothes correctly

There might also be a number of non-language indicators similar to those listed for Dyspraxia e.g. slow to achieve milestones, difficulties evident in co-ordination of movements. Some youngsters may exhibit features of both Dyslexia and Dyspraxia.
KS1 / KS2 Descriptors may include:

- Unevenness of performance within National Curriculum attainment targets (e.g. a pupil may be at Level 3 for Speaking and Listening but at Level 1 for Reading and Writing). A pupil’s performance may also vary from day to day.

- Difficulty mastering basic reading. This might be as a result of poor phonological and blending skills and/or failure to recognise familiar words. Reading may be hesitant and laboured, often combined with poor recall and understanding. This may be in contrast to adequate language skills and better levels of listening comprehension.

- A prolonged difficulty in mastering grapheme/phoneme correspondence and a tendency to confuse letters, words and numbers that look similar.

- Phonetic and/or bizarre spelling errors that are not age/ability appropriate for the pupil’s Key Stage.

- Difficulty in automating processes (doing several things at once). This may affect performance in a number of areas, eg. in spite of having good ideas for writing, there is a marked difficulty in putting these ideas on paper and automating all the skills required (sequencing of ideas, selecting appropriate vocabulary and grammatical constructions and orchestrating the secretarial skills of punctuation, handwriting, spelling and layout).

- Handwriting that lacks fluency in formation of letters or letter strings.

- Poor short-term working memory which may affect ability to follow instructions or carry out mental calculations in maths. It can also affect copying, particularly from the board.

- Marked and unexpected difficulties remembering anything in a sequential order, e.g. tables, days of week, months of the year, the alphabet, number order and organising thoughts sequentially.

- Unexpected problems with learning to tell the time, general organisation and timekeeping.

- Continued difficulties handling symbolic information which can affect mastering maths numbers and symbols (e.g. +/x and -/÷) and music notation in contrast with an ability to understand concepts and processes, e.g. for solving maths problems.

Identification and Assessment of Dyspraxia

Early Developmental Descriptors may include:

- irritable and difficult to comfort -from birth
• requires constant adult attention to alleviate anxiety

• feeding difficulties: milk allergies, colic, reflux problems, tolerates a restricted diet

• sleeping difficulties: problems establishing routine, requires constant adult reassurance

• delayed early motor development: sitting unaided, rolling form side to side, does not usually go through crawling stage as a baby

• high levels of motor activity: constantly moving arms and legs

• repetitive behaviours: head banging or rolling

• sensitive to high levels of noise, or changes in light intensity

• continued problems with development of feeding skills

• toilet training may be delayed sometimes with evidence of bowel problems

• avoids constructional toys such as jigsaw puzzles and Lego

• delayed language development: single words not evident until age 3 - problems with articulation not comprehension

• highly emotional: easily distressed, frequent outbursts or uncontrolled behaviour

• concentration limited to 2/3 minutes on any task

Pre-school/ Early Years Foundation Stage Descriptors may include:

• very high levels of motor activity
  – feet swinging and tapping when seated
  – hands clapping or twisting
  – unable to stay in one place longer than 5 minutes

• very excitable
  – voice loud and shrill
  – easily distressed, temper tantrums

• moves awkwardly
  – constantly bumping into objects and falling
− associated mirror movements, hands flap when running or jumping
− difficulty pedalling tricycle or similar toy

• poor fine motor skills
  − pencil grip
  − use of scissors
  − immature drawings

• poor figure-ground awareness
  − no sense of danger: jumps from inappropriate heights

• avoids constructional toys
  − jigsaw puzzles
  − building blocks (Lego)

• lack of imaginative play
  − does not enjoy ‘dressing up’ or playing appropriately in the home corner or creative play area

• limited creative play
  − isolated in peer group
  − rejected by peers, prefers adult company

• laterality still not established
  − problems crossing mid-line

• language difficulties persist
  − children often referred to speech therapist

• limited response to verbal instructions
  − slower response time
  − problems with comprehension
  − limited concentration, tasks often left unfinished

• continues to be messy eater
  − often spills liquid from drinking cups
  − prefers to use fingers to feed

• sensitive to sensory stimulation
  − dislikes high levels of noise
  − dislikes being touched or wearing new clothes
KS1 / KS2 Descriptors may include:

- problems adapting to a more structured school routine
- difficulties evident in PE
- slow at dressing - unable to tie shoe laces
- handwriting barely legible
- immature drawing - including copying skills
- limited concentration and poor listening skills
- literal use of language - problems with articulation
- remembers only 2 or 3 instructions
- class work completed slowly and rarely finished
- continuing high levels of motor activity
- motor stereotypes - hand flapping or clapping when excited
- easily distressed, very emotional
- problems coordinating a knife and fork
- unable to form relationships with other youngsters - appears isolated in the class group
- sleeping difficulties - wakes during the night and reports nightmares
- may report physical symptoms - migraine, headaches, feeling sick
- difficulties with the conceptual understanding of Maths