Session 8
Learning and teaching for dyslexic pupils

Priority standards Q10, Q14, Q19, Q23, Q26.

This session is about pupils with specific learning difficulties. It aims to develop trainees’ understanding of the needs of dyslexic learners so that they can plan appropriately for them in their learning objectives, teaching approaches and access strategies.

Learning outcomes
Trainees will:
- understand current definitions of dyslexia
- know some barriers to learning for dyslexic pupils
- be able to recognise when to modify learning objectives for dyslexic pupils
- know some access strategies, teaching styles and approaches for dyslexic pupils, and
- be familiar with some of the ICT that supports dyslexic pupils.

Approximate timing: 3 hours and 30 minutes

Required resources
Slide presentation Session 8
Handout 1 Key facts about dyslexia
Handout 2 What is dyslexia?
Handout 3 Identification
Handout 4 Dyslexia – telltale signs
Handout 5 The dyslexia-friendly classroom
Handout 6 Dyslexia-friendly presentation styles
Handout 7 Using ICT to support dyslexic learners
Handout 8 Lesson examples
Handout 9 Points for action
Handout 10 Follow-up activities
Activities

Activity 1   Understanding dyslexia                  40 minutes
Activity 2   Recognising pupils likely to be on the dyslexic continuum  15 minutes
Activity 3   Learning objectives and access strategies  35 minutes
Activity 4   Teaching styles and approaches – multisensory learning  45 minutes
Activity 5   Teaching styles and approaches – using ICT  45 minutes
Activity 6   Review and reflection                   30 minutes

Prior learning

As preparation for the session, trainees should identify one or more dyslexic pupils for discussion.

Note

In activity 1, you could arrange for a dyslexic adult or young person to describe at the session how dyslexia impacts their experiences in school and daily life. If one of the trainees has disclosed that they are dyslexic, they might be willing to provide this input. Alternatively you could show film clip ‘Dyslexia in the primary classroom, Croxteth Primary School’, (SpLD1).

In activity 3, make sure that you are familiar with the content of slides 11–23 so that you can provide constructive commentary on the items displayed.

In activity 4, it is recommended that individual tables are set up to illustrate three ways of learning spellings. Each table should also have a set of large coloured cards in interesting shapes and each with an idea written on it (see Table 8.1, which follows).
Table 8.1 Display of learning approaches for spelling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning approach</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Activity cards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Table 1: Auditory</strong></td>
<td>Blank paper and coloured felt pens</td>
<td>Choose one of your spelling words, say it one phoneme at a time ‘robot-style’ for a partner to identify. Count the phonemes in one of your spelling words. Write one of your words on a phoneme frame with one phoneme in each box. Count the syllables in the spelling word. Split the word into syllables. Write each syllable in a different colour. Think of a rhyming word you already know, that has the same spelling. Make up a mnemonic, eg. ‘A bus is always busy’. Find out if there is a spelling rule that works for your word.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Table 2: Visual</strong></td>
<td>Set of plastic letters (must contain more than one full alphabet), blank paper and coloured highlighter pens</td>
<td>Make your word from the letters in the rainbow alphabet. Look at the word. Take a picture of it in your mind. Visualise your word written in large coloured letters on a blank wall. Identify any hidden short words within longer words. Identify the tricky part in some of your words, and write it in a different colour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Table 3: Tactile/kinaesthetic</strong></td>
<td>A small baking tray filled with sand, sheets of fine sandpaper, a baking tray and a can of shaving foam, blank paper and fine felt pens in different colours</td>
<td>Write one of your words on sandpaper or in sand. Say the letter names as you write them. Write your words in large ‘sky writing’ while saying the letter names. Write one of your words, one letter at a time, on your partner’s back for them to identify. Trace your word in shaving foam. Say the letter names as you write them. Write your word in large letters on blank paper. Trace over it repeatedly in different coloured felt pens, saying the letter names as you trace them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In activity 5, you will need to display examples of software that supports dyslexic learners in reading and recording, eg. talking wordprocessors, predictive wordprocessors, software with on-screen word grids, pen readers, handheld spellcheckers and voice-recognition software.

Up-to-date product summaries can be found at:
- www.bdadyslexia.org.uk
- www.dyslexic.com
- www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk

For this activity, an organisation such as AbilityNet (www.abilitynet.org.uk) or TechDis (www.techdis.ac.uk); commercial suppliers such as iansyst (www.iansyst.co.uk) or Inclusive Technology (www.inclusive.co.uk), or a local dyslexia group may be willing to give a presentation of available ICT products. This facility may also be available within your own institution, if it provides an internal assessment and support service for dyslexic students.
Introduction

Show slide 1 to introduce the session.

Areas of need set out in the SEN code of practice

Learning and teaching for dyslexic pupils

Learning outcomes

You will:

- understand current definitions of dyslexia
- know some of the barriers to learning for dyslexic pupils
- be able to recognise when to modify learning objectives for dyslexic pupils
- know some access strategies, teaching styles and approaches for dyslexic pupils, and
- become familiar with some of the ICT that can support dyslexic pupils.
Activity 1

Understanding dyslexia

Learning outcomes
Trainees will:
- understand some current definitions of dyslexia, and
- be aware of some of the barriers to learning experienced by dyslexic learners.

Approximate timing: 45 minutes

Required resources
- Handout 1  Key facts about dyslexia
- Handout 2  What is dyslexia?
- Whiteboard or flipchart and marker pens

Task
Show slide 3 to outline the learning outcomes for this activity.

Invite trainees to discuss what they already know about dyslexia. These terms may be mentioned:
- poor reading and spelling
- letter reversals, and
- memory difficulties.

Distribute Handout 1 and ask trainees to form pairs. Tell them to read the statements together and then decide whether they are true or false.

Allow enough time for trainees to complete the task and then take feedback from the whole group. Point out that all of the statements are, in fact, true.
Ask trainees to note down the names of any pupils at their school who are identified as dyslexic. Explain that later in the session they are likely to return to the list to add other pupils’ names.

Introduce the dyslexic speaker that you have arranged to come to the session. Ask them to tell trainees what it is like to be dyslexic, to describe the barriers to their learning including those caused by a dyslexia-unfriendly curriculum, and how they have affected their participation in school life. Where possible, draw out what helped the speaker, what teachers and other practitioners did that made a positive difference and to share any negative experiences. Invite trainees to put questions to the speaker.

Show slide 4 to highlight some of the talents that dyslexic learners can have.

**Talents and abilities that often accompany dyslexia**

- Lateral thinking and imaginative problem-solving
- Good spatial awareness and visualising skills.

Use some of these examples of successful and creative people with dyslexia:

- **scientist** Einstein (who did not speak until he was four nor read until he was 12)
- **writers** Hans Christian Andersen, Agatha Christie, F Scott Fitzgerald, Lynda LaPlante
- **musicians** John Lennon, Nigel Kennedy
- **artists and architects** Leonardo da Vinci, Richard Rogers
- **sportmen** Steve Redgrave, Jackie Stewart, Duncan Goodhew, Magic Johnson
- **actors and celebrities** Walt Disney, Tom Cruise, Keanu Reeves, Susannah York, Eddie Izzard

Point out that pupils’ talents may not be apparent at school. If their self-esteem is low or their learning needs are not being met, they become frustrated and disillusioned.

Distribute Handout 2, which contains recent guidance from the British Dyslexia Association (BDA). It explains that current thinking defines dyslexia as a **learning difference** that only becomes a learning difficulty when it is not recognised and teachers fail to make appropriate adaptations to their teaching.
Show slide 5 which describes how a pupil with dyslexia reacts when things go wrong for them in school.

When things go wrong

“I hide my work. Sometimes I wish I could hide myself away forever”

Pupil with dyslexia

 Invite trainees to give suggestions on how teachers could help this pupil feel better about him or herself. Use the flipchart or whiteboard to record their ideas, then show slide 6 and draw comparisons between the two lists.

Building self-confidence

- Use specific praise
- Praise ideas, content and effort
- Value pupil’s work and make sure that the pupil and their peers do too
- Notice and use pupil’s strengths
- Avoid exposing pupil’s weaknesses in front of their peers
- Make sure the whole class understands what is dyslexia and is aware of famous dyslexic role models.

Highlight to trainees that understanding the difficulties faced by dyslexic pupils face is essential if we are to enable them to learn effectively and to prevent them experiencing the frustrations that have been discussed.
Activity 2

Recognising pupils likely to be on the dyslexic continuum

Learning outcome
Trainees will consider ways in which they can recognise pupils likely to be on the dyslexic continuum.

Approximate timing: 20 minutes

Required resources
- Handout 3 Identification
- Handout 4 Dyslexia – telltale signs

Task
Show slide 7 to outline the learning outcome for this activity.

Open the session by describing how, in the past, schools referred pupils to outside agencies for specialist assessment and then waited, often a long time, for the outcome. Point out that practice is now changing so that all teachers feel able to identify indicators of dyslexia and take appropriate action. Remember that trainees will experience a range of different policies from the local authority and their placement school on how to identify and assess dyslexia. Recommend to them that current best practice often starts from an assumption that pupils who experience persistent literacy difficulties, not explained by other factors, probably fall somewhere on the dyslexic continuum. This enables everyone to focus on action (“What are we going to do about it?”) rather than lengthy debate about definitions or diagnosis.
Show slide 8 and talk trainees through Handout 3 to describe some of the tools that teachers can use to identify dyslexia and assess learning needs.

**Identifying dyslexia and assessing learning needs**

- National curriculum assessment profiles
- Achievement of curricular targets, particular difficulties with class or group curricular targets involving spelling, sequencing skills or rote recall
- Day-to-day assessment in class
- Written work
- Screening for difficulties in phonological awareness
- Checklists.

Circulate Handout 4, and suggest that as trainees read through the checklist, they reflect whether any pupils they have taught on school placements come to mind. Ask whether they would now like to add any pupils to the list they made earlier of dyslexic pupils they have worked with.

Emphasise that lots of pupils will show some of the signs on the checklists, but only when they display many of the signs, or when a key indicator such as a family history of dyslexia combines with several other indicators, is there cause for concern.
Activity 3

Learning objectives and access strategies

Learning outcomes
Trainees will:
• consider when to modify learning objectives for dyslexic learners, and
• become familiar with some of the teaching approaches and access strategies that are appropriate for dyslexic learners.

Approximate timing: 35 minutes

Required resources
Handout 5 The dyslexia-friendly classroom
Whiteboard or flipchart and marker pen

Optional resource
Film clip ‘Dyslexia in the primary classroom’, Croxteth Primary School (SpLD1), TDA 2008 TDA training toolkit disc two. Follow the prompts

Task
Show slide 9 to outline the learning outcomes for the session.

Activity 3 Learning outcomes

You will:
• consider when to modify learning objectives for dyslexic learners, and
• become familiar with some of the teaching approaches and access strategies that are appropriate for dyslexic learners.

Explain to trainees that having begun to understand the strengths and difficulties of dyslexic learners, you are now moving on to consider their teaching needs.
Show slide 10 to remind trainees about waves of intervention.

Explain that dyslexic learners are likely to need additional wave 2 and 3 help with reading, spelling and sometimes with numbers. Point out that this activity will focus on wave 1 approaches – adaptations that need to be made to everyday classroom teaching and learning so as to include dyslexic pupils. However, trainees will be asked to investigate some of these additional interventions as a follow-up to the session.

Highlight to trainees that they should not assume that back-tracking to earlier learning objectives will be needed. Dyslexia occurs across the ability range. Some pupils with dyslexia may also have generalised learning difficulties. For them, back-tracking may be needed in some subjects. Other dyslexic pupils however, may only need back-tracking for word-level work in literacy, and perhaps for some work on numbers and the number system. In other curriculum areas, they will be able to work in the same learning objectives as the rest of the class, provided that access strategies are used to overcome potential barriers to their learning.

Now ask trainees to talk in pairs for a few minutes. One member of the pair should briefly describe a lesson they have taught on a school placement. Then, together, they should identify barriers that the lesson might have created for dyslexic pupils.

Record feedback on a flipchart or whiteboard. Trainees are likely to mention:

- reading difficulties that may make it difficult for the pupil to use information books
- difficulties with spelling and handwriting that may affect written recording
- difficulties in remembering instructions that may affect the pupil’s ability to start or complete tasks
- difficulties in rote memory for mathematical tables and number facts that affect problem-solving, and
- low self-confidence and feelings of embarrassment or anxiety, for example if the pupil is asked to read aloud in front of their peers.
Ask trainees to contribute ideas on how to **remove each of the barriers**, inviting a volunteer to record them. Trainees should have plenty of ideas about how to overcome barriers from their work in session 7, and on how to overcome low self-confidence from their work earlier on in this session. They may need help in thinking about how to overcome difficulties in rote memory for mathematical tables and number facts. You could suggest providing:

- number grids
- small tables squares
- a pocket number line or ruler
- use of a calculator, or
- getting the pupil to work with a study buddy – a friend who finds it easy to recall number facts.

End your discussion of access strategies with a slide show showing how one teacher overcomes barriers to learning through her dyslexia-friendly classroom organisation (slides 11 to 23). Run through the slides, clicking on the sound button to hear the class teacher or SENCO talking about how the classroom is organised and how one particular pupil is supported.
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A dyslexia-friendly classroom

Visual timetable

Areas of need set out in the SEN code of practice
Display of pupils’ work

Science words
ICT prompts

English work

Areas of need set out in the SEN code of practice
Using mind maps

Assessing learning: traffic lights
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19 Slide

Desktop prompts

20 Slide

Pupil’s workplace, with table wedge

Areas of need set out in the SEN code of practice
Rainbow alphabet

Using the alphabet
Work display and bookshelves

You might want to expand on slide 21. This shows a rainbow alphabet, which is used to help pupils manipulate letters, see patterns and work in a multisensory way on spelling and phonics. The slide shows a metal whiteboard and magnetic letters, with the vowels in a contrasting colour. Pupils are given repeated experience of setting out the letters of the alphabet in an arc, and using it to make words and play word games.

Distribute Handout 5 and explain that it contains statements describing some of the access strategies that contribute to the term ‘the dyslexia-friendly classroom’. Remind trainees that not all the strategies will apply to every pupil and it is important to plan for pupils as individuals. Explain that when combined, the strategies provide a helpful framework for enabling dyslexic pupils to learn. Using these strategies will also benefit pupils with other kinds of SEN: for example, pupils with speech and language problems, who may have similar difficulties with short-term memory and with sequencing. Point out that each page has been designed so that the statements can be photocopied and cut up into separate cards. The cards have been written in child-friendly language, so that the teacher can read them to a dyslexic pupil and ask the pupil to choose or rank strategies that would be helpful to them.

If you have time, you might want to show film clip ‘Dyslexia in the primary classroom’ (SpLD1). The sequence shows how teachers can use the buddy systems and alternatives to paper and pencil tasks to overcome the barriers to learning presented by reading and writing difficulties.
Activity 4

Teaching styles and approaches – multisensory learning

Learning outcome
Trainees will consider teaching styles and approaches that are particularly appropriate for dyslexic pupils.

Approximate timing: 45 minutes

Required resources
Three worktables set up to explore different ways of learning spellings (refer to ‘Note on page 2 for additional advice on this activity).

Task
Show slide 24 to outline the learning outcome for this activity.

Before you start this task, discuss the terms ‘phoneme’ and ‘mnemonic’ with the trainees to ensure they fully understand them.

Tell trainees that dyslexic pupils, like many others, benefit from using all their senses when learning, so in this activity they will explore multi-sensory approaches for pupils who need learning support in spelling.

Explain that trainees are going to experiment with these multisensory approaches. Ask them to suggest words that they find difficult to spell, and choose five of them for trainees to practise.
Divide trainees into three groups so that each group can use a different approach to learning the spellings, using the activity cards displayed on the three tables:

- Group 1 will use multi-sensory approaches with a visual emphasis
- Group 2 will use approaches with an auditory emphasis, and
- Group 3 will use approaches with a kinaesthetic emphasis.

Allow enough time (eg. 10 minutes) for the groups to try as many of the activities as possible, then invite each group to spend about 10 minutes sharing their feedback with others on the activities they tried and whether they were useful.

You could extend this task by exploring multisensory approaches for particular subject areas.
Activity 5

Teaching styles and approaches – using ICT

Learning outcome
Trainees will become familiar with some of the ICT that supports dyslexic pupils.

Approximate timing: 45 minutes

Required resources
- **Handout 6**  
  Dyslexia-friendly presentation styles
- **Handout 7**  
  Using ICT to support dyslexic learners
- **Film clip**  
  'Billesley Primary School: Aaron' (PDR.16)  
  'Implementing the Disability Discrimination Act in schools and early years settings'  
  DfES 2006, disc two
- **Film clip**  
  'Goostrey Community Primary School: Paddy' (PDR.17)  
  'Implementing the Disability Discrimination Act in schools and early years settings'  
  DfES 2006, disc two

To find clips PDR.16 and PDR.17 go to the main menu and select ‘Primary Education’ chapter, followed by the ‘Primary Deployment of Staff Resources’ section. The clips are related and located within a sequence of clips. It is necessary to skip to the required ones.

Examples of ICT products that support dyslexic learners in reading and recording, eg. talking wordprocessors, predictive wordprocessors, software with onscreen word grids, pen readers, handheld spellcheckers, and voice recognition software (refer to Note on page 2 for additional advice on this activity).

Task
Show slide 25 to outline the learning outcome for this activity.
Tell trainees that this activity allows them to explore the use of ICT as an access strategy for dyslexic pupils. This will be done either through a presentation you have arranged, or through a hands-on approach with the selection of software and hardware on display.

Allow trainees enough time to explore the range of tools and gain an understanding of how they can support a pupil’s learning.

Point out to trainees that ICT provides a way for teachers and other staff to modify the way they present written information.

Show slide 26 to illustrate how complex written information can present barriers for dyslexic pupils.

Presenting written information

Printed information might look like this to dyslexic learners

Ask volunteers to describe how they felt when reading the text on the screen. Circulate Handout 6, explaining that it describes how print can be presented so that it is easier to read.

Explain that ICT also allows pupils with reading difficulties to access ‘talking’ text – either through talking wordprocessors or pen readers which read text aloud when scanned over a word or sentence. Some schools are having success with voice-recognition software that allows pupils to write by dictating text.

Show the film clips ‘Billesley Primary School: Aaron’ (PDR.16) and ‘Goostrey Community Primary School: Paddy’ (PDR.17) in succession, advising trainees that the two clips illustrate the use of predictive wordprocessing and voice-recognition software.

Circulate Handout 7, which summarises the use of ICT to support dyslexic learners. Ask trainees to work in small groups. They should read the handout and then identify the elements they might be able to incorporate easily into their own teaching.
Activity 6

Review and reflection

Learning outcomes
Trainees will:
- consolidate their learning about dyslexia by looking at examples of appropriately differentiated lessons, and
- identify key points of action for themselves.

Approximate timing: 30 minutes

Required resources
- Handout 8 Lesson examples
- Handout 9 Points for action
- Handout 10 Follow-up activities

Task
Show slide 27 to outline the learning outcomes for this activity.

Circulate Handout 8, and ask trainees to consider the lesson examples listed on the handout. Suggest that they highlight the features they think would be most helpful to dyslexic pupils, and to add brief notes as they read through the sheet. Allow 20 minutes for this task.

To conclude the session, circulate Handout 9 and encourage trainees to spend a few minutes reflecting on key points of action that will help them to consolidate and apply their learning. Suggest that trainees may also wish to refer back to Handout 5, ‘The dyslexia-friendly classroom’.

Give out Handout 10 and suggest that trainees choose a task to follow up over the next few weeks. Talk through the options and how trainees might approach their task.