Cognus

No Limits on Learning

Educational Psychology Service

Educational Psychology Service Guidance

Literacy Difficulties and Dyslexia

Contents

Section 1 - Understanding literacy difficulties and dyslexia

This guidance has been written to provide school and education staff with a clear understanding of the current best practice and evidence-base relating to supporting the needs of learners with literacy difficulties and dyslexia. It also aims to provide clarity about assessing and identifying literacy difficulties and dyslexia. For more information about the development of literacy skills please refer to the 'Further Reading' section in the Appendix.

This document is part of the wider provision for Special Educational Needs (SEN) within Sutton's Local Offer, and the process of supporting learners with literacy difficulties should therefore be undertaken in line with the Graduated Response to support, as detailed within Sutton guidance[1] and legislated within the Code of Practice (DfE, 2014) (for further information please see Appendix).

This document has been co-created by school partners, parents of pupils with literacy difficulties and dyslexia, and the Educational Psychology Service. It is subject to review and revision in line with advancements from the research and changes to the context of support in schools.

The primary function of this document is to ensure that pupils in Sutton schools receive high quality literacy support and teaching. Due to the inherent differences in literacy development and teaching across the age ranges, we have provided specific recommendations for literacy intervention for early years up to Key Stage 4. **It is important to note that regardless of whether or not a child or young person has been identified as having dyslexia, if literacy difficulties are present, they should have access to the appropriate support.**

---

[1] Please see SENCO Handbook and Local Offer for further details

Cognus

No Limits on Learning

Educational Psychology Service

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Definitions of dyslexia and literacy difficulties

It is acknowledged that the subject and labelling of dyslexia can be a contentious issue, in part a consequence of differing understandings and the changes to definitions and understandings that have occurred over the years. It is imperative that a label of dyslexia is not used as a 'key' to access resources, and that routes to provision of resources and support are made based on pragmatic decision-making and ensuring equality of access for all, regardless of diagnoses.

We advocate using the Rose Report (2009)[2] definition to define dyslexia, as this follows the governmental guidance, and is broadly agreed upon across professional groups and organisations. This is as follows:

- *Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in **accurate and fluent word reading and spelling**.*
- *Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed.*
- *Dyslexia occurs across the **range of intellectual abilities**. It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are **no clear cut-off points**.*
- *Definition does not rely on identifying a discrepancy between a child's ability in one area and their abilities in other areas.*
- *Co-occurring difficulties **may be seen** in aspects of language, motor co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organisation, but these are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia.*
- *There isn't one specific profile of cognitive strengths and difficulties that needs to be identified in order to classify a child as having dyslexia.*
- *A good indication of the severity and persistence of dyslexia difficulties can be gained by examining how the individual responds or has responded to **well-founded intervention**.*
- *Studies report that many parents of children identified with dyslexia also have reading difficulties.*

A further definition which is helpful to acknowledge is that of the British Psychological Society (BPS) taken from ['Dyslexia, literacy and psychological assessment. Report of a working party'](link) (1999):

"Dyslexia is evident when accurate and fluent word reading and/or spelling develops very incompletely or with great difficulty. This focuses on literacy learning at the "word" level and implies that the problem is severe and persistent despite appropriate learning opportunities. It provides the basis of a staged process of assessment through teaching"

---

[2] ['Identifying and Teaching Children and Young people with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties'](link) (Rose, 2009)

Cognus

No Limits on Learning

Educational Psychology Service

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Section 2 – Identifying and supporting literacy difficulties and dyslexia

This document advocates for early identification of need so that pupils receive the support they require at the earliest possible opportunity. Early identification and intervention are linked to better outcomes. For early identification to be achieved, schools need to have clear pathways for identification and support and use of a Graduated Response is suggested. For further information about the legal framework settings must adhere to please refer to Appendix 2.

The Graduated Response[3]

SEN support should take the form of this four-part cycle (see below) through which earlier decisions and actions are revisited, refined and revised, with a growing understanding of the pupil's needs and of what supports the pupil in making good progress and securing good outcomes. Some pupils may require 'targeted support', which is additional to, or different from, universal support. A small minority of pupils may require 'specialist support' in addition (please see Section 4 of this document for examples of support at each level). The level of support needed will become evident through the graduated response using the Assess, Plan, Do and Review cycle.

The effectiveness of the support is **reviewed** by school staff and parents/carers and the cycle repeated if needed.

Assess

Review

Plan

Do

The child's needs must be **assessed** so that the right support can be provided. Parents, teachers and other professionals who work with the child should be consulted.

An SEN support **plan** about how to meet the identified needs should be agreed by school staff and parents/carers with outcomes set.

Interventions and **support** agreed are put in place.

If it is agreed that SEN Support is not sufficient to meet a child's educational needs, then a parent or school can ask the local authority for an EHCNA. If the young person is over the age of 16, they can request one directly. "Individuals with EHCPs usually have needs in more than one area and it is extremely rare for an EHCP to be awarded to a child who only has dyslexia. Their academic performance would need to be significantly behind their peers" (BDA website).

---

[3] Please refer to the SENCO Handbook for further information about this process

Cognus
No Limits on Learning
Educational Psychology Service

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Example of Assess, Plan, Do, Review process in action

Move through process every 4-6 weeks if concerns continue

Initial concerns raised about pupil's progress or attainment with literacy skills
Class teacher ensures that QFT and universal provision is in place

⬇

Class teacher monitors and records concern with SENCO

Parent inforned of concern, asked about hearing/vision	Increase intensity of universal provision	SENCO to review QFT/universal provision and pupil response through observation

⬇

Class teacher and SENCO monitor pupil progress

Additional information gathered through checklists or school assessment to identify areas of need	Parent involved in creation of SEN support plan and SMART targets

⬇

Review with parents and school staff

Targeted support put in place	SEN Support plan updated	Where appropriate support put in place at home

⬇

Support from external agencies e.g. Educational Psychology for further assessment and/or intervention recommendations
Increased targeted support put in place

⬇

Review in line with professional recommendations

Consider if dyslexia label is to be used	Adapt intervention, if needed implement specialist provision	Continue to monitor progress over time

Questions to consider when planning an intervention

- Is there an evidence-base to support choice of intervention?
- How long should the intervention be in place?
- How will progress be measured?
- What is the expected progress?
- Who will deliver the intervention?

- Have they been trained to carry out the intervention effectively?
- How will the delivery quality of the programme be monitored and maintained?
- Where and when will the intervention be carried out?
- How will missed curriculum areas be covered?

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Identification and assessment of dyslexia and literacy difficulties

Teachers are best placed to complete school-based assessment with pupils initially through:

- high-quality support at the universal level
- universal screening measures
- progress monitoring

The first step in identifying that children may have dyslexia is to notice those making poor progress in comparison with their typically developing peers, **despite high quality teaching**. It is therefore important that schools have good quality monitoring systems to track pupils, and to ensure that high quality teaching of literacy skills are consistently adhered to.

Screening

Screening tools are a useful way of gaining more information about the difficulties a pupil is having and highlighting the areas required for more targeted support. See Section 4 for examples of screening and assessment tools that can be used alongside standardised measures of reading and spelling that schools will already be using including the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, Letters and Sounds phases or the Year 1 Phonics test.

It is also important to ensure that other factors which may be contributing to difficulties with literacy are explored at this stage, for instance eyesight, especially if a pupil has spoken about letters moving around the page or pain in their eyes when reading, or other changes or factors in the child's environment (e.g., school moves, family difficulties, bullying etc.). There may also be other contextual factors causing difficulties with focus and engagement.

Assessment

Assessment is best seen as a **process undertaken over time** rather than a one-off event and standardised assessment may be sought to gain further information about a pupil's strengths and needs and may also be used to identify dyslexia. There is no single 'dyslexia assessment' or cut-off point that is indicative of dyslexia, and a variety of tools can be used by school staff and other professionals to ascertain whether a pupil's learning needs should be described as dyslexia.

Following assessment, identification as to whether a pupil should be identified as having dyslexia rather than literacy difficulties can be made by a teacher with additional training or an Educational Psychologist. For some the dyslexia label may serve a powerful psychological function and be experienced as an affirming explanation, providing reassurance to the pupil and the adults around them. For others, the identification of dyslexia, may be detrimental as it leads to the pupil and the adults around them developing a 'fixed' view of their literacy ability.

Cognus

No Limits on Learning

Educational Psychology Service

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

What to do when a pupil isn't making progress

To ensure that support for a pupil continues to meet need, the progress they are making must be reviewed. The method and timing of review is likely to be specified by the intervention being used, otherwise, monthly to half-termly review tends to be sufficient. It is necessary to consider the factors that may be undermining progress. Most commonly, the way in which an intervention has been delivered lacks fidelity (e.g. overly adapted, not delivered in line with the duration or intensity requirements), and therefore the results that should have been achieved have not been.

When an evidence-based intervention is being used, it must be delivered in line with the implementation guidance for that specific intervention. To enable this, additional staff training may be required, as well as monitoring of the delivery of the intervention. It is vital that this is the first thing to be considered when reviewing the effectiveness of an intervention. **It is also imperative that literacy intervention is delivered alongside universal support to promote inclusion and wider learning experiences.**

Another important factor to consider when reviewing progress are any emotional factors; if a pupil is not able to fully engage with the intervention it will not be as effective as it could be. A variety of factors may inhibit motivation and engagement including low self-esteem, anxiety, upcoming transition, changes in the home environment and many more.

Ways of monitoring impact:

- Screening tools
- Standardised measures
- Lesson observations
- Pupil self-evaluation
- Parent questionnaires
- Pre and post measures of the intervention
- Studying pupil progress data
- Monitoring pupil participation
- Scrutinising workbooks

If it is not felt that a pupil has made the expected progress in response to an intervention, this requires further scrutiny through an Assess, Plan, Do, Review cycle.

For a small minority the level of targeting may need to be increased, so that support includes more regular input, often on a daily basis (little and often), and teaching of a more bespoke nature. Consultation or assessment from a specialist professional (including your Educational Psychologist) may be necessary in order to ascertain the next steps.

It is important to highlight that prior to involving an external professional's schools should be confident that they have supported a pupil through high-quality universal and targeted provision and have clear evidence that the expected progress has not been made.

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Universal support

It is important that all pupils are supported by high quality teaching and learning strategies to promote their development across the curriculum. The Code of Practice states that a graduated approach to meeting SEND should be used: high quality teaching is the first step when a pupil is not making expected progress. The vast majority of children and young people will have their needs met through this. As described above, reasonable adaptations must be put in place to support the differing needs of learners and creative adaptations of teaching and learning underpins inclusive and meaningful participation of all children and young people.

In order to ensure high quality literacy teaching across a school, it is important that senior leaders promote a whole school ethos that recognises and promotes individual differences, and inclusion of pupils with SEN. The idea the of a 'dyslexia friendly school' may be familiar to some and recognises the role of everyone within the school system to support literacy and those who struggle.

Principles of quality first teaching in relation to literacy include, but are not limited to:

- Careful progress **monitoring**
- Use of **inclusive teaching techniques** e.g., talking partners, peer support
- **Effective differentiation** of work - by task/by outcome/by material
- **Limited copying** off the board
- Various **methods of recording** encouraged e.g., mind mapping, ICT, drama, pictures, flowchart, oral presentations
- **Chunking** instructions and tasks into small parts
- Teaching **memory strategies** e.g., mnemonics, visualisation

- Providing **brain breaks**
- **Multi-sensory** teaching strategies
- **Pre-teaching** vocabulary
- **Positive marking** to support personal targets
- A **high-quality phonics** programmes that allows pupils to learn at their own pace, and features opportunities for **over learning** and **reinforcement**
- Teach and support **meta-cognitive strategies** e.g., planning, review
- **Scaffold writing** through pre-writing activities, summarising, sharing, sentence starters

To ensure that teachers feel confident in applying these principles, regular professional development[4] is recommended alongside implementation support. It is also advised that certain members of staff have training to develop expertise in literacy development and support. For further support related to maximising the impact of teaching assistants, please contact the Educational Psychology Service for informatic about the MPTA training course.

---

[4] The Literacy and Dyslexia-SpLD Professional Development Framework has training and support documents

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Targeted intervention

Most children learn to read and write through high-quality classroom teaching, yet a minority do not. "Although good classroom teaching and differentiation is essential to effective practice and in promoting positive outcomes, most research suggests that children falling behind their peers need more help than the classroom normally provides. This help requires coordinated effort and training" (Brooks, 2016, p.14).

Intervention should be delivered and reviewed in line with evidence-based interventions and approaches (please see Section 4). The following table[5] may also be of use when considering the area of need that intervention will need to target for a particular child. It should be noted that these categories are not exhaustive, and some children will need support across multiple areas:

Desired outcomes	Recommended focus of the intervention
Word reading	Phonological awareness – synthesis and blending (the ability to hear individual sounds and put them together to make a word) Systematic phonics intervention Sight vocabulary intervention Vocabulary knowledge
Reading comprehension and inference	Word reading – aiming to increase accuracy and fluency Oral language skills Reasoning skills e.g. prediction, questioning, clarifying, summarising and activating prior knowledge Vocabulary knowledge
Spelling	Phonological awareness – segmentation (the ability to hear a word and separate it into individual sounds) Handwriting skills Phonic, whole word, morphemic spelling interventions Generalising spelling skills into independent writing and recording
Writing	Letter formation Word formation Writing sentences Oral language skills

---

[5] Adapted from Staffordshire Count Council Literacy Practice Guidance February 2018 (draft)

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Early Years

The first few years of life provide an important foundation for later literacy development, and much of this is down to having meaningful opportunities to engage with language and text. Many of the ways that children learn and develop in the early years is through play, therefore, the strategies outlined in this section should be incorporated into play as well as daily life activities. The guidance below provides a range of examples of best practice[6] in preparing children to develop literacy skills within the classroom and finishes with some recommendations about assessment and monitoring.

It should be acknowledged that the early years comprises a large developmental period, and whilst the below principles apply across this age range, it will be more pertinent for the 3-5 age range and younger pupils who are making rapid progress.

Strategies to prepare children for literacy (adapted from EEF guidance):

Using the **PEER** Framework when reading together.

- o **P**rompt the child to say something about the book. For example, 'what is that?'
- o **E**valuate their response. For example, 'yes that is an elephant.'
- o **E**xpand on their response for example by adding information or rephrasing it. For example, 'yes that is right it is a big grey elephant.'
- o **R**epeat the prompt to help them learn from the expansion. For example, 'can you say big grey elephant?'

- • Explicitly teaching high frequency words.
- • Teaching children about written words, including:
  - o That print has meaning.
  - o That text is read from left to right.
  - o Page sequencing.
  - o The different parts of a book.
- • Ask questions about the books you are reading, for example using the five W's: Who? What? Where? When? Why?
- • Link back reading to the real-world situations. For example, if you are reading about children playing with toys, you could talk about what toys the child enjoys playing with.
- • Offer a variety of writing implements e.g. coloured pens, crayons (fat and thin), chalk, chunky pencils, paint brushes.
- • Work on a variety of surfaces e.g. coloured paper, whiteboards, foil, materials.
- • Break down simple words when giving instructions or asking questions, such as: 'Can you find your h-a-t, hat?' 'Where is the c-a-t, cat?' 'Sit on the s-ea-t, seat'.

---

[6] The below examples have been adapted from the Cambridgeshire Dyslexia Guidance which can be found here.

Cognus

No Limits on Learning

Educational Psychology Service

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Provide a language and communication rich environment

Early literacy development is underpinned by a rich language environment and opportunities for quality adult-child interactions at home and in early years settings, and development of good oral language skills can reduce the incidence of later development of reading difficulties. Examples of strategies to promote language include:

- Speaking with and listening to children from the start of their life, even before they are talking. For example, through commentary, questioning and dialogue.
- Provide opportunities to sing with and listen to a range of songs and nursery rhythms – this will help develop phonological skills.
- Provide opportunities for children to listen to and engage with stories.

Provide opportunities to engage with books and text

- Provide opportunities to recognise and see whole words (even before children are reading) such as a child's name. These are often the first words children will learn to read using visual mechanisms.
- Provide opportunities for scribbling and mark making with a range of materials and tools.
- Provide opportunities to engage with a range of books and reading materials.
    - o Reading to children before they can read and with children when they can.
    - o Support children's comprehension skills by the adult asking questions about the text. This could be about what the character is doing and what has happened.

Develop a range of skills that prepare children for literacy

- Provide regular opportunities to engage in play that promotes pre-reading skills, for example, matching and sorting games. Further ideas can be found on Family Learning website.
- Consider sensory needs and ensure they are not impacting on children's literacy development.
- Begin to develop alphabetic knowledge as one of the many components of literacy development.

Five games that promote early literacy skills

1. I spy with my little eye.
2. Card and picture sorting activities, such as matching animal pictures, or objects, with the correct word.
3. Writing words or drawing using multi-sensory tools such as flour, sand and foam.
4. Puzzles.
5. Singing along to songs and nursery

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Teaching of phonics

According to the EEF (2018) evidence suggests that including activities relating to **phonemic awareness skills leads to better literacy outcomes** than programmes without these components for children in their first years of reading. They emphasise the importance of these programmes being systematic, ensuring staff are well-trained, making sure it is responsive to the needs of children and has engaging content (see general intervention guidance above for more information in this area). Alongside phonics approaches, reading books and increasing awareness of text is highly supportive. See Appendix 3 for the steps of phonological awareness.

Assessing and monitoring progress

The Early years foundation stage profile (2019) is most often used for assessing, tracking and monitoring literacy progress in the early years. You may also want to use the Phase One letters and sound for monitoring phonics and decoding progress in reception. It is important to remember the number of components involved in literacy development, when assessing children's progress, and ensure that the range of factors that contribute to development of literacy skills are considered (inc. language and fine motor skills as well as confidence).

Given the early stage of development for this age group it is unlikely to be appropriate to consider labelling of dyslexia, although it is important to begin identifying pupils who may have additional difficulties and to be implementing more targeted approaches. When considering additional and targeted support think carefully about the aims of the intervention and make use of evidence-based approaches and careful monitoring over time. When implementing targeted support, follow the graduated response.

Evidence-based interventions

An example of an intervention that has been evaluated by the Education Endowment Foundation is The Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI). The intervention aims to develop children's listening, narrative and vocabulary skills, by training teaching assistants to deliver a number of small group or individual sessions who have difficulties with spoken language skills. The funded evaluation found that children receiving NELI made improvements in their oral language equivalent to four months' additional progress.

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Key Stage 1

Literacy skills become even more important as pupils move through school, therefore children who are delayed in developing these skills may become more noticeable. This section begins by providing some key principles to support the continued acquisition of basic literacy skills before providing details about evidence-based targeted interventions. As with support during the Early Years, it remains important to continue focusing on supporting communication and language development of children to promote literacy skills. The following principles should be applied to all teaching and learning approaches in the classroom and communicated to parents.
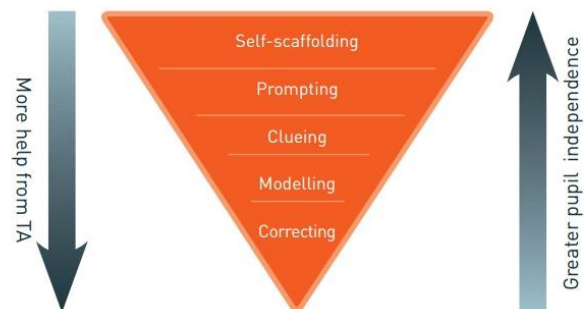
Develop speaking and listening skills and wider understanding of language

- Promote high quality adult-child interactions **'talking with children rather than talking to children'**.
- Use explicit and implicit approaches including planning for teaching of vocabulary.
- Model and extend children's language and thinking during interactions and activities such as shared reading.
- Collaborative activities that provide opportunities to learn/hear language often also provide opportunities for wider learning through talk.
- Explicitly plan for and teach skills of social awareness, relationship skills, and problem-solving.

Teach decoding and comprehension skills to develop reading

Both **decoding** (the ability to translate written words into the sounds of spoken language) and **comprehension** (the ability to understand the meaning of the language being read) skills are necessary for confident and competent reading, but neither is sufficient on its own. It is also important to remember that progress in literacy requires **motivation and engagement**, which will help children to develop persistence and enjoyment in their reading, therefore multi-sensory and play-based learning are still important, alongside access to different media and genres of texts on a wide range of topics.

Reading comprehension can be improved by teaching pupils' specific strategies to support them with inferencing and self-monitoring their understanding. Teachers should introduce strategies using modelling and structured support, which should be strategically reduced as a child progresses until they are capable of completing the activity independently.

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Cognus

No Limits on Learning

Educational Psychology Service

Teach phonics through use of a universal systematic phonics programme

Systematic phonics approaches explicitly teach pupils a comprehensive set of letter-sound relationships for reading and sound- letter relationships for spelling. Consider the following when teaching a phonics programme:

1. **Training:** Ensure all staff have the necessary pedagogical skills and content knowledge.

2. **Responsiveness:** Check with individual children if learning can be accelerated, or if extra support is needed. If there is a need for extra support identify the child's individual capabilities and difficulties to provide more focused teaching.

3. **Engagement:** Plan and deliver lessons that engage pupils and are enjoyable to teach.

4. **Adaptations:** Carefully consider the potential impact of adaptations to the programme, especially if a manualised, evidence-based programme is being followed.

5. **Focus:** Consider changing the groupings of children in a responsive manner, with the aim of improving teaching efficiency and the engagement and success of pupils.

This checklist by the DfE details the criteria that an effective systematic synthetic phonics teaching programme should adhere to and may be supportive in identifying a programme and Appendix 3 for the steps of phonological awareness

Teach pupils to use strategies for planning and monitoring their writing

Producing quality writing is a complex process, but a number of different strategies are likely to help, depending on the skills of the writer. These include:

1. Pre-writing activities e.g. playdough to build hand strength, painting with earbuds, threading beads, writing in sand or flour, word displays, and mnemonics.
2. Drafting, editing and revising.
3. Sharing work with other children and looking at examples.

Pupils' writing can be improved by teaching them to **plan** and **monitor** their writing. This can be done in many ways, including writing a list of all the things to include in your piece (sticky notes can help with this), doing a mind map, using writing frames, and using a flowchart.

Find more examples here.

Monitoring strategies to teach:

- Writing a plan
- Checking that the plan answers the question
- Pause during writing, and double check that you are answering the question
- Provide reminders to do this double checking
- Ask yourself questions like 'Am I doing this in the right way?', 'Does what I'm writing make sense?', and 'Will/does my writing answer the question?'
- Think about what is good about your writing, and what could be better next time

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Promote fluency in writing through practice and explicitly teaching spelling

- Transcription refers to the physical processes of handwriting or typing, and spelling. Children must develop fluency in these skills to the point that they have become automated. If children have to concentrate to ensure their transcription is accurate, they will be less able to think about the content of their writing.

- Spelling should also be explicitly taught to aid transcription. Teaching should focus on spellings that are relevant to the topic being studied and which are frequently used. There are various strategies for doing this which could include 'trace, copy, and recall', using flash cards, teaching touch typing, spelling the word out loud,

Use high quality intervention to help pupils who are struggling

Schools should initially focus on ensuring they offer high quality in-class support for the whole class. However, even when excellent classroom teaching is in place, it is likely that a small number of children will require additional targeted literacy support. When this is thought to be the case the following steps should be followed:

- Collect high quality, up-to-date information about a pupil's strengths and needs, and adapt teaching accordingly.
- Use accurate assessment to identify interventions that are matched to pupils needs.
- Use one-to-one and small group tutoring involving structured, evidence-based interventions (see Section 4 for further details).
- Regularly review children's progress to ensure the effectiveness of the support in place.
- Consider changing the approach if a child is disengaged or finding the learning too hard.

Key Stage 2

By the time they reach Year 3, a child will normally have experienced three years of structured literacy teaching. Most children will have gained fluency in reading and writing, although there may be differences between individual pupils in terms of speed, accuracy and confidence. By Year 3 it is hoped that all pupils will have a secure grasp of the basic skills needed for literacy: knowledge of all the most common letter-sound correspondence (phonics), skills in segmenting and blending (decoding), knowledge of irregular high frequency words.

A small number of children in each year group may now be showing clear signs that they are struggling to make progress in literacy:

- may not have passed the Phonics Check in Year 1 or Year 2.
- may be very reluctant to read or to write.
- may have difficulty decoding and/or be very slow when reading.
- may have clear difficulty learning new spellings.

1. The first step for all pupils that are struggling is to **reinforce literacy learning opportunities** in the classroom through Quality First Teaching approaches. For struggling readers build in additional opportunities to read in small groups or 1:1 with an adult.

2. Pupils who are struggling with literacy should be **monitored carefully through teacher assessment**, with a particular focus on reading levels and spellings. Frequent progress checks are important to help establish specific areas of difficulty and to monitor response to intervention so that informed decisions can be made.

3. **A range of explanations** for delayed literacy skills should be considered at this point as these

Quality First Teaching

Allow extra 'thinking' time for processing information and formulating responses.

Use overlearning - recap information using different methods.

Engage more than one sense at a time when presenting new information, e.g. ask them to say letter names out loud when they're writing a word; use movement or gestures to reinforce mathematical concepts such as addition or multiplication.

Ensure materials are appropriately adapted, e.g. break large chunks of text down into bullet points; use visuals and diagrams to make information more memorable; avoid presenting information as black print on a white background.

Try asking what works for them and how they learn best.

Draw attention to patterns in words, e.g. bat, cat, sat; irregular spelling patterns - rough, tough, enough; prefixes and suffixes; rules for plural or -ed word endings.

Allow children to choose books that reflect their interests and ensure that they have access to books and / or magazines that reflect their interests. Try using graphic novels to encourage reading.

Experiment with different coloured overlays and tinted paper.

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

may be contributing to the pupil's difficulties. Additional intervention may be necessary to support the pupil's broader language and literacy skills and to fill possible gaps in their literacy learning.

This might include pupils; with EAL, who have missed out on schooling (absence or illness), with a history of sensory impairment (hearing and vision), with underlying speech and language difficulties, with difficulties relating to attention and engagement, or who have experienced trauma that has impacted on their learning (as well as many other factors).

Literacy continues to be linked to language skills for this age group, therefore explicitly teaching new vocabulary and exposure to language rich environments remains important.

Strategies to develop language
Purposeful speaking and listening activities
Reading books aloud and discussing them
Pre-teaching and discussion of new words
Structured questioning to develop inference skills
Articulating ideas before writing them
Teachers modelling inference and 'thinking aloud'
Exposure to a wide range of text

A note on fluency

Fluency in reading is important because it support comprehension as cognitive resources are freed up from word recognition and be directed on comprehension. Fluency in writing supports composition as cognitive resources are freed up from handwriting, spelling and sentence construction.

We can assess why fluency is not being achieved through using the skills detailed in the reading rope (see Further Reading). Ways of increasing fluency in reading include good teacher modelling, repeated reading of short, meaningful passages and continued work on decoding and phonological awareness for those who need it. Whereas fluency in writing can be achieved through extensive practice, explicit teaching of spelling and spelling rules, practice sentence combining.

Where a pupil continues to show literacy skills that are significantly delayed, class teachers should **promote inclusion through differentiation** in the classroom to minimise the impact of literacy difficulties on other areas of learning. This includes:

- providing visuals whenever information is presented in written form
- reducing the expectations around written output and providing other opportunities for a pupil to share their learning e.g. discussion, dictation to an adult scribe or through drawing
- technology based support such as dictation software and text to speak software for older pupils.

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Cognus
No Limits on Learning
Educational Psychology Service

4. All pupils who struggle with literacy learning should be offered **targeted interventions** at group or individual level (following the graduated response in line with guidance in Section 4). Intervention in Key Stage 2 is likely to focus on reading comprehension and reading fluency to support independence in reading and may also include explicitly instruction in vocabulary and morphology as these as skills used in spelling and comprehension. It should also be focused on developing independent learning skills, with pupils encouraged to take greater responsibility.

Schools should provide **advice to parents** regarding additional support at home. This may include signposting online games to practice phonics skills, activities to support reading fluency (e.g. Paired Reading) or activities to support self-esteem and broader learning (see parent information guide for more information).

Teach **reading comprehension** through modelling and supported practice (using carefully selected texts) of the following strategies:

- ✓ prediction
- ✓ questioning
- ✓ clarifying
- ✓ summarising
- ✓ inference
- ✓ activating prior knowledge

Teach **writing composition** by giving children a reason to write and someone to write for (purpose and audience).

Teach the 7 components of writing:

1. **planning** (setting goals, generating ideas)
2. **drafting** (noting key ideas in a logical order)
3. **sharing** (ideas or drafts)
4. **evaluating** (self-monitoring or other feedback)
5. **revising** (making changes in light of evaluating)
6. **editing** (making changes to ensure accuracy, coherency)
7. **publishing** (presenting work so others can read it)

Teach **spelling** following a diagnostic assessment to identify the types of spelling error being made.

Phonological errors (not phonologically plausible) e.g. 'frsit' for 'first', 'gaj' for 'garage'
- ➔ explicitly teach consonant and vowel phonemes
- ➔ practices sounding phonemes all the way through words
- ➔ focus on identification of common diagraphs

Orthographical errors (phonologically plausible) e.g. 'gud' for 'good', 'cam' for 'calm'
- ➔ look at patterns of letters and syllables within words
- ➔ encourage automatic recognition of whole words
- ➔ emphasis on careful decoding and encoding

Morphological errors (due to a lack of awareness of morphemes) e.g. 'trapt' for 'trapped', 'ekscuse' for 'excuse'
- ➔ focus on prefixes, suffixes, root words and learn common rules e.g. words engine in 'f' or 'fe' change plurals to 'ves'
- ➔ explore relationship between meaning and spelling by looking at etymology

Cognus

No Limits on Learning

Educational Psychology Service

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Key Stage 3/4

The evidence base for intervention with secondary pupils differs and is more focused on subject-specific approaches and pupils identifying approaches that support them in managing with any enduring difficulties they experience. It looks at a widening of intervention away from building phonological awareness to supporting literacy across the curriculum, and making use of adaptations (e.g. laptops, spell checkers, voice recorders) to allow pupils to demonstrate their knowledge more accurately. By this age pupils tend to have more complex and individual profiles of need, therefore this guidance should be read alongside anything more individualised that is recommended for a pupil.

In this sense the following guidance is focused on supporting wider literacy difficulties at the whole school level (as advocated by Sharples et al., 2011). Should your setting require further support to develop a secondary literacy strategy, or additional training in any of the approaches outlined below please contact the Educational Psychology Service.

1. Prioritise 'disciplinary literacy' across the curriculum

An approach of 'disciplinary literacy' involves supporting literacy across every subject and recognising that there are both subject-specific and cross-curricular skills. As such it is important to ensure that all teachers receive training so that they are confident in teaching reading, writing and effective communication, and it is not seen only as the prevail of the SEN department or English teachers.

A disciplinary literacy approach becomes more important the further through secondary education pupils get, as the level of specialisation associated with each subject increases. This is in relation to a number of factors including vocabulary, how to communicate and express ideas, key information to be acquired through reading texts, problem-solving and what is assessed through exams. Each subject should have a literacy plan so that the specific difficulties pupils encounter in each curriculum area can be effectively targeted. Where possible, links between subjects should be sought. To inform these plans, assessing the literacy expectations of each subject to baseline reading levels of pupils is important.

The following section has been written drawing on the overview of best practice for literacy teaching in secondary settings presented in the EEF's guidance report 'Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools', first published in 2019 (please refer to this document for further information and resources).

1. Prioritise 'disciplinary literacy' across the curriculum
2. Provide targeted vocabulary instruction in every subject
3. Develop students' ability to read complex academic texts
4. Break down complex writing tasks
5. Combine writing instruction with reading in every subject
6. Provide opportunities for structured talk
7. Provide high quality literacy interventions for struggling students

2. Provide targeted vocabulary instruction in every subject

Pupils often struggle with reading and writing in secondary education because the quantity of academic, subject specific language increases enormously. Taking into account the previous recommendation, it is important that each subject creates its own literacy plan to identify the key vocabulary to be taught, but also to recognise where the same language may be being used in different subjects but with different meanings (sometimes known as false friends). Making use of Beck's 'tiers of vocabulary' is helpful when considering which vocabulary needs to be explicitly taught.

Approaches to explicitly teaching vocabulary:

- Organise words into meaningful patterns, for example vocabulary instruction based in etymology and morphology
- Encourage pupils to organise their learning and create visual learning aids for themselves e.g. graphic organisers, concept maps, Frayer model
- Regular low-stakes assessment to test learning
- Explicitly teach spelling alongside vocabulary development, and draw pupil's attention to synonyms

3. Develop students' ability to read complex academic texts

An understanding of how to teach pupils to read is not something all secondary teachers will have confidence in doing but will underpin successful adoption of a disciplinary literacy approach. There should not be an assumption that pupils arriving at secondary school are able to read accurately, fluently and with good comprehension, and staff development needs to reflect this.

Some teaching techniques that are known to support reading comprehension are:

- **Explicitly teaching complex vocabulary** which underpins inference
- Providing more opportunities for **verbal comprehension** and **discussion tasks** before writing, because these are often easier for pupils to engage with meaningfully
- Prioritising **teacher-led reading** over independent reading and when doing so highlight important features of the text e.g. spelling patterns, academic language
- **Support independent reading** of more complex texts; help students to read 'deeply'.
- Activate **prior knowledge** of students before they read e.g. asking them to

think back to a topic they are confident on, ask what they already know about a new topic
- Ask questions that encourage pupils to make **predictions** about the text so that they attend more closely and monitor their comprehension
- Have pupils **create questions** for one another to check their comprehension
- Undertake activities in which pupils have to **summarise** sections of text to consolidate their understanding and draw out the key points
- Structured approaches to **group reading tasks** e.g. reciprocal reading, or assign roles: Director, Helper, Reporter, Summariser.

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

4. Break down complex writing tasks

Longer, complex writing tasks will pose the greatest cognitive challenge for students, because of the range of working memory functions they require for successful completion. The three processes that are engaged, and must be combined, during complex writing tasks are:

1. Transcription – physical writing or typing
2. Composition – generating ideas and putting these into words and sentences that follow grammar and spelling
3. Executive functions – planning how to complete a task, motivation to sustain attention during the task and reviewing/editing of the task on completion

If any one of the above principles are more challenging for a pupil, the burden on their working memory may be exceeded during a task. It may be beneficial to reduce task demands as much as possible, give memory aids, and breaking down tasks into smaller parts so the child does not feel overwhelmed. Such difficulties will have a knock-on effect on their ability to make use of the skills needed for the other processes and generally decrease the quality of their writing. For example, pupils who struggle with the mechanics of handwriting will be expending more energy on this process, which is likely to decrease the quality of their composition (e.g., the content of their ideas or the structure of these sentences) and/or their executive functions (e.g., their ability to sequence an answer well or to focus their attention for the duration of the task).

Difficulties in any of the three processes above should be taken into account when asking pupils to complete complex writing tasks, and differentiation or adaption to tasks made based on individual pupils needs. Other factors to consider may include:

- **Spelling skills** which are likely to be decreased during longer, more complex writing tasks for pupils who already struggle with spelling. Explicit teaching of spelling is therefore likely to be a useful ongoing intervention for many pupils.
- Supporting pupils to develop their **transcription skills** so that writing becomes less effortful and more automatic, otherwise providing alternative means of recording.
- Developing the **metacognitive skills** of pupils so that they become more confident in setting personal goals, reflecting on their learning and planning how to complete tasks based on their individual strengths and needs. Explicit teaching for pupils about how to plan and structure their work when providing longer answers alongside frameworks, or checklists that are meaningful to them to reduce the load attributable to executive functions.

Cognus
No Limits on Learning

Educational Psychology Service

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

5. *Combine writing instruction with reading in every subject*

As detailed above, written tasks are often more demanding for students, yet pupils who have good subject knowledge are not always able to display this in their written work. This is where alternative ways of recording work may be beneficial. Writing about a topic also recruits other ways of processing information which can deepen the understanding that we have, whereas reading provides new ideas about concepts and increases our subject knowledge. Combining elements of both should therefore be encouraged as a fundamental strategy in improving literacy in secondary subjects and some approaches include:

Writing key points about what is already known on a topic before reading a text to gain new and additional information.

Annotating text to highlight key ideas, structures or techniques used by the author.

Asking pupils to write short summaries of what they have read.

Asking students to discuss what is 'good' about a piece of writing and then creating a checklist that they can use when reviewing their own writing.

In the same way asking students to discuss what is 'bad' about a piece of writing and to create a resource that supports them to avoid replicating such factors.

6. *Provide opportunities for structured talk*

Talk and discussion-based learning is important in the secondary curriculum, especially for lower-attaining pupils or those who have had less access to high-quality language role models. Additionally, regular and structured opportunities for talking promotes development of language and communication skills.

The framework of 'accountable talk' is a useful model developed by Resnick and colleagues which provides three key components that should be incorporated within talk-based tasks: knowledge, reasoning and community. Knowledge refers to the importance of pupils referring back to key texts or learning points in their answers and 'getting the facts right', reasoning refers to the way in which pupils explain their answers and justify responses, and community is around how students are expected to listen and show respect to one another.

7. *Provide high quality literacy interventions for struggling students*

Alongside the recommendations above which should be used to inform classroom practices, it is necessary to have additional targeted support for pupils who need it. The use of additional support should be informed through ongoing teacher assessment and additional diagnostic testing as required. Whereas there are many literacy interventions targeted at primary aged pupils there are relatively few which have been rigorously evaluated for secondary aged pupils (please see Section 4 for some examples and further signposting). Further guidance has also been provided from the International Literacy Centre at the Institute of Education (2018)

Cognus

No Limits on Learning

Educational Psychology Service

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Section 3 - Frequently asked questions for schools[7]

1. **What should I say to a parent/carer who has had an independent assessment which concludes that their child is dyslexic?**

- Firstly, acknowledge the parents' views and concerns. The following information may be helpful in discussion:
- There is no single assessment for dyslexia, however, an independent assessment can contribute to the overall picture of a child's strengths and weaknesses and provide helpful information that will help you support the child in your school. It is therefore important to read through the assessment and invite parents in to meet with you to discuss their concerns and hear how you are supporting their child. The parents should be regularly informed of progress and review.
- Professionals outside the Local Authority may be using a different definition or description of dyslexia, for example, the discrepancy model. If this is the case and the child appears to have average reading ability, reassure the parent, discuss their concerns and use the information provided in the assessment to help you support the child (for example, do they need to be stretched in some areas of the curriculum? Do you need to reconsider settings and groupings?)
- If the private assessment recommends a number of interventions to support the child, discuss these with parents, and share what you are already doing in school that may be similar to the suggestions or, if you disagree, explain why and provide your evidence. The private report may provide some very helpful new information and it is important to identify which interventions are evidence based and manageable given the available resources
- Parents should be reassured that school are aware of their child's needs and that appropriate support is available.

2. **Do I need a specific qualification in order to identify dyslexia?**

No, as a teacher, using the definition in this guidance, you will have the teaching skills needed to identify persistent literacy difficulties and dyslexia, although this is not a formal identification. Parents/carers need to feel confident that a formal identification of dyslexia is not necessary in order for you to address their child/ young person's difficulties in this area.

A formal identification can be completed by a teacher with the appropriate qualification or an Educational Psychologist, but they should always consider how the child/young person has responded to well-founded interventions that have been implemented. A diagnosis may not be necessary, but the label can be useful in some ways.

---

[7] Please note that the information in this section is derived directly from the Cambridgeshire guidance paper.

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

3. Should I be using the term 'dyslexia' with children and parents?

Consideration should always be given to whether using the term 'dyslexia' is helpful for the pupil. Many children and parents find it reassuring to be able to describe their difficulties in this way, however, professionals and parents should also be aware of the danger of creating low expectations from those who don't understand the term, including the belief that the pupil is not able to make progress.

If a child has made very little progress despite following a graduated response of 'Assess, Plan, Do, Review' and you are confident that you have used evidence-based interventions that focus on the child's needs, then, according to the Rose Report (2009) definition and the BPS definition, you can use the term dyslexia as a description of a child's needs. You will need to be very clear about current literacy levels and that interventions have been implemented appropriately. You will need to describe to parents and children what you mean by the term and that this is not a diagnosis but an identification of need. Sharing this guidance is one way of supporting parents.

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Cognus

No Limits on Learning

Educational Psychology Service

Section 4 – A Graduated Response to literacy intervention

Universal provision – Quality First teaching	Targeted provision – SEN Support	Specialist provision
Support that is available to all children, including differentiation as part of whole class teaching, changes to how pupils are grouped, use of evidence-based intervention and group work	Support that is additional to universal, quality first teaching for pupils who require more focused intervention identified through assessment of needs	Support that is additional and different to what would usually be provided
Early Years A language rich environment, where children are talked to and listened to Regular opportunities to explore and play with a wide range of books (board books, cloth books, plastic books, real books) Singing nursery rhymes and developing awareness of rhythm, rhyme and syllables in words Listening to stories and encouragement to look at favourite pictures, point to familiar objects, imitating an action seen in a book, encouraging babbling/ talking in imitation of reading Opportunities to recognise whole words e.g. the child's name Adults model and encourage scribbling and mark making Opportunities for reading and writing in all areas of provision Multi-sensory teaching strategies Introduction to phonics through a structured programme e.g. Letters and Sounds	1:1 or small group introduction to pre-reading skills 1:1 or small group activities to explore stories and books 1:1 or small group activities focused on mark-making and/or pre-writing skills Use of structured reading programmes when appropriate (from developmental level 40-60 months) 1:1 or small group games to listen to and identify sounds 1:1 or small group targeted phonics work e.g. Letters and Sounds (from developmental level 30-50 months) *(all interventions should be delivered in line with the principles of little and often taking into account the individual timetables of children and development of their concentration and attention skills)*	Individual support all times to access activities with purpose and/or safety 1:1 support for all activities related to pre-reading skills, listening and attention, phonics development with frequent overlearning 1:1 teaching using a specific reading programme if appropriate e.g. Reading Recovery (from developmental level 40-60 months)
Screening and monitoring tools Early Years Foundation Stage Foundation Stage Dyslexia Checklist (BDA)		

Cognus

No Limits on Learning

Educational Psychology Service

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Key Stage 1	1:1 or small group evidence-based interventions[8] for reading, spelling and writing[9] including:	Frequent and higher-level literacy interventions e.g. multiple times daily, either individually or with one other peer
Effective differentiation of work - by task/by outcome/by material		
Systematic phonics programme for whole class e.g. Success For All, Lexia Core 5 Reading, Jolly Phonics, see also	• Accelerated Reader • Toe by Toe • Catch Up Literacy • Rapid Reading • Letters and Sounds	An individualised literacy curriculum linked to the content of whole class work but delivered at a slower rate with an ongoing focus on overlearning
A language rich environment which explicitly teaches new vocabulary and develops speaking and listening skills	Evidence suggests delivery for around 30 mins, 3-5 times a week 1:1 or small group, by trained members of school staff (however each intervention will have delivery specifications which should be adhered to)	Classroom support is personalised and individual to meet needs
A wide range of books and regular opportunities to explore and play with books		Individualised programme for reading, spelling, inference
Teaching of reading comprehension skills alongside decoding	Refer to http://www.interventionsforliteracy.org.uk https://www.evidence4impact.org.uk/# & http://www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit for more evidence based interventions	Interventions include:
Alphabet strips, writing frames, sentences starters, word banks available, as well as resources to check spellings		• Fischer Family Trust Wave 3 literacy support • Acceleread • Accelewrite • Every Child a Reader • Reading Recovery
A range of reading texts including simplified versions	Daily 1:1 reading	
Support for handwriting difficulties e.g. pencil grips, writing slopes	1:1 or small group handwriting intervention (see the National Handwriting Association website)	Ongoing precision teaching
Use of highly motivating strategies for story telling e.g. story sacks	Trial of a 'whole word', sight vocabulary approach to reading	
Reading tailored to an area of interest	Precision teaching intervention for small units of learning e.g. to develop sight vocabulary	
Occasional opportunities to have a scribe		
Coloured overlays/reading rulers available	Use of ICT resources to support reading and writing e.g. Read Write Gold	
A range of texts reflecting different interests		
Explicitly teach spelling of new and topic specific words using varied approaches e.g. phonics, analogy, identify 'tricky' parts, visual		
Use of inclusive teaching techniques e.g. talking partners, peer support, flexible grouping of students		

---

[8] Brooks, G. (2016) What works for children with literacy difficulties? 5th ed. https://www.helenarkell.org.uk/documents/files/What-works-for-children-and-young-people-with-literacy-difficulties-5th-edition.pdf

[9] The applicability for each intervention varies based on the age of pupils, with specific delivery requirements for each

![Cognus logo] Cognus

No Limits on Learning

Educational Psychology Service

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Multi-sensory teaching strategies Providing learning breaks Pre-teaching vocabulary		

Key Stage 2 Continued reminders and practice of phonics skills Effective differentiation of work - by task/by outcome/by material A language rich environment which explicitly teaches new vocabulary and develops speaking and listening skills A wide range of books and regular opportunities to explore and play with books Teaching of reading comprehension skills alongside decoding focusing less on phonics and more on language/comprehension based approaches as needed Alphabet strips, writing frames, sentences starters, word banks available, as well as resources to check spellings A range of reading texts including simplified versions Support for handwriting difficulties e.g. pencil grips, writing slopes, repeated opportunities to practice through rainbow writing, use of aids for spacing, chances to develop stamina Coloured overlays/reading rulers available A range of texts reflecting different interests Additional time to initiate and complete tasks Additional time for assessments Explicitly teach spelling of new and topic specific words using varied approaches e.g. phonics, analogy, identify 'tricky' parts, visual Text presented in a larger font, with less information contained on a page	Continued teaching of systematic phonics programmes for pupils who have not acquired KS1 skills 1:1 or small group evidence-based interventions for reading, spelling and writing including: • Rapid Reading • Letters and Sounds • Project X Code • Units of Sound • Toe by Toe Refer to http://www.interventionsforliteracy.org.uk https://www.evidence4impact.org.uk/# & http://www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit for more evidence based interventions Use of highly motivating strategies for story telling e.g. story sacks Reading tailored to an area of interest Various methods of recording encouraged e.g. mind mapping, ICT, drama, pictures, flowchart, oral presentations Providing learning breaks Pre-teaching vocabulary Daily 1:1 reading	Frequent and higher-level literacy interventions e.g. multiple times daily, either individually or with one other peer An individualised literacy curriculum linked to the content of whole class work but delivered at a slower rate with an ongoing focus on overlearning Classroom support is personalised and individual to meet needs Individualised programme for reading, spelling, inference Interventions include: • Fischer Family Trust Wave 3 literacy support • Acceleread • Accelewrite • Every Child a Reader • Reading Recovery Ongoing precision teaching

Cognus

No Limits on Learning

Educational Psychology Service

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

A focus on reading fluency in teaching and intervention	Intervention to teach rules of grammar e.g. colourful semantics
Use of inclusive teaching techniques e.g. talking partners, peer support, flexible grouping of students	Intervention focused on developing inference skills
Multi-sensory teaching strategies	Trial of a 'whole word', sight vocabulary approach to reading
Limited copying off the board	1:1 or small group handwriting intervention (see the National Handwriting Association website)
Chunking instructions and tasks into small parts	Precision teaching intervention for small units of learning
Recording of ideas supported using e.g. drafts, writing frames, mind-maps, assistive technology, well-directed teaching assistants, able scribes	Alternative methods of recording[9] learning e.g. laptop, iPad, voice recording software (Dragon Dictate), ICT resources (Read Write Gold)
Teaching memory strategies e.g. mnemonics, visualisation	Intervention to develop touch typing skills
Teach and support meta-cognitive strategies e.g. planning, review	
Scaffold writing through pre-writing activities, summarising, sharing, sentence starters	

Screening and monitoring tools

Phonics screening check

Primary School Dyslexia Checklist (BDA)

Gray Oral reading Test (6-23) Test for oral reading fluency and comprehension

York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension: Early Reading and Passage Reading Primary (YARC Primary 4-11)

Single Word Reading Test (SWRT) Ages 6-16

Phonological Assessment Battery 2 (PhAB 2) (Ages 5-11)

New Salford Sentence Reading Test (2011) (ages 6-10 and 5-12 for comprehension sub tests)

Rising Stars PiRA (Progress in Reading Assessment) for KS1 and KS2

Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE) Ages 6-24

Lucid Rapid online screening Ages 4-15

Cognus

No Limits on Learning

Educational Psychology Service

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Key Stage 3, 4 and post-16

Effective differentiation of work - by task/by outcome/by material. This NASEN guide is a useful resource

Implement a 'disciplinary literacy' approach combining subject specific literacy plans with more general literacy development as well as:

- Planning and teaching subject-specific literacy skills
- Explicit teaching of subject-specific and academic vocabulary and spelling
- Break down complex texts
- Provide opportunities for structured talk
- Develop ability of pupils to read complex texts

Explicit teaching of reading skills e.g. scanning for key information and techniques to access text e.g. highlighting

Additional time to initiate and complete tasks

Additional time for assessments

Provide targeted vocabulary instruction in every subject

Develop ability to read and access academic texts

Limited copying off the board

Teaching memory strategies e.g. mnemonics, visualisation

Multi-sensory teaching strategies

Support for handwriting difficulties e.g. pencil grips, writing slopes

Coloured overlays/reading rulers available.

Text presented in a larger font, with less information contained on a page. The BDA provides further guidance related to accessibility

Word banks and technical glossaries taught and used across the curriculum

Teach and support meta-cognitive strategies e.g. planning, review

---

1:1 or small group evidence-based interventions for reading, spelling and writing including:

- Rapid Reading Plus
- Read Write Inc
- Fresh Start
- Units of Sound
- Nessy
- Lexia

Refer to http://www.interventionsforliteracy.org.uk https://www.evidence4impact.org.uk/# & http://www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit for more evidence based interventions

Chunking instructions and tasks into small parts

Providing learning breaks

Pre-teaching vocabulary

Positive marking to support personal targets

Scaffold writing through pre-writing activities, summarising, sharing, sentence starters

Intervention to teach rules of grammar e.g. colourful semantics

Intervention focused on developing inference skills

Adult scribing for longer pieces of writing

1:1 or small group handwriting intervention

Precision teaching intervention for small units of learning

Daily 1:1 reading

Teaching of a whole word, sight vocabulary approach to reading

Frequent and higher-level literacy interventions e.g. multiple times daily, either individually or with one other peer

An individualised curriculum linked to the content of whole class work but delivered at a slower rate with an ongoing focus on overlearning

Classroom support is personalised and individual to meet needs

Individualised programme for reading, spelling, inference

Interventions include:

- Fischer Family Trust Wave 3 literacy support
- Reading Recovery
- Acceleread
- Accelewrite
- ARROW

![Cognus logo]
Cognus

No Limits on Learning

Educational Psychology Service

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Organisation and recording of ideas supported using e.g. drafts, specialised writing frames, mind-maps, cloze activities, assistive technology, well-directed teaching assistants, able scribes	Alternative methods of recording[10] used for all tasks e.g. laptop, iPad, voice recording software (Dragon Dictate), ICT resources (Read Write Gold)	
Various methods of recording encouraged e.g. mind mapping, ICT, drama, pictures, flowchart, oral presentations	Intervention to develop touch typing skills	
Use of inclusive teaching techniques e.g. talking partners, peer support, flexible grouping of students	Support for recording and completing homework	

Screening and monitoring tools

Secondary School Dyslexia Checklist (BDA)

Gray Oral reading Test (ages 6-23) Test for oral reading fluency and comprehension

York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension: Passage Reading Secondary (YARC Secondary 11-16)

Single Word Reading Test (SWRT) Ages 6-16

The Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting (DASH) Ages 9-16

Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE) Ages 6-24

Lucid Rapid online screening Ages 4-15

Dyslexia Screener, Portfolio and Guidance Ages 5-16

---

[10] A range of assistive technology options now exist to support those who continue to struggle with reading and writing despite appropriate intervention, and for some, will remain a part of their lives as they move into adulthood and employment. Some examples include: audiobooks and recordings, Clicker and DocPlus, Dragon dictation software, spelling tools including Easy Spelling Aid, reading equipment including scanning pens, Livescribe, software such as Read&Write, Claro software, Sprintplus, Instant Text, Snap&Read, ActiveWords and Alternative communication devices including speech tablets,

See Assistive Technology Tools: Writing | Reading Rockets or Assistive Technology for Reading, Writing & Spelling - The Dyslexia Association - The Dyslexia Association for a regularly updated selection

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Cognus

No Limits on Learning

Educational Psychology Service

Section 5 – References and useful links

British Psychological Society (1999). Dyslexia, literacy and psychological assessment. Report of a working party of the Division of Educational and Child Psychology. Leicester: Author.

Brooks, G. (2013). What works for children and young people with literacy difficulties? The effectiveness of intervention. http://www.interventionsforliteracy.org.uk/widgets_GregBrooks/What_works_for_children_fourth_ed.pdf

Cambridgeshire Guidance https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/asset-library/imported-assets/CAMBRIDGESHIRE%20DYSLEXIA%20GUIDANCE%20FEBRUARY%202019.pdf

Cummins, J. (2000) *Language, Power and Pedgogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Gov.uk https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/858652/EYFSP_Handbook_2020v5.pdf

Evidence 4 Impact: http://www.evidence4impact.org.uk/index.php

Family Learning Pre-reading skills http://www.familylearning.org.uk/pre-reading_skills.html

Interventions for Literacy Website: http://www.interventionsforliteracy.org.uk/

Morris, H. (2018) Developing literacy intervention for older students struggling with literacy: How does research inform our choices and decisions? https://www.ucl.ac.uk/reading-recovery-europe/sites/reading-recovery-europe/files/research_evidence_informing_grow.pdf

Phase One Letters and Sounds https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/190537/Letters_and_Sounds_-_Phase_One.pdf

Slavin, R et al., (2009). What works for Struggling Readers? http://www.bestevidence.org.uk/assets/What_works_for_struggling_readers.pdf

The Education Endowment Foundation (2019) Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/guidance-reports/improving-literacy-in-secondary-schools/?mc_cid=48e7ac2c18&mc_eid=4d4bbe8166

The Education Endowment Foundation (2018) Preparing for Literacy Early Years https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Literacy/Preparing_Literacy_Guidance_2018.pdf

The Rose Review (2009): https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/14790/7/00659-2009DOM-EN_Redacted.pdf

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

The Scarborough Reading Rope https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-Reading-Rope-Scarborough-2001_fig2_282550319

Useful Links

The BDA website lists a range of products including screening tools and provides checklists for children and young people of different ages which could form part of an initial screening process.

Understanding and supporting neurodiversity: Support strategies for parents and carers (BDA and Patoss)

British Council. Making your classroom dyslexia-friendly https://www.britishcouncil.mk/sites/default/files/making_classrooms_dyslexia_friendly.pdf

Cognus
No Limits on Learning

Educational Psychology Service

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Section 6 – Appendix

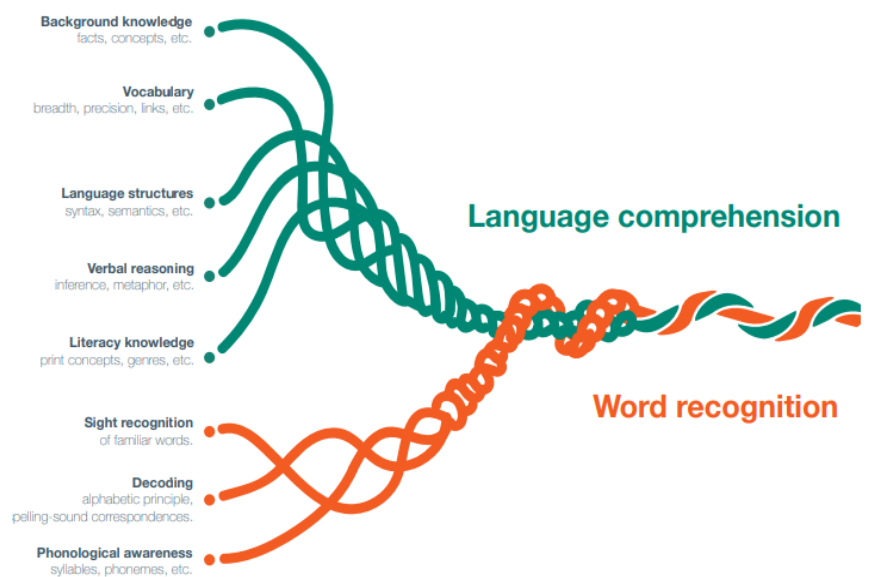### Appendix 1 – Further reading

A definition of literacy

Literacy is the ability to read, write, speak and listen in a way that lets us communicate effectively and make sense of the world (National Literacy Trust, 2017). Children will begin to learn early literacy skills in their first years of life and continue developing their skills throughout secondary education. As students' progress through their schooling the importance of literacy as a cross-curricula discipline is seen to increase.

Learning to read is a complicated process, that involves a number of processes. Typically, children first develop their ability to read through whole word awareness of visual and spoken familiar words, for example, recognising their own name in print. Reading skills are then developed through exposure to printed words by reading to children, vocabulary development by talking to children, and also through nursery-rhymes. When children begin school, literacy teaching is formalised and focuses on phonics-based approaches.

Although there is much variation in the way that children learn to read, several components are involved in the process, including:

Phonological awareness – the ability to hear and identify sounds in words (see Appendix for hierarchy of phonological awareness skills). There is evidence that phonological awareness is a predictor for later reading success.

Decoding - the ability to apply the knowledge of sounds (through breaking down the sounds in a word) to read words.

Comprehension - the ability to understand text through fluent and accurate reading.

The Scarborough Reading Rope (2001) is helpful in depicting the number of factors that influence our ability to learn to read and how they interact. It is therefore important to consider this balanced view when supporting children to develop their early literacy skills. We must consider all factors holistically to best support children's progress. It is important to note that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to learning to read and this should be kept in mind when working with pupils with literacy difficulties.

Background knowledge
facts, concepts, etc.

Vocabulary
breadth, precision, links, etc.

Language structures
syntax, semantics, etc.

Verbal reasoning
inference, metaphor, etc.

Literacy knowledge
print concepts, genres, etc.

Sight recognition
of familiar words.

Decoding
alphabetic principle,
pelling-sound correspondences.

Phonological awareness
syllables, phonemes, etc.

Language comprehension

Word recognition

![Cognus logo] **Cognus**

No Limits on Learning

Educational Psychology Service

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

What causes difficulties acquiring literacy skills?

A proportion of children struggle to develop early reading skills across all languages and in all countries, yet a smaller number will experience this as an enduring difficulty throughout their time in school, and even as adults. English is a tricky language to learn to spell and this may lead to more children struggling with reading and writing when learning English.

A pupil's speech and language skills also contribute to their development of literacy skills, and those who are slow to acquire language often later struggle to acquire literacy skills due to the interconnectedness of these abilities. Similarly hearing difficulties which are prevalent during infancy, can have an impact on a child's early exposure to language which later impacts their development of literacy skills.

Other factors related to affect are consequential for some children. For example, pupils who have experienced/are currently experiencing trauma will be unlikely to effectively engage in learning. This may result in the pupil experiencing gaps in their learning which could be traced back to stressful or traumatic periods in their lives.

Literacy difficulties are often underpinned by difficulties in some or all of the following:

- Phonological awareness: the ability to perceive and manipulate sounds in words
- Verbal memory: the ability to store, process and manipulate verbal information
- Verbal processing speed: the ability to retrieve familiar words quickly and accurately
- Visual processing speed: the ability to visually recognise familiar words, symbols or patterns quickly and accurately

English as an Additional Language (EAL)[11]

When we learn a language, a child uses a set of skills that can be drawn upon when learning a second language; this is known as having an underlying proficiency (Cummins, 2000). The acquisition of English will be supported by the common features of the child's first language, therefore making it important that children and families are encouraged to continue speaking in their native language. It is helpful to encourage parents to model the language they are most comfortable with at home, and for children to continue to speak their home language.

The British Dyslexia Association (BDA) recommends that to be assessed for dyslexia, a pupil will need to have lived in an English-speaking country, and to have been regularly speaking English, for a minimum of seven years. This is because the tests used are heavily influenced by an English-speaking culture and require the ability to read, write, and spell in English. It does not consider that a definitive view can be reached without these factors being in place.

---

[11] See research report 'Dyslexia and Multilingualism' for further guidance in this area (Bath Spa and BDA)

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Cognus

No Limits on Learning

Educational Psychology Service

Appendix 2 - Legal frameworks

Schools operate within various legal frameworks, and as such, support for pupils with literacy difficulties must adhere to these. Two main pieces of legalisation

The Children and Families Act 2014

The Department for Education (DfE) published a new [Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice: 0-25 years](#) in July 2014, which was then updated in January 2015. The Code reflects the changes introduced by the Children and Families Act 2014. All schools must refer to the Code of Practice whenever decisions are taken relating to children with SEND.

The principles of the Code of Practice indicate that when a pupil is identified as having SEND, schools should take action to remove barriers to learning and put effective special educational provision in place. Schools and colleges have the responsibility of identifying and addressing SEN and must put in place a graduated approach to increasing support, implemented in a structured and coherent way

The Code of Practice also makes explicit reference to learning difficulties and specific learning difficulties (see paragraphs 6.30 and 6.31).

Exam arrangements

Literacy assessments can sometimes be used as evidence for exam arrangements, although schools now have to conduct their own assessments. Guidance from the Joint Council for Qualifications provides [further information](#) about the evidence that is accepted.

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act was published in 2010 and replaces all existing equality legislation such as the Race Relations Act, Disability Discrimination Act and Sex Discrimination Act. In its application to education settings it makes it unlawful for schools to discriminate against pupils because of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief or sexual orientation.
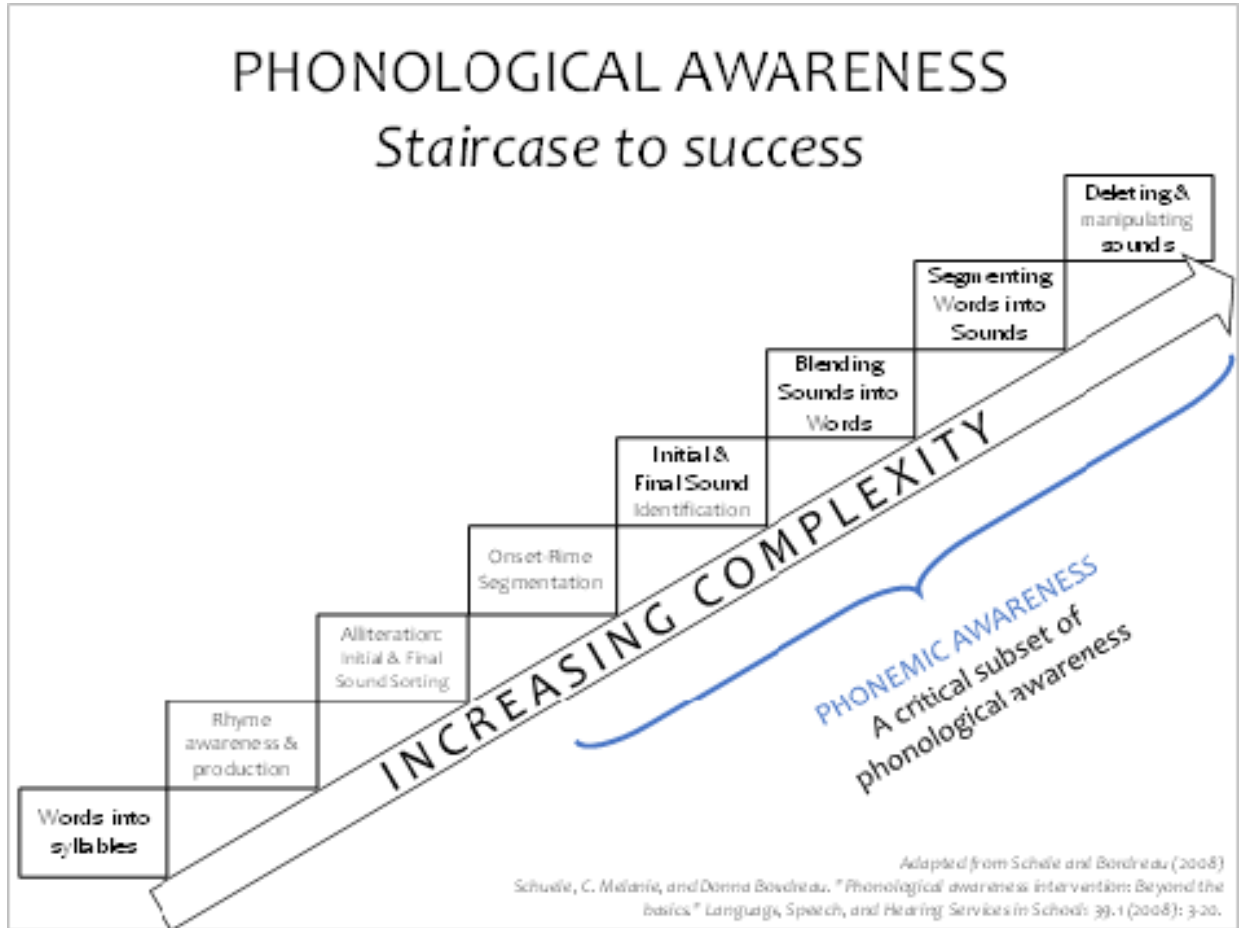
In line with this Act:

- You are disabled if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities

- An education provider has a duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' to make sure disabled students are not discriminated against. These changes could include providing extra support and aids (like specialist teachers or equipment)

In some cases, therefore pupils with learning difficulties including literacy difficulties or dyslexia may be considered to have an impairment, and therefore are entitled to receiving reasonable adjustments as needed. This could include the provision of handouts on different coloured paper, or prepared in a different font, or additional time to undertake an assessment.

Cognus

No Limits on Learning

Educational Psychology Service

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Appendix 3 - Hierarchy of phonological awareness skills

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS
Staircase to success

Deleting & manipulating sounds

Segmenting Words into Sounds

Blending Sounds into Words

Initial & Final Sound Identification

Onset-Rime Segmentation

Alliteration: Initial & Final Sound Sorting

Rhyme awareness & production

Words into syllables

INCREASING COMPLEXITY

PHONEMIC AWARENESS
A critical subset of phonological awareness

Adapted from Schuele and Bondreau (2008)
Schuele, C. Melanie, and Donna Boudreau. "Phonological awareness intervention: Beyond the basics." Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools 39.1 (2008): 3-20.

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Appendix 4 – Targeted intervention

Targeted intervention should be delivered in line with evidence-based interventions and approaches. Ongoing assessment and monitoring of intervention is important to ensure that approaches are appropriately targeted and may include pre- and post-intervention assessment. Some overriding principles about best practice for literacy intervention, for pupils whose difficulties are at the phonological awareness level, include:

- Structured, systematic teaching – using an explicit, organised and sequenced approach (NRP 2000, Swanson and Hoskyn 1998, Singleton 2009)
- Small group settings[12] or individualised teaching for those who continue to make slow progress (Vaughn et al 2000, Swanson & Hoskyn 1998, Scammaca et al 2007)
- On-going professional development and training for teachers to ensure they have the necessary pedagogical skills and content knowledge (NRP 2000, Slavin et al 2008)
- Cooperative learning, including peer reading approaches (particularly with adolescents) (Brooks 2007, Slavin et al 2008, Vaughn et al 2000)
- Teaching should be daily or almost daily, with practice distributed i.e. 'little and often' (Solity, 2000, Scammaca et al 2007)
- Provision of graphic representations, allowance of time for reinforcement and emphasis on generalisation (Brooks, 2007)
- On-going assessment of student achievement to identify if the right level of support is being provided (Solity et al 2000, Scammaca et al 2007)
- Where teaching assistants can be given appropriate training and support, they can be very effective (EEF, 2016)
- Computer assisted learning has considerable potential, but needs to be carefully matched to student need (Brooks 2007, NRP 2000)
- School staff working in partnership with parents/carers by sharing information and agreeing support
- Take into account, and build on, the pupil's strengths and qualities to promote their self-belief
- Teaching that is engaging and fun!

---

[12] This will be dependent on the evidence base for a particular programme/intervention but a small group intervention tends to be between two and five pupils (EEF)

Cognus
No Limits on Learning
Educational Psychology Service

24 Denmark Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2JG

0208 323 0457
www.cognus.org.uk

Appendix 5- Summary of relevant approaches taken from the EEF's Teaching and Learning Toolkit

Approach	Effectiveness
Feedback on learning	Positive effect on attainment for low cost
Ability grouping	Negative effective with only some small benefits for higher attaining pupils
Peer tutoring and collaborative learning	Positive effect sees through learners providing each other with explicit support
Traditional teaching assistant support	Negative or very low impact based on a TA working with small groups; low attaining pupils do less well with TA support
Meta-cognition and self-regulation	High impact for low cost although this requires adoption of a different pedagogy
Differentiation based on 'learning style'	Low impact and sometimes detrimental
One to one tuition	Positive effect when provided by experienced teachers or those with a high level of training
Phonics	Moderate impact overall; consistently positive for KS1 pupils but less successful for older pupils
Very high expectations	Positive effect
Reading and writing for pleasure and purpose	Positive effect of reading 'real' books alongside other literacy intervention