

Specific Learning Difficulties

Specific learning difficulties (SpLD) occur when learners have persistent difficulties in one or more specific aspects of learning. This encompasses a range of learning differences including, but not limited to, dyslexia and dyscalculia.

[Dyslexia](#) is a learning difference where the learner presents with greater difficulty than most other learners of their age in the following areas:

- Persistent reading, spelling, and writing skills.
- Phonological difficulties.
- Processing information & memory.
- Organisational skills.
- Motor skills e.g. handwriting.

Dyscalculia is a learning difference where the learner presents with specific and persistent difficulty with understanding numbers which can lead to a diverse range of difficulties with mathematics. It can occur across all ages and abilities.

Special Education Needs and Disability Support Services (SENDSS) refer to the Rose definition of [dyslexia](#). More detailed guidance can be found on the [Schools' Extranet](#).

Leicester City's approach to Specific Learning Difficulties

SENDSS offers support to schools to meet the special educational needs of children and young people, provided schools have followed the graduated response. This may take the form of assessments which may include observations, direct work with children and young people and consultation with staff, parents/carers, and training. Schools can discuss individual cases with specialist services to agree next steps including traded work.

People and services for children and young people with dyslexia/dyscalculia, indicators of dyslexia/ dyscalculia and persistent literacy/mathematics difficulties

Role and expectations of the school

Senior management team & SENCo should:

- have a statement /policy which lays out their approach to SpLD.
- ensure there is a consistent approach to dyslexia/dyscalculia which is fully supported by all staff.
- promote dyslexia/dyscalculia awareness with reference to inclusion, accessibility, and the celebration of diversity.
- induct new staff and existing staff – supply teachers.
- monitor and track pupil progress in Literacy and Maths.
- cascade, model, and shadow training of skilled teachers/teaching assistants (TA) within school.

- access formal training on interventions with regular updating.
- provide evidence-based interventions for literacy and maths and monitor their impact on progress.

Teachers and TAs should:

- monitor and review pupils' baselines, provision and subsequent progress regularly over a sustained period (i.e. at least 2 terms) using a range of formal and informal methods e.g. checklist, standardised assessments.
- complete and update the dyslexia checklists from the [MIN document](#).
- keep up to date with school policy regarding SpLD and access Continuing Professional Development (CPD) as necessary.
- know what is going on in specific interventions and provide opportunities to embed learning within the classroom.
- explicitly teach phonics using a multi-sensory, cumulative programme for as long as required and have available alternative strategies (whole word recognition) for those children and young people for whom phonological methods are proving ineffective.
- monitor and assess pupils for Access Arrangements for national exams as appropriate e.g. SATs, GCSEs and use any arrangements as a pupil's usual way of working within the classroom.

Role and expectations of the local authority

SENDSS should:

- provide awareness training and advise on whole school practice.
- ensure that LA provide support with identifying specific learning difficulties (within graduated response) including full diagnostic assessments for dyslexia and dyscalculia.
- signpost school and families to national and local services e.g. British Dyslexia Association and Leicestershire Dyslexia Association.
- provide forums in school to discuss teachers concerns.
- provide dyslexia workshops for parents.
- take a holistic view of the child or young person's difficulties.
- explore the impact upon self-confidence, self-esteem, anxiety and advise on how to overcome these.
- ensure that the child or young person has opportunities to express their views about their situation and involve them in the planning and delivery of interventions.

Provisions and practice for children and young people with dyslexia/dyscalculia, indicators of dyslexia/ dyscalculia and persistent literacy/mathematics difficulties

Role and expectations of the school

All staff should:

- provide alternative ways to present and record learning across all areas of the curriculum., e.g. bullet points, lists, diagrams, oral, photographic, video, drama and role play, mind maps, bar modelling, pictorial representations in maths etc.
- provide a range of reading experiences e.g. teacher modelled, group reading, audio books, choice of reading for pleasure, re-reading familiar texts for fluency.
- differentiate texts across the curriculum to learner's current reading age of text and/or use of reader/reading software.
- ensure reading books are well matched to reading ability providing 90-95% accuracy rate.
- differentiated learning activities including spellings, numbers, and concepts.
- reduce copying/notetaking from the board; instead, provide handouts.
- encourage a range of subject specific work groupings.
- provide opportunities for peer support with appropriately matched peer.
- promote learner's self-esteem through reducing anxiety e.g. adjusting timed activities, reducing expectation to read aloud, and promoting areas of strength.
- support memory and use a range of prompts e.g. visual timetables (class/individual/both), task plans, recording devices.
- provide over learning opportunities; the same key skill taught several times and generalised in different situations.
- teach metacognition – support learners to understand the way they learn best.
- ensure homework is presented in a range of ways e.g. choice of activities, support for recording or setting homework.
- provide learning materials which are dyslexia friendly in terms of font size, font style, spacing and colour. Consider use of tools to reduce visual stress if appropriate e.g. colour overlays.
- provide a range of timely evidence-based intervention in literacy and / or maths to support development of skills and monitor progress over time.
- ensure the cycle of 'assess, plan, do, review' is applied to interventions.

Role and expectations of the local authority

SENDSS should:

- advise on whole school strategies and approaches for supporting children and young people with specific learning difficulties.
- provide specific advice for pupils.
- signpost to and recommend evidence-based interventions for learners.
- provide specific advice for children and young people to understand their learning differences.

Environment for children and young people with dyslexia/dyscalculia, indicators of dyslexia/ dyscalculia and persistent literacy/mathematics difficulties

Role and expectations of the school

Schools should:

- ensure the physical environment of the school is inclusive and 'dyslexia/ dyscalculia aware.'
- ensure the school has a communication friendly environment e.g. signs and symbols are used throughout school as well as written labels.
- ensure classrooms have clearly labelled resources for independent work, including photos, symbols, and words to support access
- consider seating positions regarding distraction/lighting/noise distractions.
- include working walls, word banks and visual prompts on display within the classroom/ intervention spaces. Older learners may have individual versions to move around the school.

Role and expectations of the local authority

SENDSS should:

- advise on whole school strategies and approaches for supporting children and young people with specific learning difficulties

Resources for learning for children and young people with dyslexia/dyscalculia, indicators of dyslexia/ dyscalculia and persistent literacy/mathematics difficulties

Role and expectations of the school

Schools should:

- ensure classroom learning aids (e.g. task specific word mats, word lists colour coded by category, writing frames, spellcheckers, specialist dictionaries, coloured overlays, 'concrete' apparatus for number tasks) are freely available.
- ensure teachers have access to a range of multisensory resources to support phonics activities, e.g. magnetic letters, sensory activities, phoneme frames.
- provide a range a dictionaries/thesaurus/spell checkers including dyslexia friendly text such as 'Ace' dictionaries.
- ensure learners have access to high interest/low reading age texts including phonetically decodable texts.
- create personalised literacy prompts such as phoneme charts and word banks based on words the learner is currently focusing on.
- try different writing materials and grips for writing tools.
- ensure access to assistive technology e.g., voice to text software (Microsoft 365), read aloud software, apps, and laptops for word processing.
- ensure access across all key stages to concrete and abstract maths resources such as Dienes equipment, Numicon, abacus and counting equipment.

Role and expectations of the local authority

SENDSS should:

- regularly update the MIN document and make it accessible to schools.
- signpost to resources including assistive technologies.
- signpost school and families to national and local services e.g. British Dyslexia Association and Leicestershire Dyslexia Association.