



Birches First School
Believe, Grow, Succeed...
...to be the best 'me' I can be!

Policy Updated: June 2025
Next Review: September 2026
SENCo: S. Hulme
MAT SENCo: R. Connolly
SEND LAB Member: K. Graham

Dyslexia Friendly Policy

Our SENCo (S. Hulme), MAT SENCo (R. Connolly), named SEND LAB Member (K. Graham) and Headteacher (S. Varricchione) ensure that Birches First School's Special Educational Needs and Inclusion Policy works within the guidelines and inclusion policies of the Code of Practice (2014), the Local Education Authority and other policies current within the school.

Birches First School strives for every child to 'Believe, Grow and Succeed' to be the best 'me' they can be. Our vision is that *all* children develop secure foundations for lifelong success and are ready to take on the challenges of the next stage in their learning journey by being able to concentrate, persevere, have imagination, be co-operative, have an enjoyment of discovery, demonstrate independence, achieve self-improvement and be curious.

At Birches First School, we will do our best to ensure that the necessary provision ('that is additional to or different from') is made for any pupil who has a Special Educational Need and/ or Disability. We ensure that teachers are able to identify and provide the correct support for pupils with a Special Educational Need and Disability, allowing them to join in all school activities together with their class peers.

'Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling'. (Jim Rose 2009)

About this policy

- The purpose of this policy is to promote effective teaching and learning for all pupils, including those with dyslexia.
- We expect to meet the needs of the vast majority of dyslexic pupils through existing school procedures and SEN Support (where necessary); only a very small percentage of pupils will require an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- This policy extends to all in the school community, not just pupils. We recognise that, on occasion, adults within the school community may also need support because of dyslexic difficulties.
- This policy supports The Children and Families Act (2014).
- This policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies, particularly the SEN and Inclusion Policy, The Single Equality Policy and Accessibility Plan and the SEN Information Report.

What is Dyslexia?

According to the Dyslexia Institute, dyslexia can be defined as ***"...a combination of abilities and difficulties which affect the learning process in reading, spelling, writing and sometimes numeracy."***

Dyslexia affects children of all academic abilities and can sometimes accompany other difficulties. Dyslexic children often have weakness in short-term memory, sequencing and processing skills. They may find that skills do not become automatic and great stamina is required to produce each piece of written work. They may lack personal organisation skills and struggle to organise themselves and their belongings. Their experience of difficulty can lead to low self-esteem and poor motivation unless strategies exist to combat this.

It should be remembered, however, that as the above definition states; dyslexia is ***"...a combination of abilities and difficulties..."***, and individuals may demonstrate great competence in areas other than English. What starts as a learning difference can quickly become a learning difficulty if dyslexia goes unrecognised and the teaching is inappropriate. However, if those with milder forms of dyslexia are identified early and given the opportunity to learn the way they learn best, they can make good progress.

Identification, Assessment and Intervention

Concerns may be identified in a variety of ways:

- Previous schools
- Parents/carers
- Class teachers
- Outside agencies (SENS, Educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, medical professionals)
- Other adults working with the students (e.g. mentors, other family members, private tutors, TAs, family support workers)

If the school's system for monitoring the progress of individuals identifies a pupil as having difficulty, their class teacher may;

- Complete the Dyslexia Indicator Checklist
- Consult the SENCO
- Inform parents/ carers
- Complete a dyslexia screening (GL Dyslexia Screener)
- An appropriate intervention programme (Nessy)
- Put dyslexia friendly strategies in place (where appropriate)
- Seek additional support from outside agencies

Monitoring and support procedures will be implemented when a child is first suspected of having English difficulties. It is not necessary for an external body to "diagnose" dyslexia.

If parents are concerned that their child is not progressing well in English and may be dyslexic, they should approach their child's class teacher in the first instance. Parents' concerns and observations are useful indicators of potential problems: their input will be valued and acted upon.

Teaching Strategies

As the Dyslexia Institute states, *"if a pupil can't learn the way we teach, then we must teach in the way that he can learn..."*

The school maintains a bank of resources, which will help dyslexic learners across the curriculum, not just in English. These include online programmes (such as Nessy), visual/auditory stimuli and practical equipment; as well as paper-based resources. What is good for the dyslexic learner is good for everyone. Research shows that all children benefit from dyslexia friendly teaching methods.

Children with dyslexia seem to process information differently. Understanding how they learn best and being flexible enough to adapt teaching approaches are vital factors in enabling dyslexic children to learn effectively in the classroom. Therefore, at Birches, we may employ strategies such as (not limited to):

- Use of mnemonics to learn tricky words
- Precision teaching
- Model answers/ sentence starters prepared for children
- Access arrangements where necessary e.g. 25% extra time, reader, scribe, laptop, separate room
- Intervention groups/ programmes (such as Nessy/ Sentence Adventure)
- Allow pupils to respond in ways other than writing when appropriate (e.g. computers, recorded responses)
- Coloured overlay and reading rulers (including computer – Colorveil). Work photocopied onto cream (or appropriate colour) paper and pale background on the Interactive Whiteboard
- Limiting the amount of copying a child needs to complete
- Maintain high expectations of thought processes but reasonable expectations of written responses
- Opportunities for overlearning
- Watch out for signs of fatigue
- Support the child's self esteem i.e. not asking a child to read aloud or copy large amounts of text when printable or downloaded versions are available
- Concentrating on content when marking rather than spelling
- Give guidance on how to tackle tasks systematically

- Arrange appropriate peer support where appropriate
- Present oral information in small chunks and in different ways to ensure understanding and retention
- Make the classroom environment “dyslexia friendly”
- Ensure that the child is assigned to the appropriate ability group, according to their intellectual ability and understanding, rather than their ability to read and record
- Use electronic aids and ICT to support pupil access and participation
- Ensure dyslexic pupils have access to sophisticated texts that will challenge and extend their comprehension, vocabulary and analytical skills, even when these texts are beyond their reading ability (shared texts, whole class guided reading etc.)
- Whenever possible, give dyslexic pupils prior experience of the texts to be covered in class so that they can get beyond the decoding stage and be ready to consider content
- Whenever possible, issue lists of vital topic words prior to starting a new topic so that the child can practise reading, spelling and using them
- Support personal organisation so that letters reach home and equipment reaches school on the right days
- Obtain guidance and support from appropriate outside agencies (where necessary).

Individual Support Plans

If it is felt that a child has Special Educational Needs, we will adopt the graduated approach and the school, parents/guardians and the pupil will create an ISP (Individual Support Plan) to record the steps planned to meet the needs of the child.

The Individual Support Plan (ISP) will take the form of assess, plan, do and review and will be produced on Insight.

1. The child will be assessed, and areas of need identified (assess).
2. A plan of how these needs will be identified is created. SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely) targets will be implemented and monitoring by the class teacher/ support assistants (plan).
3. A record of what has been carried out will be kept (do).
4. Progress towards targets and next steps will be identified (review).

Targets will be set according to their area of need. Class teachers will ensure that adequate opportunities to meet targets are given to children. Targets will be monitored by the class teacher and SENCo regularly and will be formally reviewed at least three times per year.

The SENCo will support the provision of additional interventions. These may include:

- Liaising with external agencies including the LA’s support and educational psychology services, health and social services and voluntary bodies.
- Co-coordinating and developing school-based strategies for the identification and review of children with SEND.
- Referral to and advice from Staffordshire SEND Hub.
- Making visits to classrooms to monitor the progress or address needs of children on the SEND support list.
- Liaising with local middle schools so that support is provided for Year 4 pupils as they prepare to transfer.
- Refer for EAPDR process for further enhanced support.

Partnership with Parents

Partnership plays a key role in enabling children and young people with SEND to achieve their potential. Parents hold key information and have knowledge and experience to contribute to the shared view of a child’s needs. All parents of children with Special Educational Needs will be treated as partners and given support to play an active and valued role in their child’s education.

We value the contributions of parents and plan collaborative intervention programmes if parents are able to support their child in this way. However, dyslexia can “run in families” and parents may need support

themselves before they are able to help their child. We will endeavour to provide this support and make school correspondence accessible to all, regardless of their level of literacy competence.

A supportive atmosphere at home is vital in promoting positive attitudes in dyslexic learners. Children also have access to Nessy Learning at home. Our SENCo can provide support and strategies for implementation at home.

Training

The Dyslexia friendly Initiative was begun in Staffordshire in 2001 and we received full Dyslexia Friendly School status. Staff, routinely, update their knowledge and skills through appropriate training. Our SENCo has completed Dyslexia Training with Bristol Dyslexia Centre through Nessy Learning. Other details of training undertaken by staff in the past 12 months can be found in the head teacher's record of Continuous Professional Development.

Staffing

All school staff are responsible for, and involved in, meeting the needs of children with dyslexia or other special educational needs. They will support students according to school policy.

The SENCO will monitor the implementation of this policy and be responsible for its review. The SENCO regularly reports to the Headteacher and LAB Committee on issues relevant to dyslexia provision within the school.

Equal Opportunities, Safeguarding

Through all subjects, we ensure that the school meets the needs of all, taking account of gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, sexual orientation, age, ability, disability and social circumstances. It is important that in this school we meet the diverse needs of pupils to ensure inclusion for all and that all pupils are prepared for full participation in a diverse community.

Staff are aware of the regulations set out in the SEN and Disability Act 2001 and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and take all reasonable steps to ensure that no member of the school community is treated less favourably because of disability.

At all times and in all circumstances, teachers and other staff are responsible for safeguarding the welfare of all pupils. When planning activities, teachers must ensure that safeguarding procedures are followed.

Admissions

The governing body has decided that children with special educational needs will be admitted to the school in line with the school's agreed admissions policy.

Who can I contact for further information?

If you wish to discuss your child's educational needs, are unhappy about something regarding your child's schooling or perhaps wish to say thank-you – your first point of contact is the class teacher. You can contact the school office to arrange a meeting with the SENCo or the head teacher. The SEND LAB Member is K. Clifford and she can also be contacted through the school office.

Key Contacts:

Head Teacher – S. Varricchione

SENCo – S. Hulme

MAT SENCo – R. Connolly

Named SEND LAB Member – K. Clifford

School Educational Psychologist – Staffordshire EP Service

Useful Links

More information can be found by visiting the website addresses below:

- British Dyslexia: <https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/>
- Understood Learning Differences: <https://www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/child-learning-disabilities/dyslexia/what-is-dyslexia>
- SEND Code of Practice:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf
- Staffordshire Local Offer:
<https://www.staffordshireconnects.info/kb5/staffordshire/directory/localoffer.page?localofferchannel=0>